PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 176

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1989-90

COMPRISING PERIOD
9 July—20 July 1990

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 176**

FIFTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1989-90

House of Commons

Monday 9 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Midland Line

1. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will meet representatives of local authorities and others regarding midland line electrification; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am meeting representatives of Northamptonshire county council shortly to discuss the report which the local authorities have commissioned on electrification of the midland main line. It is for British Rail to consider whether there is a commercial case for electrification, and I hope that the local authorities will discuss their plans with British Rail.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that nearly every local authority in the east midlands—Labour and Tory—agrees with the midland line electrification programme? They have been demanding it for years—for the whole time that the Government have been in power. They cannot understand why, when more passengers are using the line, it has occasionally been under threat and why the Government cannot provide the local authorities with a morale boost by giving money to British Rail to get the job done. Why are the Government so concerned about roads? Is it because the road lobby companies line the pockets of the Tory party?

Mr. Freeman: I am well aware that there is considerable support among the local authorities affected by the midland line electrification. The Government welcome sensible electrification proposals on both this line and others.

Mr. Skinner: Give them the money then.

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that it would not be sensible for the Government to spend taxpayers' money unless there were a sound commercial case for electrification. There are two facts that I am sure the hon. Gentleman and the local authorities will bear in mind. First, the rolling stock on the line has another 10 years of useful life. I am sure that, when the rolling stock has to be replaced, British Rail will look carefully at the future of the line. Secondly, straightening the line to increase the average speed of trains could be more productive than electrification.

Mr. Lester: When my hon. Friend meets his local authority colleagues in Northamptonshire, will he also consider the freight operations on the midland line? Many of us are anxious that the channel tunnel should help all areas in the midlands and the north. Therefore, it is essential to have freight depots in the right place. I know that that is very much a matter for the Minister. I hope that he will consider it in the near future.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail will shortly be deciding where to locate the terminals for collecting freight for onward shipment through the channel tunnel. It is to announce the location of the terminals during the next six months. Before the end of the year its plans will be fully unfurled. Electrification of the line is not relevant to freight services through the channel tunnel. Freight can and will be collected at various terminals and, if necessary, assembled for forwarding on through-trains in London. However, I understand the significance of freight to the railway industry so that it can capitalise on the channel tunnel.

Mr. Ashton: Is the Minister aware that York is 50 miles north of Sheffield and that trains get there faster from London and that Leeds is 35 miles north of Sheffield and that trains from London get there in the same journey time? How on earth does he expect business men to invest in coalfields and steelworks areas and in places of high unemployment in the north midlands when it takes an hour to travel 35 miles to Manchester because there is no InterCity service? Railway connections throughout the area are backward and should have been updated many years ago.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman has referred to the electrification of the east coast main line, and that is an excellent service. British Rail has plans, yet to be submitted to the Government, for improving speeds on the west coast main line. We welcome those forward-looking plans. As for the midland main line, I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Electrification will not significantly increase running speeds. Widening bridges and straightening the curves on the midland main line would do more than electrification for average speeds.

Dartford-Thurrock Crossing

2. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the new Dartford-Thurrock crossing will be opened.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): Construction of the new Dartford to Thurrock bridge is progressing well. The main pier pylons were erected at the end of last month. The project is on target for completion by summer 1991.

Mr. Arnold: My constituents and those in north-west Kent will warmly welcome the prospects of the speeding up of the crossing by the M25 of the River Thames and of getting rid of the immense traffic congestion that we suffer in that part of the world. But can my right hon. Friend assure us that the infrastructure of roads feeding up to the bridge will be up to the job?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. Part of the plan is to turn the approach roads to the tunnel and the bridge into dualled four-lane roads, so there will be four lanes going north and four travelling south.

Mr. Squire: For the benefit of hon. Members who represent constituences on each side of the bridge, and given the critical importance of the crossing not just for personal use but for international freight, can my right hon. Friend confirm whether the contractors would be subject to financial penalties were they to finish late?

Mr. Parkinson: The big incentive that the contractors have is that their concession runs for only 20 years, and if they are late in completing the project, they will be late in starting to collect the revenue. That means that they have a real financial incentive to complete the bridge on time.

A69, Northumberland

4. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to dual the A69 west of Hexham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: There are no plans to dual the A69 west of Hexham. The Brampton bypass, now under construction in Cumbria, is to be a single carriageway. This will also be the case for the improvement at Haltwhistle in Northumberland.

Traffic flows west of Hexham are relatively light and even with the new traffic forecasts, which look well ahead, any significant dualling is unlikely to be justified.

Mr. Amos: Will my right hon. Friend note that everybody in the north-east is extremely grateful for his decision to upgrade the A1 to a motorway as far as Newcastle, but that that means that in future years the A69 will fall between two major motorways – the new A1 and the M6—which will increase flows on that road? In the light of the excellent news that my right hon. Friend announced last week, may I ask him to give us some more good news as soon as possible?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. We will monitor developments on the A69 after the A1 to Newcastle has been turned into a motorway, but, as my hon. Friend knows, traffic flows west of Hexham are very light indeed by comparison with those east of Hexham. That is why the road is dualled as far as Hexham but not beyond. Nevertheless, we shall look at the matter very carefully.

Motorways (Spray)

6. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take fresh initiatives to reduce the lateral spray caused by heavy goods vehicles on motorways in adverse weather conditions.

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): Since 1985, all United Kingdom heavy goods vehicles have been required to have anti-spray devices fitted. These are the most stringent requirements in Europe and we are keen to see the rest of Europe come up to our standard.

Mr. Michael: I thank the Minister for that reply and I share his wish that the requirements should be stringent. But has he had the experience that I have had when driving up the M4? Has he found that there is a massive variation in the amount of spray produced by different heavy goods vehicles, some of which produce little lateral spray while others produce an enormous and dangerous amount? Does not that suggest that we need greater controls – either through regulations or through their enforcement —to minimise the considerable danger to motorists that is caused when their vision is obscured in this way?

Mr. McLoughlin: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I am not sure whether he was referring to different amounts of spray being produced on the same sort of day, as the amount of spray can depend on the wind. I often drive up the M1 and I assure the hon. Gentleman that I suffer from exactly the same experience. That is why the Government are keen to see our requirements matched by the rest of Europe and why we are pursuing the matter with urgency.

Mr. Cormack: Is not most of the lateral spray caused by buses, and is not it time that we prevented buses from travelling in the fast lane of motorways?

Mr. McLoughlin: I do not know the exact answer to that, although my experience is that given the right conditions, lorries and buses both cause tremendous

amounts of spray. I can assure my hon. Friend, however, that we are keen to ensure that all vehicles are fitted with anti-spray devices as quickly as possible.

Road Safety

7. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to improve road safety for children.

Mr. McLoughlin: A wide range of measures to improve road safety have been taken under the umbrella of our "Safety on the Move" campaign. Britain has a good record on road safety. An area of great concern is that of child safety, especially child pedestrians, where there is particular scope for improvement. A sustained programme of measures on child safety was launched in May, including proposals to enable local authorities to make residential streets safer. We will be launching a further phase of that campaign concentrating on child pedestrian safety shortly.

Mr. Mitchell: Are not my hon. Friend and his Department to be congratulated on the recent initiative, particularly in view of its co-ordinating measures? In pursuing that, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the great importance of using parent-teacher associations in schools to promote road safety? They marry the interests of parents in looking after children and the interests of schools. Those are the two principal ways of promoting road safety for children and those avenues have been well explored and used in my constituency. Parent-teacher associations can make a most important contribution. Will my hon. Friend ensure that they are included as the programme evolves?

Mr. McLoughlin: In any campaign of this kind, we must do as much as we can to draw to the attention of PTAs, parents and everyone involved in supervising children the importance of ensuring that children are fully aware of the dangers that they can face on our roads. Those accidents can be prevented and I know that all hon. Members would want to see as much as possible done on that subject.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister aware that although "Children crossing" signs are much in evidence, in many such areas local authorities still allow 40 mph speed limits? Will he recommend to local authorities that that limit should be reduced to 30 mph?

Mr. McLoughlin: A number of initiatives that were outlined earlier will do much to meet the hon. Gentleman's requirement. However, perhaps too much emphasis is placed on the reduction of speed to wipe out those accidents. A number of factors lead to those accidents and we must ensure that people are more aware of the dangers on our roads. However, I accept the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Higgins: Is my hon. Friend aware that children have been among the victims of drunken driving? Is he aware also that recent press reports have suggested that he is considering whether different levels of alcohol in the blood should be considered, depending on the age of the driver? That would be a very bad thing to introduce because it would give the impression that drunken driving at one age is more or less dangerous than drunken driving at another. Clearly the same level of alcohol should be considered whatever the age of the driver.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's comments and he referred to ideas that are out for consultation at the moment. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, drinking and driving accounts for 900 deaths a year on our roads. It is the biggest single cause of road accidents and anything that can be done to make people more aware of the danger in which they put others when they drink and drive can only be helpful.

Miss Lestor: Does the Minister agree that many of his proposals place an onus on local authorities to take more action? Bearing in mind that many of those initiatives, which are admirable in their way, will cost a great deal of money, the present restrictions on local authorities mean that unless more money is made available, the carnage and injury to our children will continue. It is important that when highlighting, quite rightly, what is happening with children and road safety—and the report is clear about that—money is made available to the local authorities. At the moment they are under such severe restrictions that many of them are saying that they cannot implement many of the recommendations.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is perhaps not surprising that the Labour party has brought into play the question of money for local authorities. Those of us with extreme local authorities could point to several ways in which they could make savings and divert their money to areas where it could be used better and more effectively. It is not just the local authorities which should take the lead in this matter; parents and all those involved in educating children should also play a part. I totally and absolutely reject the idea that local authorities are short of money for that vital provision. However, it is not surprising to hear that claim from the Opposition.

British Rail

8. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss plans for denationalisation.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend will discuss privatisation, when appropriate at his regular meetings with the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Gregory: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he appreciate the frustration in great railway cities such as York which have seen the denationalisation of Sealink, Travellers Fare on-station catering, and British Rail Engineering Ltd., but not of the core business of British Rail? Would not it be more productive and better for those who actually use rail services if he were to call for denationalisation plans? That could be an opportunity for those who work in that great industry to have a share in its success, which my hon. Friend is frustrating at present.

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. Friend that we need to achieve a better deal for the consumer—the passenger on British Rail. Therefore, the recent reorganisation plans that were announced by British Rail and which are based on the business sectors of British Rail—freight, international, InterCity, provincial and Network SouthEast—are to be welcomed because they focus

management's effort and attention on improving the service that is available to consumers. That reorganisation is not inconsistent with privatisation, but that is not a matter for this Parliament.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Minister explain to his hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) that the chairman of British Rail recently gave evidence to the Select Committee on Transport that, although the financial targets that had been set by the Government were being met, there was no question of the quality of service being met? That has a great deal more to do with the comfort of passengers than all the nonsense that is talked about trying to sell off an unprofitable business.

Mr. Freeman: There is no prospect in this Parliament of any proposals for denationalising British railways. I was not present to hear the evidence that was given by Sir Bob Reid, but I assure the hon. Lady that the financial target that was set by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and the quality targets are achievable by British Rail. I shall shortly be having a meeting with the chairman of British Rail and the chairman of London Regional Transport to monitor what progress has been made on those quality objectives and to work with those two undertakings to make sure that they are achieved.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend the Minister accept that if Japan, America, France and Germany find a need to subsidise railways as a public service, it cannot be a sound policy to keep on pushing up InterCity and commuter fares in the vain hope of selling off something which, if it is to be profitable, will leave us with three private lines? Will the Minister accept that railways are a necessary part of the infrastructure of this country and that spending £600 million on the A1 is not as important as spending £600 million on railways?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend will be delighted to learn that, over the next three years, road investment in this country, paid for by the taxpayer, will be about £6 billion and investment in rail schemes by British Rail and London Regional Transport will also be £6 billion. A significant proportion of that railway investment will be paid by the public sector, either in subsidy for Network SouthEast or provincial railways, or by borrowing from the national loans fund. We have the proportion of investment in roads and railways right. If my hon. Friend looks at the experience of Germany and France, he will see that there are pressures there to reduce the losses and the subsidies that they are suffering and that they wish to emulate British Rail and the experience of this public sector.

Mr. Prescott: Are the Minister and the Secretary of State aware of the conclusion of two recent reports by the European Commission and the chartered accountants' institute that British Rail is seriously disadvantaged in being prevented from raising private capital to finance a high-speed rail link, as in France and Germany, simply because of Treasury rules and the financial targets that have been imposed on British Rail by all Governments? Will he press for changes so that a publicly owned British Rail can raise private capital on its own to finance a new high-speed rail link this century rather than next century?

Mr. Freeman: I must first correct the hon. Gentleman —the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales did not produce that report. The body that produced the report is not part of the institute—I happen to know that because I belong to it. The Hundred Group of chartered accountants is not part of the profession.

Mr. Snape: Did the Minister read the report?

Mr. Freeman: Yes, I did. I not only participated in the production of the 1981 report, but carefully read the 1989 update.

On the point about borrowing from the private sector for railway investment, of course, British Rail wants to use private sector finance. That was what the proposal that was put to us about the channel tunnel high-speed rail link was about. The proposal did not work, because the balance was not right—*[Interruption.]* Well, I can advise the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) that there is no shortage of capital in this country and no shortage of railway investment schemes in which people can invest. The problem is to find viable schemes that will ensure the repayment of that capital. The hon. Gentleman talks about raising £15 billion for a high-speed rail link—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, £15 billion for a high-speed rail link from Folkestone to Scotland. However, the hon. Gentleman will find that that scheme is not and will not be viable. He is assuming that money is available for projects that are not viable and where the money cannot be repaid.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that there is an agreement to take question No. 9 at the end. We therefore move to question No. 10.

HM Coastguard

10. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many persons were directly assisted in 1989-90 by Her Majesty's Coastguard's civil maritime search and rescue service.

Mr. McLoughlin: Provisional figures for 1989 show that from 6,837 incidents co-ordinated by the coastguards, more than 11,500 persons were assisted by a combination of Coastguard helicopters, vehicles and rescue equipment; Ministry of Defence helicopters, Royal National Lifeboat Institution lifeboats and other vessels.

Mr. Field: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Solent is the busiest coastal area in the United Kingdom? Will he add his tribute to mine to the coastguards for their excellent work in looking after our seafarers—both professional and amateur—365 days a year, and especially during the round the island race, which is probably the world's largest yacht race? Will he confirm that there will be no reduction in the provision of military search and rescue helicopters following the defence debate? Will my hon. Friend join me in condemning the comments of the Labour and Liberal Democratic parties which condemned the manpower levels of the Coastguard service, when this Government have provided so much investment in new equipment and technology to ensure that our coastguards are the best in the world?

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend is correct that the Solent is the busiest part of our coast. There were 851 incidents in that area in 1989, in which more than 1,600 persons were assisted. That was an increase of 18 per cent. over the previous year. There are carefully laid down criteria for the helicopter cover that is required along our

coastline. No reduction in that will be contemplated and any necessary changes will be made. My hon. Friend is also right to note that although the Opposition constantly tell us about all the cuts, we have, in fact, increased expenditure on the Coastguard service substantially. Compared with the 1983 figure, expenditure has now doubled to £28 million. The coastguards provide an excellent service. As we are approaching the time when most people take their holidays, it is perhaps worth reminding everyone that it is up to each person to take the proper precautions when at the coast.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: All of us who represent maritime constitutencies very much appreciate the work of the Coastguard service. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that there will be adequate night cover, following the removal of helicopters from night duty at Leuchars and Fife, which are so important for air-sea rescue searches?

Mr. McLoughlin: As I said earlier, we are satisfied that there is sufficient helicopter cover around our coastline. However, I shall certainly investigate the specific case that the hon. Lady has raised and write to her about it.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I commend the fantastic work carried out by the coastguards around our coastal waters, but will my hon. Friend confirm that there is still much room for improvement in the general public's understanding of the different sectors that offer search and rescue facilities? We have a tripartite organisational problem with the RNLI, the coastguards and other organisations that provide search and rescue cover. Will my hon. Friend assure me that once the new committee that he has endorsed—a local advisory body to help with the north Devon coastline—has proved its worth, he will replicate it throughout the United Kingdom so that all our coastlines will have a local group that can question and learn from local search and rescue services?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. She rightly refers to an idea that she sponsored and which has been taken on board. I shall look closely at the results arrived at by the consultation body. If I find that the idea is worth while I shall consider expanding it to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Ms. Ruddock: In the light of the figures that the Minister has given and the Prime Minister's recent high-profile excursion in a lifeboat, will the Minister tell the House just how many Coastguard stations he has closed? Is not he worried about the closure of the Hartland Coastguard station? Can he confirm that the bridging loans made available to members of staff who were relocated totalled about £200,000, and that for that sum it would have been possible to keep that important Coastguard station open?

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of incidents in the area round the Hartland Coastguard station has declined since the station was closed. I stand by the fact that we have doubled expenditure on the Coastguard service from £14 million in 1983 to approximately £28 million and that the service is currently involved in a four-year programme to modernise its communications and provide computerised data handling equipment. If the Opposition believe that a Coastguard service can be maintained without giving it proper equipment with which to operate, the Government do not agree. The Government propose to give coastguards the right, modern, effective communications equipment that they need to carry out their jobs.

Leeds-London Rail Service

11. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total investment in the electrification of the Leeds-London inter-city service.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail puts the total expenditure on electrification of the Leeds-London inter-city service at £164.4 million at 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Waller: Is my hon. Friend aware of the great success of electrification in improving customer service? Will he give sympathetic consideration this October to the application by the West Yorkshire passenger transport executive to invest its own resources in electrifying the Leeds-Bradford railway, as well as the Airedale and Wharfedale lines, especially as the investment will produce a positive return above the 8 per cent. criterion required for such schemes?

Mr. Freeman: I am aware that my hon. Friend is a strong supporter of that proposal, along with several other hon. Members on both sides of the House. I intend to visit the West Yorkshire passenger transport executive and authority in September. We shall give the matter careful consideration. I am glad to note that today British Rail has added an option clause to its agreement for the purchase of rolling stock for the Birmingham cross-city service. That will safeguard about 14 trains by under-option for possible use on the extra electrified line.

Mr. Madden: As the Minister's predecessor, in a meeting earlier this year, gave every impression of being extremely sympathetic to electrification of the Bradford-Leeds line, and as there are no doubts about its economic viability, will the Minister pull his finger out and approve the loan to the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority so that it can get on with the work? All sections of the community in Bradford have been pressing for the work to be done for the past six years.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman's language is colourful, but I understand the strength of his feeling. He will recall that my predecessor said that a decision would be made once the autumn statement settlement had been announced. I also give him that assurance. I am well aware that the West Yorkshire PTE is seeking only credit approval, not section 56 grant. The scheme appears to be viable, so I give the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members the assurance that the proposal will be considered at the appropriate time when we have the new public expenditure survey settlement.

Mr. Devlin: As my hon. Friend was criticised earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) for investing too much in the A1, a much-needed transport link for the north and north-east, instead of investing in the railways, does my hon. Friend agree that the electrification of the east coast main line and the electrification scheme for the Leeds-Bradford line are two of 10 major schemes which amount to the largest-ever investment in British Rail?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding the House that over the next three years British

Rail investment will be 75 per cent. up in real terms on that for the past three years. London Regional Transport investment will be about double in real terms. There is a substantial increase in investment which is significantly financed by the public sector through grants and borrowings.

Mr. Snape: Will the Minister explain slowly, for the benefit of his more stupid and innumerate Back Benchers, that the £164 million for the electrification of the London-Leeds railway line is paid for almost exclusively by farepayers in almost the highest rail fares in Europe, while the £600 million for the upgrading of the A1 trunk road is paid for exclusively by taxpayers? As a colourful accountant, can the Minister explain that discrepancy in the Government's transport policy?

Mr. Freeman: Perhaps I can give the hon. Gentleman the figures. The £3·7 billion investment in British Rail over the next three years is financed in four ways: £0·2 billion comes from its cash flow, before depreciation; £1·6 billion comes from grants, not only from central Government, but from passenger transport executives——

Mr. Snape: You bet.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman says, "You bet", but only about £200 million of that £1·6 billion comes from local authorities. One billion pounds comes from loans and £0·9 billion comes from the sale of assets which belong to the taxpayer. I repeat that the vast majority of British Rail investment, which is the largest for 25 years and represents a 75 per cent. increase in real terms, comes from the public sector.

Fishing Vessels

12. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to review the criteria for the registration of fishing vessels.

Mr. Parkinson: We will review the criteria for the registration of fishing vessels should it become necessary when the outcome is known of the litigation covering part II of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 before the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Taylor: I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware of the great concern among Cornish fishermen in particular, following the recent United Kingdom cheating on quota and, more specifically, the problems with the Spanish vessels. May I hope that the Government will resist any review and fight on behalf of those fishermen to protect the quota system? After all, it makes no sense to have a national quota system if quota-hopping is allowed.

Mr. Parkinson: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the European Court of Justice decided that our courts could issue interim injunctions suspending an Act of Parliament. It did not decide that the courts had to do so. Therefore, the Government will argue before our courts that, although they have the discretion, they should not use it and we shall argue strongly the major case that our registration arrangements should be allowed under European law. We shall fight both cases hard.

Mr. Harris: Although I congratulate the Government on the way in which they are fighting these cases, both the short-term one in the House of Lords and the long-term one in the European Court of Justice, does my right hon. Friend accept that 31 of those former Spanish vessels are back on our register through what is widely regarded as a loophole in the present registration procedure—they appear to be financed through loans or mortgages from Spain? Will he look at that problem and give an assurance that the Government will do everything in their power to deal once and for all with the scourge of quota-hopping?

Mr. Parkinson: As my hon. Friend knows, originally more than 85 vessels applied for registration. Several have been registered, although I do not think that it is as many as 31. My figure is 26. Nevertheless, I shall look at the matter again. We are examining each case carefully and we are determined that only properly owned vessels should be allowed to appear on our register.

Dr. Godman: I see that the Attorney-General is on the Front Bench. After the hearing that is taking place now in another place, may we have a statement from him about the judgment because it is of major interest both constitutionally and to our fishermen? Might one of the implications of the judgment be the end of national quotas and the allocation of quotas being determined in Brussels by European Commission officials?

Mr. Parkinson: We should look only at the two issues. The issue before the House of Lords is the narrow one of whether it wishes to use a power that the European Court of Justice says it has. The major case about our registration requirements has still to be heard and I understand that there will be no decision on that until the end of the year. The hearing in the House of Lords is about a technical matter, an interim measure, and I am advised that the full hearing will not take place until the end of the year.

Electronic Road Pricing

13. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to publish the preliminary studies being undertaken by his Department into the feasibility of introducing electronic road pricing in parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department is not currently undertaking such studies. We are, however, continuing to keep a close watch on the use of road pricing in other countries and on the development of the relevant technology.

Mr. Taylor: As the cost to business of road congestion in and around London is about £15 billion a year, at the risk of being skinned alive by my constituents in Esher, may I ask the Secretary of State seriously to consider throwing a road-pricing ring round the old Greater London council boundary? We must overcome the problem of congestion in our capital city, and some of us must make the sacrifice. Technology appears to work in other countries, and it is worth bringing it in here.

Mr. Parkinson: I should be glad to hear from my hon. Friend in which countries the technology works. As far as I know, Singapore is the only one. There are toll booths in Norway, but they are designed not for road pricing, but for revenue raising. They are not intended to discourage people from using roads. In recent weeks the Dutch, who had been leading the way, abandoned their experiment and

the Swedes have voted—if I may coin a phrase—not to go down that road. Road pricing, although intellectually attractive, is incredibly complicated to implement, would be unfair and is not a readily available option.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Pub Bombings

77. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last discussed the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings case with *(a)* Lord Lane and *(b)* Lord Donaldson.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Any discussion which I might have with the judiciary as a Law Officer would be confidential and not disclosed.

Mr. Mullin: Is the Attorney-General aware that for some time a number of senior judges have been going round quietly saying that the Guildford Four and the Maguire family had their convictions quashed only on a technicality and were guilty all along? Does he agree that that brings the judicial process further into disrepute? It is about time that we had a resignation or two so that those gentleman can say out loud what they can say at the moment only in the privacy of their clubs.

The Attorney-General: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is no, Sir. The remainder of the question does not arise.

Mr. William Powell: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that nothing could be more deplorable than for the Crown's principal Law Officer to go round discussing with judges cases that may appear before the courts again? Is not it essential that there should be proper separation between the judicial and Executive functions, even those that exist for my right hon. and learned Friend? Will he ensure that he never speaks about any live case to any judge in his official capacity?

The Attorney-General: No, Sir. My responsibilities for controlling the administration of sectors of the criminal and civil law would, on occasion, make discussion with the judiciary appropriate.

Mr. Fraser: Would not it be wrong for the Attorney-General to discuss matters of this controversial nature with the judges? Is not the right way to go about it—if the right hon. and learned Gentleman has views on it—to make a submission to the May inquiry, because it is equally clear that unless Ludovic Kennedy or my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) writes a book, the BBC makes a programme, and a police force holds an inquiry, some miscarriages of justice will not be put right? Is not it time the right hon. and learned Gentleman gave evidence to the inquiry?

The Attorney-General: No, Sir, I set up the inquiry with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, and I await Sir John May's report of the first phase with great interest. He has promised it as soon as possible.

As for the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I have no proposals to discuss any such case with any of the judiciary, but—in response to a hypothetical question—I certainly do not propose to fetter the discretion that any holder of my office has, in the interests of the administration of justice, to do what he considers proper.

Legal Aid

78. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals for one lawyer to represent clients in criminal cases on legal aid.

The Attorney-General: On 19 June Standing Committee D, with Government support, added a new clause to the Courts and Legal Services Bill under which the Lord Chancellor would be unable to say that a defendant in criminal proceedings should have only one lawyer to represent him. The Government hope to be able to extend this provision to include cases in the High Court and the Court of Appeal when the House considers the Bill on Report.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the concern that has been expressed by the Bar Council, the Law Society and the Consumers Association about this provision. I hope that he will influence the Committee to ensure that the public have a proper choice and that enough lawyers are available to represent defendants in court cases.

The Attorney-General: The Government have made it clear that there is no intention to use the power to fix fees under the legal aid scheme to require that any litigant shall be represented by only one legal representative. That will become clear when we reach Report stage.

Mr. Skinner: Why is not the Attorney-General saying that this is a case of restrictive practices and overmanning and that the Government will weed out those elements? Instead, he says exactly the opposite. If it had been a trade union, the boot would have been on the other foot.

The Attorney-General: I shall not discuss with the hon. Gentleman where he puts his boot—*[Interruption.]* It is generally in his mouth. The hon. Gentleman would be the first to his feet if one of his trade union members had not been permitted the legal representative of his choice because the Lord Chancellor of the day had decided—*[Interruption.]* Just for once, will the hon. Gentleman listen to an answer so that others can hear it? Let us suppose that one of his trade union members had been denied the representative of his choice because the Lord Chancellor of the time—perhaps even a Conservative one—had decreed that he should have only one. I wonder what he would say then.

Mr. Lawrence: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is nearly always necessary for there to be someone arranging for witnesses and trying to organise the times when they can come, and someone taking a note of the evidence? The Opposition would be the first to complain if they were involved in any sort of criminal trial that had to be delayed day after day merely because there was no one there to help the barrister on his feet.

The Attorney-General: I thought that I had expressed the same thought, perhaps rather less amply.

79. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Attorney-General when the application for legal aid by Mr. McCready, of 5 Botsham house, Newcomen street, London SE1 will be dealt with.

The Attorney-General: A number of regrettable errors in the handling of Mr. McCready's application for legal

aid delayed considerably the issue of a certificate. But I am pleased to say that an unlimited legal aid certificate was issued on 28 June.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Attorney-General agree that justice delayed is justice denied? Is the delay in this case —a delay, as he well knows, of more than a year—typical of the legal aid administration? Is he aware that solicitors are fed up with the delay and that many people just cannot get an answer? It is only because I have written to the Lord Chancellor about this case that there appears to be any movement at all.

The Attorney-General: No, it is regrettable but it is certainly not typical. The Legal Aid Board has already increased from 50 to 63 per cent. the number of legal aid applications that are processed within six weeks of receipt, and it has set itself tough targets for the immediate future.

Government Documents

80. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Attorney-General how many and what percentage of Government documents are lost each year *(a)* unaccountably, *(b)* as a result of fire or water damage, or *(c)* otherwise; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No information is held centrally about this. To comply with their duties under the Public Records Act 1958, Departments are obliged to ensure that their documentary records are properly preserved.

Mr. Fearn: Does the Attorney-General agree that the majority of documents which disappear, shall we say, do so because of Government secrecy? For example, does he know that only 5 per cent. of Department of Trade and Industry documents reach his office and that 90 per cent. are destroyed?

The Attorney-General: No. What the hon. Gentleman describes as the Government's policy of secrecy certainly does not lead to the loss of any documents. By framing his question in that way the hon. Gentleman has proceeded, by fire and water, to a rather expensive platform for denying justice to a Government who have so notably liberalised the Official Secrets Act, for example.

Mr. Favell: While on the subject of documents going astray, will the Attorney-General look into the question of the documents that appear to be going astray at the headquarters of the National Union of Mineworkers? It has been reported that there will be a private investigation at the NUM before the police are called in. As that did not apply to Guinness or Barlow Clowes why is it applying at the NUM?

The Attorney-General: I have no responsibility for what is taking place or what has taken place at the National Union of Mineworkers. I certainly do not wish to emulate its representative in the House, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), by straying into areas that are outside my responsibility.

Supreme Court of Appeal

81. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on his policy on the establishment of an independent Supreme Court of Appeal.

The Attorney-General: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has no plans to change the present structure of the appellate courts.

Mr. Allen: The Attorney-General will be aware, as are most hon. Members, that the people who are in prison for the Birmingham bombings are probably or very likely innocent. He is in an embarrassing position because he does not know how to get those people out of gaol. Would not it be better to have a totally independent and further Court of Appeal, so that the incarceration of innocent people could be dealt with without giving rise to the embarrassment which the Government obviously feel at keeping those people in prison?

The Attorney-General: Without making any comment on the assertions with which the hon. Gentleman began his question, I must observe that any change of the sort that he envisages is a matter for the Lord Chancellor or, conceivably, for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but not for me. Any judicial process depends upon the evidential material that is presented to it and upon the limits of its jurisdiction. The remit of Sir John May's inquiry is broad enough to consider whether it is desirable to change the way in which our courts deal with what are treated as appeals on referral from the Home Secretary. That is as far as I can take the matter at the moment.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Peru

90. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to send aid to Peru in respect of the recent earthquake and drought.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Following an appeal from the United Nations Secretary-General last month, we are making a bilateral contribution of $250,000 for immediate relief, channelled through the United Nations Disaster Relief Office which is co-ordinating donors' responses. This is on top of 0·120 million ecu, or £86,000, emergency assistance for earthquake victims, and 5·88 million ecu, or £4·2 million, of emergency food aid being provided from the European Community programme.

Mr. Snape: Will the Minister confirm reports that about 3·5 million of the poorest farmers in that part of the world have lost their crops as a result of this catastrophe? What are her Department's long-term plans for assisting such farmers, especially in preparation for next year's crop and thereafter?

Mrs. Chalker: I cannot yet confirm the figures that the hon. Gentleman gave, but obviously we wait anxiously for news of what is going on. I think that he realises that Peru is a middle-income country and therefore has not figured largely in our aid programme, although we give help through technical co-operation and do much in terms of training, some of it in agriculture. When we know the position better, I can examine it again.

I emphasise that we seek to concentrate our bilateral aid funds on the Commonwealth and the poorest countries. Therefore, although we will be generous with

emergency and relief aid, we feel that it is right to do that for the poorest countries, rather than for a country that has a per capita GNP of $1,440.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: What difficulties are being encountered in getting our emergency aid through to the areas that have suffered from the earthquakes, especially bearing in mind the difficulties of the newly elected Government of Peru in exercising their democratic mandate in those areas, owing to the activity of the Maoist terrorists of Sendero Luminoso?

Mrs. Chalker: We are well aware of the difficulties that Sendero Luminoso and other terrorists make for the Government in that country. I am not aware of specific difficulties in getting the aid through, but the new Government—under president-elect Fujimori—have a great deal to do, including sorting out a debt of $1·5 billion: those are substantial arrears.

AIDS

91. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resources have now been made available by his Department to help combat the spread of AIDS in developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 18 June, which noted a number of financial commitments totalling £29·39 million. Since then a further £250,000 has been committed to support another national programme.

Mr. Field: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity of reading an article in *The Sunday Times* of 1 July which outlined the effect of AIDS on African leaders, and the need to combat AIDS where there are such cultural traditions among the poor as farmers exchanging their wives and daughters for fertiliser? As the AIDS epidemic has such a serious effect on the tiny percentage of African leaders who have had a formal education, and now that aid agencies throughout the world are turning their attention to the eastern bloc countries, what can my right hon. Friend do to ensure that Africa avoids that double jeopardy?

Mrs. Chalker: I have seen the article to which my hon. Friend referred. However willing we are—and we are very willing—to do more to try to curb the HIV epidemic, we can do nothing without the commitment of Heads of Government and people at every level of life in those countries. A much wider use of condoms is necessary everywhere. In countries that already have high levels of HIV, the spread is bound to be far greater than any that we may have anticipated some years ago. It is no good simply asking for fidelity; we must persuade people to take effective practical action.

Mr. Tony Banks: What requests has the Minister received from African countries for resources to combat the spead of AIDS? Does she accept that the amount of money that she spoke about is minuscule, given the plague-like proportion of the spread of AIDS, especially in east Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: We are already helping Botswana, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire and Zimbabwe, and we are delighted to note the positive contribution being made in Zimbabwe by Dr. Stamp, the new Minister of Health, in increasing public awareness and action. It is not simply a question of money, although we have greatly increased the amounts that we are spending, and will continue to do so. We are also working with advisers in those countries to ensure that they get their programmes right and that their publicity is fearless in putting over to everyone just what a problem this is. It is not the supply of condoms that is a problem; it is getting people to use them.

Mr. Sayeed: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some figures show that 45 per cent. of the adult population in cities and towns is sub-Saharan Africa have AIDS? If that is the case, what discussions has she had with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary concerning health screening for people who come to Britain from those countries?

Mrs. Chalker: My responsibilities are not only to try to help to prevent the spread of AIDS but to educate, through our overseas aid programmes. The unique TASO project has started in Uganda—The Aids Support Organisation project—which is counselling people. That is the way forward. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is supporting action taken by my Department in those countries.

Natural History Museum

92. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the result of his inquiries about the effect of the changes in the natural history museum on research work of importance to his Department.

Mrs. Chalker: I believe that the changes at the natural history museum should have no serious impact on the ODA's programmes, including our research work. The ODA's natural resources institute, which has close links with the museum and will continue to need its collaboration, will be keeping this matter under review. So will I.

Mr. Dalyell: After her welcome visit in September, when she will see some of the 25·5 million specimens in spirits, some collected by Captain Cook, will the right hon. Lady require of the museum that it makes no changes in curatorial arrangements, in the light of the many letters from throughout the world from experts concerned with global changes in climate and other such matters?

Mrs. Chalker: I am well aware that the hon. Gentleman wishes to see that nothing irrevocable is done. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts and I between us will approach any changes that take place in the natural history museum in that spirit. It is important that the museum concentrates its efforts on the six scientific programmes that I shall be visiting in September. I was glad to talk to the associate director, Mr. Peake, abou this and about what it is aiming to do. As the museum accepts, it cannot do everything at all times. Therefore, we must get its research efforts concentrated on these vital issues.

Women (Adult Education)

93. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the overseas aid programme provides support for adult education for women in developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes, we provide such support in a variety of ways: as component parts of ODA projects, through in-country training and training on courses in British institutions, through distance learning, and in joint ventures with non-governmental organisations and in our contribution to the United Nations development fund for women, UNIFEM.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in too many parts of the world, opportunities for women are fewer because of their inadequate education? Therefore, the reason for adult education of women is that much stronger. Has the world conference on education for all, held in Thailand earlier this year, led to any advances, and can we support such projects?

Mrs. Chalker: The education for all conference in Thailand was valuable because it called on Governments to give a higher priority to basic education. That should enable us, and other donor Governments, to support adult literacy for women to a greater extent. We have to consider overseas Government priorities because without their support, we cannot proceed, and it is hard to persuade them to give full education to women in their teens, so that we do not have to catch up with adult education, which will be needed for the next 20 years.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Minister give us the number and percentage of women participating in ODA training programmes in developing countries? Is she ready to encourage those Governments who are reluctant to nominate women to support a quota system so that 20 to 30 per cent. of awards from the ODA are allocated to women?

Mrs. Chalker: Like the hon. Lady, I want a higher proportion of women to come forward, and that is why I have been encouraging overseas Governments to nominate more women. Some 20 per cent. of the nominations for awards go to women, which is an improvement, and the number of women receiving training under the technical co-operation training programme is improving all the time.

I cannot give the hon. Lady the other figures without notice, as she well knows.

Aviation and Maritime Security

The following question stood upon the Paper:

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to improve maritime and aviation security.

3.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): We are determined to continue to take whatever measures are necessary to improve maritime and aviation security. The Aviation and Maritime Security Bill will strengthen existing aviation security powers and introduce new powers in relation to maritime security.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I report on the investigation into the incident at Heathrow involving Dr. Jim Swire. A senior investigator from the aviation security inspectorate, who is a former superintendant in the Metropolitan police, has interviewed all those involved in the incident. Although there are differences in the detail of the incident as recalled by Dr. Swire and his travelling companion and by British Airways staff, the investigator's conclusions are, first, that it is beyond reasonable doubt that British Airways were aware that Dr. Swire and his travelling companion were relatives of Lockerbie victims when they bought their tickets, when they checked in, when their hold baggage was searched and when they were on the flight; and, secondly, that there are grounds for believing that British Airways staff, knowing who Dr. Swire was, were insufficiently stringent in checking the radio.

I accept that, because British Airways staff knew exactly who Dr. Swire was, it was understandable that they should conclude that he was not planning to take an explosive device on board his flight. Nevertheless, I am asking my chief inspector of aviation security to write to all airports and airlines to emphasise that they must be especially careful in checking electrical items, irrespective of to whom they belong.

Mr. Colvin: I am sure that the House will join me in expressing sympathy—indeed, heartfelt condolences—to Dr. Swire for the tragic loss of his daughter in the Lockerbie disaster. Although he may have been a little unwise to go as public as he did, and in such a dramatic way, about the results of his escapade, he may have done the travelling public a service by identifying a weak link in the security chain.

Is my right hon. Friend happy that the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill, now before Parliament, will give him all the powers that he needs to ensure that individual airlines and companies involved in services at airports can be kept in check? Are those powers strong enough for my right hon. Friend to ensure that the necessary security procedures are followed? Does he acknowledge that there is no such thing as 100 per cent. security?

Mr. Parkinson: I wish to associate myself with my hon. Friend's remarks about Dr. Swire. I have met him on a number of occasions, and know that he is a genuine person who is desperately keen to ensure that aviation security is improved. The Bill will be useful when the House passes it, and I hope that there will be no more filibustering of the sort that we experienced 10 days ago. Not only will the Bill give me the power to give directions to a wider range of people; it will also give me the power to enforce them—including taking such action if necessary as, for example, closing airports, grounding airlines or putting directions on others who serve aircraft and airports. The Bill will be useful and it will provide the necessary additional powers.

I am afraid that my hon. Friend is right to say that it is virtually impossible to guarantee 100 per cent. security. However, that is no reason why we should not use every possible method open to us to reduce the risks.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does not the Secretary of State realise that his explanation is both singularly silly and singularly worrying? Is he seriously suggesting that we should accept that, if someone is known to the authorities, that means that they are safe? Could not a device be planted on such a person on just that premise? Does he accept—I am sure that he does, privately—that we are in no way reassured by what we have heard today and that we hope that there will be much more stringent action in future?

Mr. Parkinson: The right hon. Gentleman cannot have been following events, or he would not have made that remark. First, Dr. Swire admits that he was one of the percentage of passengers selected. He was taken, his luggage was searched, and the radio was found. Dr. Swire admitted that he packed his bag himself. Those are his words, not mine. The individual making the investigation realised who Dr. Swire was, and she is, as I said, open to criticism for not taking such stringent measures as she might otherwise have done. However, she saw the suitcase and the radio, and Dr. Swire confirmed that he had packed the case—so there was no question of Dr. Swire having been duped.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): As one of the Members of Parliament who represents part of Heathrow airport, I ask my right hon. Friend to clear up some confusion, for the sake of those of my constituents who undertake airport checks. Will he confirm that there was not a failure to detect a real bomb, and that Dr. Swire's action was not part of a genuine suicide attempt, for which staff are trained to be on the look-out? Will my right hon. Friend confirm also that the luggage in question was not unaccompanied, which is very different from the Lockerbie situation? Given that my constituents have an unenviable job to do, does my right hon. Friend agree that Opposition Members who seek to score cheap party points over such an issue should tell my constituents whether or not they should show humanity and compassion towards an individual who so tragically lost a daughter?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I will confirm that there was not a failure. The plane involved was one of a number selected at random each week for investigation. Ten per cent. of all hold baggage on those flights is checked. In this instance, the luggage was checked, questions were asked, and the radio was found. The young woman concerned, knowing the identity of the person carrying the radio, took the view that Dr. Swire was unlikely to want to blow up himself and the aeroplane. She is open to criticism, but she did not have the benefit of the hindsight that we have now. I thought that Opposition Members would accept that she tried to use her judgment and to be understanding in a difficult situation.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I speak as someone who, some years ago, travelled on an aircraft on which there was a live bomb. Is the Secretary of State

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

aware that several people have already served prison sentences for carrying dummy or hoax bombs into aerodromes and airports and on to aircraft? Should not there be a common standard of justice, to ensure an end to nonsense of the kind that was perpetrated at Heathrow last week, when intercontinental flights were delayed by as much as three hours?

Mr. Parkinson: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, enforcing the law is a matter for the police. The police questioned him about his future conduct, and, in the very special circumstances they decided not to take further action. However, I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that there must be a common standard, and that it must be enforced.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): Does my right hon. Friend agree that in air transport the primary risk does not come from passengers who carry their own luggage and whose identity is known to those who undertake searches of them, but that progress needs to be made with securing greater international co-operation in improving security generally?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. and learned Friend makes an important point. In the main, the real danger does not come from accompanied baggage, when the person carrying the bomb travels on the plane, but from attempts to put bombs on planes on which the persons planting them do not intend to travel. I agree with my hon. and learned Friend that it is vital to improve international co-operation. That is why my predecessor and the American Secretary of Transportation took the initiative after Lockerbie of calling on the International Civil Aviation Organisation to draw up much tighter international standards. We continue to work for improved standards in international forums.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that it would be easier for us to accept the explanation that Doctor Swire was recognised if there had not been a fairly lengthy hiatus between his announcement that he had tried to put a fake bomb on board and British Airways explanation that he had been recognised? Even if one accepts that statement at face value, is the Secretary of State not aware that he raises doubts in my mind when he says that the radio was discovered by the random checking of baggage? Why was the radio not picked up by the X-ray machine when the hand baggage went through? If he will forgive me for raising the matter, what action is he taking about an Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science who disgracefully said that a hoax bomb was in his red box?

Mr. Parkinson: May I say to the hon. Gentleman, who I know studies these matters carefully, that this was not hand baggage. It was hold baggage. It was detected as part of the 10 per cent. of hold baggage that is searched on selected aircraft.

As for the hon. Gentleman's second point, my hon. Friend has already made it clear that he regrets the incident. I ought to point out that the same rules were applied in his case as would be applied in everyone else's case. When he made his foolish remark about his case being full of bombs, the supervisor was immediately called. He was taken to a private part of the examination area and asked to repeat the remark. He did not do so. He retracted it. Had my hon. Friend repeated the remark, the police would have been informed and he would have been interviewed by them.

Last year, there were more than 700 of these incidents at Heathrow and Gatwick alone, when jokesters—members of the public—made such claims once but withdrew them when pressed. My point is that the rules that apply to my hon. Friend apply to all those who travel and who make that sort of foolish remark.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Is not the ludicrous difficulty that we face that, although it may be possible to test the degree of risk in particular circumstances in a complex operation, as any modern airport is, one has to remember that there is a finite limit to the tolerance of the public when it comes to the delays and inconvenience to which they are prepared to be subjected regularly, if we are to squeeze out the last possible risks?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, my hon. Friend is right. Our objective is 100 per cent. screening of all hold baggage. We have written to all airlines and to BAA asking them to come forward with their plans for reaching that target. We recognise that our airports were not designed for this level of search and that there are substantial logistical problems. However, that is the Government's declared aim and we intend to pursue it.

It was reported in the press when I wrote to the airlines that some of them were thinking of not co-operating. The point about the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill is that they will not have a choice about not co-operating; directions will be issued and they will be capable of being enforced. We are working towards 100 per cent. screening of hold baggage, but it will take some time.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that, during the last 10 years, those who use Heathrow airport every week—as many hon. Members certainly do—find that delays of up to 30 minutes are not uncommon when one is being screened for security? In those circumstances, the weaknesses and deficiencies of attempting to achieve 100 per cent. security become obvious. Tempers become frayed and people grow very agitated when they realise that they may miss their flight.

Mr. Parkinson: I recognise that there is always a conflict between getting an aeroplane away on time and getting it away safely. People become irritated and think that the security checks are unnecessary until there is an incident, at which point they appreciate the importance of security checks.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I am still worried about airport security. Will the Minister now state to what extent the security forces are protected by being authorised to carry arms? Are they armed at present or are they to be armed following the passage of the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill, which we hope will be enacted next time?

Mr. Parkinson: I do not want to go into too much detail about our security arrangements, because that is a very good way of telling people who might be tempted to get around them what they face. There are armed police on duty at Heathrow and, as the hon. Gentleman knows,

exercises are staged from time to time, with a full alert and fully armed soldiers. Our security arrangements do include the provision of armed security.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In his discussions about attempting to reach the 100 per cent. target for security, has the Secretary of State discussed with the various airlines and the British Airports Authority the need for funding? In trying to reach that target, it will be essential to increase the number of personnel who work at our airports and the number of machines that are used to X-ray baggage.

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, and one of the difficulties, especially in the south-east, is the recruiting and training of suitable staff. Before someone can be accepted for a security job, his employment records, going back over many years, have to be checked. In an area where there is almost full employment, people are not prepared to be subjected to that search if they can obtain another job. The difficulty lies in recruiting people and keeping them; the problem lies not in a shortage of funds but in getting the right number of staff. As the hon. Lady knows, from time to time people have to be flown from less busy airports to help out at Heathrow in peak periods.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, 18 days ago, four hon. Members flew from London to Leningrad via Frankfurt? While the hold baggage was checked right through to Leningrad, there were no transit facilities for passengers at Frankfurt, as a consequence of which the passengers had to leave and re-enter going through all the customs and ticketing procedures. That gives members of the public an opportunity to leave their hold baggage to go right through and then to leave the airport entirely. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a thoroughly dangerous procedure at Frankfurt? Can he confirm that the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill will ensure that, if anything like that happened in the United Kingdom, he could stop it immediately?

Mr. Parkinson: One of the main aims of the new arrangements post-Lockerbie is to separate incoming and outgoing passengers and transit passengers. We recognise that that is important, as opportunities could arise for exchanging luggage bombs and weapons. We are therefore concentrating on this separation of incoming and outgoing passengers at every airport. We think that that is a major step in the right direction.

My hon. Friend referred to transit baggage. As he probably knows, any transit baggage going through Heathrow on American airlines is automatically the subject of examination even though it goes straight into the hold.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Does the Secretary of State accept that we are fed up with continually being assured by Conservative Secretaries of State for Transport that our airport security is adequate, when time and time again its inadequacy is exposed by the press and others, such as Dr. Swire? Is he aware that, by limiting the inquiry into Dr. Swire's action and by blaming the operator staff, he is behaving in a manner that is typical of his Department, which is always shifting the blame? That is in sharp contrast to the Americans' full investigation into their Government authority's role in security matters—an approach that has been resisted by the Department. Is not the real lesson of this case that we require a full inspection of luggage, which is expensive and which takes time, but for which we called in our amendment—which the Government resisted—to the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill?

May I impress on the Secretary of State the fact that the relatives of those killed in the Lockerbie and Marchioness tragedies welcome the Department's announcement today of an inquiry into a possible injustice arising out of the Titanic affair 73 years ago but that they would like a full, open, independent inquiry into more recent tragedies, which the Department of Transport is avoiding?

Mr. Parkinson: We have just heard a typical rant from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). He is always getting fed up about something, while other honest people, like the security staff at Heathrow, have the daily business of examining the luggage of hundreds of thousands of people. They do not sit there like him, hoping that something will go wrong so that they can criticise. They get on with the business of trying to make our aviation more secure.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's remark about the presidential commission and full inspection of luggage, Lockerbie is at the moment the subject of a huge criminal investigation including the investigation of security arrangements at Heathrow. It is also the subject of an air accident investigation branch inquiry, and it will be the subject of a fatal accident inquiry. I announced last week that the Government exceptionally are going to fund legal representation for the relatives of those who died in that dreadful accident.

I want finally to deal with the hon. Gentleman's feeble joke about the Titanic.

Mr. Prescott: It was no joke.

Mr. Parkinson: It was made to a member of my staff by Dr. Swire at about 1 pm today. There will be a marine accident investigation branch investigation about the Titanic. That will not be a huge full public inquiry; it will involve just the marine accident investigation branch. Exactly the same kind of investigation is already being conducted into Lockerbie by the air accident investigation branch. The hon. Gentleman's point was a total and utter non-point.

So as far as the Department is concerned, I want to repeat what I said earlier—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is really interested in aviation security, perhaps he should stop his noisy colleagues from filibustering on that vital Bill and perhaps we could get it through Parliament and help make Britain's airports safer.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With permission, I will put together the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Redundancy (Merchant Seamen Exclusion) Order 1973 (Revocation) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Sea Fish Industry Authority (Levy Powers) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the School Boards (Financial Information) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1277) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

[Mr. Speaker]

That the Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1020) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Opposition Day

[18TH ALLOTTED DAY, FIRST PART]

Environmental Policy

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the debate on environmental policy in the name of Plaid Cymru. I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.57 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the current levels of pollution in the Irish Sea, particularly the dumping of industrial waste and sewage sludge, and the discharge of untreated sewage, and is not satisfied with current measures to tackle the problem; notes the decision of the European Court of Justice to prosecute the United Kingdom Government for failure to comply with European Community Directives on the quality of bathing water; and calls on the Government to commission an independent survey into the effects of pollution in the Irish Sea and to act on its findings without delay.

As the House will be aware, the gift of these minority party debates is organised through our colleagues in the Ulster Unionist party. As hon. Members of that party sit behind me in the Chamber, I begin by thanking them, as members of the senior minority party in the House for helping to facilitate this debate.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): On a subject in which we have a common interest.

Dr. Thomas: Indeed—I want to explain why we selected environmental policy as the topic for the debate.

We believe that concern about the environment is the major issue facing the Government and the House. The House will notice that our motion concentrates on marine pollution in the Irish sea. We intend to ask for a response from the Welsh Office and from the Government about that tonight. We will be pushing our motion to a Division because of our concern about the inadequate response so far from the Government on that issue.

I might go so far as to suggest that the Government of the Isle of Man have shown greater initiative on that issue than the Northern Ireland Office, the Government of the Republic of Ireland, the Welsh Office, the Department of the Environment or the Scottish Office. That should get me into sufficient trouble with all the Departments and parties in the House.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland scientists are excellent people, and their work is very good.

Dr. Thomas: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for defending the integrity of the Scottish Office. I should not want to impugn it. The scientists have been very good. Marine scientists have provided us with excellent advice on the issue. We need intergovernmental action. The hon. Gentleman will agree that this is an ideal subject on which to convene an intergovernmental conference similar to the one on the North sea. It would provide a forum not only for scientific opinion to be presented on the extent of chemical, sewage and radioactive pollution of the North sea but to initiate joint action.

Marine pollution is a sensitive issue in terms of the marine ecosystem. It clearly relates to food safety and the fishing industry and to the sensitive issue of bathing safety and the health of swimmers and tourists on Welsh beaches. That has clear implications for Ireland, Wales and the English coastline because of our emphasis on tourism and marine recreation. Members of Parliament, scientists and others who highlight marine pollution and dirty beaches are often accused of making political points that can appear negative in terms of marketing our tourist industry. I put that matter straight once and for all. We are deeply distressed about the level of pollution in the Irish sea and other coastal waters around Wales, and we shall not cease to draw attention to the issue as long as there is clear scientific evidence that such pollution exists and that it creates a potential risk to health.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is not it a matter of shame that only one bay in Wales, Pembrey, has merited a European Community blue flag?

Dr. Thomas: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I had the misfortune to officiate at the opening ceremony of a sewage outfall in my constituency last year. At that ceremony, I was faithfully promised by the water authority, now Wales Water—Dwr Cymru—that, within a year at the most, a blue flag would be flying over that beach. I have not yet seen it. I emphasise that point because there is a clear obligation on the Government to clean up marine pollution, as it affects the tourist industry. Indeed, there are international obligations on governments that are responsible for maritime pollution. We look not only to the Government but to statutory undertakings such as the National Rivers Authority for their assessment of the pollution in our estuaries and rivers, which lead into the seas and cause maritime pollution. In that context, we should look to the Welsh Office, in particular, to take a firmer lead on maritime pollution and other related pollution issues in Wales.

Maritime pollution is a good example, because all the rubbish that we produce, dispose of and dump ends up in the sea. I refer not only to the rubbish that we produce but to the rubbish that other maritime countries produce. I am not suggesting for one moment that the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) is more susceptible because it is an island, but my hon. Friend feels strongly about the issue. He hopes to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, to concentrate further on his proposals for cleaning up the Irish sea. Maritime pollution provides us with a case study of all the environmental problems that we face in Wales. I am concerned that we are not doing our bit to help to prevent the major international ecological disasters that now face us.

The Welsh Office has not done its bit in terms of environmental policy. The Welsh Office has been with us for 25 years—we often imagine where we might be without it—yet it has not had a Minister responsible for the environment who would give his or her time and energies completely to that issue. Indeed, at official level, the Department does not have a co-ordinating mechanism to bring together all its responsibilities for the Welsh environment. I invite the Secretary of State, in his first major public response to us in the House, to acknowledge that he is the Secretary of State for the Welsh environment and that, along with his hon. Friends the Members for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts), and for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), he will take seriously his responsibilities for the Welsh environment. I hope that the Department will produce an initiative on environmental policy that will co-ordinate all the activities of the Welsh Office. The Secretary of State for Wales must see himself as the guardian of the Welsh environment in all its aspects.

I should like the Welsh Office not merely to contribute to the general debate on environmental issues, which is conducted at the level——

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): On the point about the responsibilities of the Welsh Office for the environment, and especially for the aquatic and coastal environment, does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a disgrace that the Department of the Environment and the Crown Estates Commissioners have sanctioned the use of dredgers off the Welsh coast, which is causing the beaches from Southern Down to Sker Point in my constituency to be denuded of sand, leaving nothing but mud heaps?

Dr. Thomas: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) for raising that issue, which shows yet again the lack of co-ordination between Government Departments on activities that affect the marine environment.

I hope that this debate will establish that the Secretary of State is taking overall responsibility for this matter. It is not enough for the Department to contribute to the current process of producing a White Paper for the Government as a whole; I expect to see the Welsh Office produce its own equivalent, as happens in other areas of policy, such as education, social policy and—dare I say it—for the health service. There is a Welsh Office face in all those spheres—although it is not always an acceptable face—but the same is not true for the environment. That Welsh Office face would enable those who are concerned, such as the statutory bodies, the local authorities and those involved in the strong environmental movement in Wales to make their representations directly to the Welsh Office and to ensure that the Department is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities.

After all, the Welsh Office is the Department of the Environment for Wales. It has most, but not all, of the relevant functions of the Department of the Environment. However, it is also the Department which is responsible for the national parks. At the moment, the Countryside Commission is undertaking a major review of the national parks. Although the initial report will be made to the Countryside Commission, it is important that the Welsh Office should be seen as the Department that takes any decisions that affect the structure of the national parks in Wales.

The Welsh Office is also the Department responsible for the activities of local government. Its role is therefore to give a lead to local government in Wales through its policies on the environment. I am thinking especially of waste disposal in local areas, the separation of waste and the availability of waste for recycling. The Welsh Office should be giving a lead to the local authorities and providing small-scale funding to encourage projects that will enable local authorities to tackle such responsibilities in their localities.

More than that, however, the Welsh Office should be giving a much higher priority to environmental policy in its own research budget. Much excellent environmental

[Dr. Thomas]

research is already carried out in Wales. Happily, a great deal of it is done at my University college of North Wales at Bangor. I welcome the announcement last week by the Minister of State that the new central administration of the Countryside Council for Wales will be located at Bangor in the offices of the Nature Conservancy Council. There was great demand to locate the offices in other parts of Wales. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) would have loved to have it at Aberystwyth. I can tell him that the town council in Dolgellau wanted it.

Mr. Anderson: Bala wanted it, too.

Dr. Thomas: I should not speak about Bala, although it is relevant to the debate on the aquatic environment because it has the largest inland lake in Wales. I must get on with my speech.

I welcome the announcement that the centre will be at Bangor. It will enable the centre to work alongside the excellent unit at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology which recently produced a document on pollution in Wales for those of us who attended its official re-launch earlier this year. Research has been carried out into acidification, deposition of nitrogen and other aspects of environmental pollution. Those studies represent a high quality of international research in Wales which is relevant to Wales and beyond Wales.

The scientists who work at the unit at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology and other experts on environmental policy with whom I have spoken emphasise that they are always short of funding. They often operate on short-term contracts. Where they have longer-term contracts, funding is sometimes inadequate to maintain existing databases. In environmental science where short-term projects produce interesting results it is important to maintain the database perhaps for 10 years. That is the time scale on which interesting, relevant scientific results may appear.

I ask the Secretary of State specifically to examine the research budget of his Department and its priorities. He should ask himself whether the minuscule proportion of his Department's budget which is spent on research is adequate. He knows the figures, because he and his colleagues have answered parliamentary questions on the matter recently. About 1 or 2 per cent. of the Department's budget is spent on research. For a Department which spends £4 billion of public money in Wales, clearly that is not enough. The Department cannot simply say that the Department of the Environment already funds research in Bangor. That is true and we are grateful for it. The Scottish Office has funded other aspects of hill farming in Wales and we welcome that. But as the lead territorial Department, the Welsh Office should increase its research budget.

In the present context of high priority for environmental issues, a doubling of the Welsh Office budget for research on the environment is the least that we can expect in response to the debate. I know that the Secretary of State is about to respond to me, and I am sure that he will take that suggestion on board.

It is important not only to examine the Welsh Office programme of research but to consider how the research that we undertake in Wales can be valuable in understanding the international implications of environmental changes. The nature of the country, its geology and topography makes Wales an ideal area in which to study climatic and environmental changes.

The Secretary of State will be aware that, within a radius of 30 or 40 miles of the new office of the Countryside Council for Wales, there are major sites of special scientific interest which include marine sites and sites where alpine ecology can be studied, such as Snowdonia and other upland areas. Within Wales it is possible to study the impact on the Welsh environment of overall climatic changes. For that reason, it is important that Wales should make a direct contribution to international research.

It is a matter not just of contributing to environmental research and assessing our environment, but of action research—in other words, of changing the form of activity which is polluting. I want to consider several sources of pollution. In recent years the farming industry in Wales gradually but continually has been reducing its fertilisers to prevent pollution. Only last week, at the royal show at Stoneleigh, we were discussing the substantial shortfall inorganic produce from the farming industry to supermarkets and the food industry.

Mr. Anderson: Organic food is too expensive.

Dr. Thomas: It is true that there is a 15 per cent. mark-up on premium quality organic Welsh lamb. If the hon. Gentleman were to taste it more often, he would understand why. It is tastier than the lamb that I suspect he usually eats.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): What if my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) is a vegetarian?

Dr. Thomas: The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) is a vegetarian.

Dr. Howells: I did not say that I was a vegetarian.

Dr. Thomas: Let me get on with my speech.

There is an opportunity for a substantial switch to organic farming in the hills in Wales. There is an opening in the market. The Minister has an opportunity to improve the perceived quality of Welsh products. After all, much of our farmland is grassland with a low level of fertiliser input, so the step to a greener farming industry in Wales is only a small one. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North will have something to say about that if he has the chance to speak. We have an opportunity to reduce soil pollution from nitrogen fertiliser at the same time as developing quality products from our agriculture industry.

All our manufacturing and extracting industries, particularly quarrying and mining, have a strong negative impact on the environment. Wales has put up with industrial processes which have created employment and unique communities—certainly in mining and quarrying—but which have also created environmental hazards and caused disasters with a cost to human life and young lives. Wales has a legacy of environmentally damaging industries in our economy.

I say advisedly to Welsh Office Ministers and the House that when in future we look for inward investment in Wales we must ensure that we expect standards of environmental cleanliness as high as those that would be

expected elsewhere. The old argument that it is tolerable to place environmentally unfriendly activities, such as nuclear activities, in remote areas or chemical reprocessing in not-so-remote areas because of the levels of employment and unemployment has gone. We must ensure that we have a green environment which is resource balanced and economically active, based on the ability of the environment to attract industries which are themselves environmentally friendly.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is just such an urgent case before us now? If the Secretary of State for Wales looks north from his window in the great fortress of the Welsh Office, he will see the first hills of Wales at Taffs Well. There is a historic site of special scientific interest which at this moment is under threat from quarrying. That is repeated right through Wales. I hope that the Secretary of State will take that matter seriously when it is put before him, because it is a precious area of scientific interest.

Dr. Thomas: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I may have visited that place during a recent by-election in which he was involved. I am aware of the impact of opencast quarrying because there is a lot of opencast slate mining in my constituency. I appreciate the impact that it can have not just on the immediate level of waste disposal, but on the landscape's overall shape.

Where there are sites of special scientific interest or environmental destruction caused by noise pollution to communities and localities, the Secretary of State, as planning Minister, must consider the issues carefully. I know that the Secretary of State may tend to say, as his colleagues do on planning matters, that he does not want to talk about specific cases because he has to determine individual cases. However, surely he and his team are determining such individual cases in the context of environmental policy. Our frequent complaint is that we do not hear what that policy or strategy is. Where there is a conflict of interests or policy objectives between environmental conservation—whether in national parks or on the borders of urban areas——

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Or Cardiff bay.

Dr. Thomas: —or in Cardiff bay, as the hon. Gentleman says—wherever there are major individual projects and conflicts involving environmental policies, the Department's duty in that case is—if I may coin a phrase —to come clean and spell out clearly to the public its thinking in such matters. If there is a conflict of interest between the various duties of the Secretary of State and his Ministers according to which hats they are wearing, it is better that it should be known and debated in a public forum, rather than hidden behind closed doors in a castle at Cathays park.

We have to consider not only the global effect on our Welsh environment, the contributions that we can make and the sensitivity of the marine environment, but the way in which the Welsh countryside is affected by changes in planning policies. This is an important opportunity for the Secretary of State to show himself to be the greenest Secretary of State there has ever been. I mean Green with a big "G", not a small "g". We know that he is not green in other senses, because he has had a hard training in other Departments. We also know that he has lived for part of his career in a Welsh environment and enjoyed visiting it. I know that he has a love of the Welsh landscape. But we want to see the practical consequences of that and hear him declare himself a green Minister in planning terms.

We need to protect the integrity of our national parks, environmentally sensitive areas, sites of scientific interest and designated areas and we need a coherent countryside planning policy. The areas represented by many of my hon. Friends present today include valley communities and the fringes of urban industrial south Wales, as it used to be called, and industrial north-east Wales. In those areas we can see the result of over-development, whether commercial or housing, that is out of character with the landscape and would not be permitted in a national park, where there are strict guidelines controlling the appearance of properties and estates.

We need to adopt the same kind of sensitive approach everywhere in the countryside. We might spend a lot of public money trying to re-create an attractive atmosphere in the inner cities, such as the marine districts of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, attempting to renovate districts with old industrial heritages and make them into conservation areas, conserving old buildings or landscaping away the effects of mining and quarrying, but it does not make much sense if we are destroying our landscape and heritage at the same time because of new development. We need consistency of approach by the Department.

We need to set Welsh environmental issues in the global context of the threat to the ecosphere, with all its moral, ethical and—for the benefit of the hon. Member for Swansea, East—theological implications. We need to adopt a global approach when scrutinising the micro-environment in Wales—and we need coherence in policy. We must assess the implications for our environment of all policy decisions, and we look to the Secretary of State for Wales, as the new green Minister, to respond to all our points.

4.25 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the major programme of investment to be undertaken by the privatised water companies to improve the quality of water and the comprehensive measures outlined in the Environmental Protection Bill; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the positive lead it is giving in areas of environmental concern; and looks forward to the publication of the Government's White Paper on the Environment later this year.'.

I certainly regard environmental policy as my responsibility as Secretary of State, assisted by the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State. Environmental policy is vital. The environment is one of the most important policy areas, and my objective is and will remain to improve the quality of life in Wales, with particular reference to the environment.

We certainly inherit problems from the past, but, equally, we are trustees for the future. Although we may be able to point to actions in bygone years that have caused the situation today, that is no excuse and no alibi for not ensuring that we take the most urgent and positive action to overcome the problems of our inheritance—so that we can hand over a heritage of an improved quality of life.

I must also respond to what the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) said about farming. Agriculture is vital to the future of Wales, and a strong and healthy agriculture is crucial to the quality of

[Mr. David Hunt]

life there. We must ensure an improvement in that quality of life so that we have an even better environment in which to work and live.

As we draw together the policies for the 1990s, towards the year 2000 and beyond, I should have thought that there would be almost unanimous agreement in the House that the environment is one of the key areas on which we must make our policies relevant to the needs of today and to those of future generations.

Today's debate could be seen as part of the long-running campaign designed to draw attention to the perceived problems of the Irish sea, but despite the wording of the motion the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy drew back from such a confined analysis, and I welcome the fact that he widened the debate; such was the purpose of our amendment. I readily accept that we have pushed him in the right direction, and I welcome the way in which he responded.

When dealing with the environment no single section of society and no single political party has a prerogative; we are dealing with a vital component in the thinking of us all. Environmental issues matter not only because they have an impact on us but because whatever we decide will have a major impact on future generations, too. In that sense we are the stewards of the future and must exercise our stewardship judiciously and with care and prudence. In every possible sense we must take account of the importance of environmental issues. We must be aware of what we are doing and the effects, and we must consider all the evidence before deciding how best to proceed. We must appreciate the damage that can flow from certain policies because such damage is often long-standing. Some problems can be corrected only at enormous cost and with great difficulty. The Government are conscious of the need to care for and protect the environment and of the need to devise policies to ensure that what we value today is available to future generations.

Mr. Dalyell: I am grateful for the way in which the motion is worded, which shows that this is a United Kingdom debate. What do the Government propose to do about new modern trawlers that hoover—there is no other word for it—the sea bed, and especially the beds of the Irish sea and the Minches? Those trawlers drag dumped material to where it should not be, as ICI found in a recent explosives case. The actions of such trawlers lead to the destruction of many breeding grounds of fish and creatures on the sea bed. Serious damage is being caused. The problem has grown in the past four or five years. I am not attacking any Department, because the problem is not of the Government's making, but what do they propose to do about it?

Mr. Hunt: The problem goes back much more than four or five years. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will be aware of the positive approach adopted by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the way in which he has raised such matters in the European Community. I do not want to go into great detail about those discussions, but if the hon. Gentleman has been present for debates and questions about fisheries, he will know that we are expressing serious concern about the need to ensure that not only are quotas strictly observed but that the breeding grounds are protected for future generations. I am pleased at the way in which the hon. Gentleman approached his question and I reassure him about the Government's intentions as expressed in the robust language of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Many of the policies to which the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy referred are being implemented and will continue to be implemented to meet the concerns that have been expressed. Caring for the environment requires constant assessment of the relative costs of what is proposed and the benefits that will follow. The environmentally preferable solution is often the most costly. We must be sure that we are prepared to meet such costs, and we must be mindful of their extent in areas which I shall discuss later.

Judgments must be made between environmental costs and environmental benefits. For example, we hear much about the cost of dumping sewage at sea, but little about the disbenefits of alternative methods of disposal. We must look at the whole picture. We have already taken some steps, but economic growth is needed to meet the cost of improving the environment, and such growth often causes other environmental problems.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The Secretary of State refers to the disbenefits of certain matters. If the long sea outfall is long enough for two tides, will not that sometimes be preferable to trying to absorb the chemical effluent from a sewage disposal plant?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend has hit on an important point. As I said earlier, experts believe that long sea outfalls can—if judiciously managed—be an effective means of disposal. A report by Consultants in Environmental Sciences has examined the assessment.

Often, we must examine the environmental consequences of the alternative means of disposal. I am not aware of an urgent wish on the part of people living in certain areas to have a sewage disposal improvement plant adjoining their houses, or of any who are urging that we should allow effluent from sewage disposal plants to be injected into the sea near where they live. We must always ensure that we examine the total picture before reaching decisions about part of it, especially when that part has given rise to a pressure point from a section of public opinion.

Mr. Anderson: Is not that debate already closed as the result of pressure from the European Community? Did not the Government announce on 27 June that any long sea outfalls yet to be put into operation must include a treatment plant? As I understand it, no timetable has yet been announced in respect of Welsh areas such as Swansea bay. When will the Minister be able to announce that timetable, which is the subject of considerable concern in a number of Welsh coastal areas?

Mr. Hunt: I shall respond in more detail to the hon. Member's point in a moment.

In working out any timetable, we must be aware of the costs, and also the relevance of the alternative means of dealing with the sewage. The sewage will not go away; we must find a better method of dealing with it. We must bear it in mind that alternative means of disposal can carry with them equally problematic difficulties for the environment. We must think through the consequences before embarking on the tight timetable that certain sections of public opinion are urging us to adopt.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am sure that the Secretary of State will accept—given where his constituency lies—that the fact that a quarter of all the sewage sludge that is dispersed into the waters around these islands is dispersed by the North West water authority into Liverpool bay can cause an enormous localised problem. Given that the Irish sea turns over its water only about twice a year—a very low turnover—that may not be the most appropriate way of disposing of sewage in that location.

Mr. Hunt: I am well aware of the consequences of over-disposals into an area that does not have the necessary turnover of fresh water, although I do not accept the double mechanism to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I have not seen that statistic verified, but if it is correct it is equally relevant to the problem that we are discussing.

We must be aware of the environmental impact of alternative methods of disposal when we embark on assessing the costs and benefits. As I said, the problem is that we need the economic growth to pay for improvements in the environment. The Government must provide the means for securing economic growth, while developing environmental policies to ensure that what we have and value remains for succeeding generations. Equally—as our environment is affected not only by what we do but by what other countries do—we must do our best to promote sensible environmental policies, not just in this country but in the wider world.

I hope that it is accepted in the House, because I believe that it is widely accepted outside, that the Government have done a tremendous amount to promote and develop environmental policies. Let us take one or two examples. In 1974, a Conservative Government introduced the Control of Pollution Act, but there was a long wait until, under another Conservative Government in 1983, the benefits of that Act were put into operation. Last year, the Government established the National Rivers Authority, which was generally acclaimed as an effective way to improve the water environment. This year, we have in the throes of the parliamentary process the Environmental Protection Bill, which will provide us with the basic framework for our pollution control well into the next century.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not hesitate to ask this question as the university of Cardiff, with Professor Michael Claridge, who is president of the Linnean Society, and Professor Pritchard, has one of the most distinguished schools in this subject in Europe. The professors made the strongest representations about the natural history museum and the consequences of the changes there for research into all these matters. Will the Welsh Office use its influence to help those who are trying to help the museum to get proper funding for its worldwide responsibilities?

Mr. Hunt: I shall let the hon. Gentleman have a detailed answer to that point, but the policy is that the Welsh Office does not fund museums and galleries, with the one specific exception of the national museum. We shall certainly do our best to help and encourage funding for the museums and galleries in Wales.

Not only has this Conservative Government introduced these Bills and developed major environmental policies, but we have produced the economic climate that allows us to make the investment necessary to implement the Bills when enacted.

Water pollution problems are not new. They are not the result of the policies of, or of any recent activity or inactivity by, the Government. Nor did they suddenly appear when water pics were created. Water quality problems result, in some cases, from industrial and agricultural policies that go back for decades and from a lack of investment by water authorities in relatively unglamorous sectors such as sewage treatment.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): As a former member of a water authority, I do not feel that we should take all the blame for that, because the previous Labour Government slashed half the investment programme of water authorities. We should have happily spent the money if the Labour Government had given it to us.

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful for that intervention. If the last Labour Government had a record, it was in the size of the cuts imposed on water authorities. I agree that there were serious economic problems, and the IMF had been asked to come in and bale out the Labour Government, so there are understandable reasons why the investment programme was cut. However, it produced the serious problems with which we are now dealing.

It has been common practice in the United Kingdom and the rest of the world to discharge sewage effluent into the sea with only the most preliminary treatment to remove litter, rags and large solid particles, because it had been taken for granted that the size of the sea and the dilution that it provides, and the effect of the sun and the waves, would be sufficient to allow it to continue. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) that, in many cases, it is.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Is not one of the fundamental difficulties the fact that, when the European Community introduced the bathing waters directive in 1976, the Department of the Environment deliberately chose to interpret "bathing beach" in such a way that not a single bathing beach in Wales fell under the definition? As a consequence, the Government were able considerably to delay the implementation of the directive.

Mr. Hunt: I did not wish to be drawn by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) into criticism of the last Labour Government, and equally I should not be drawn into criticism of them by the hon. Member, although it may be attractive to do so to prove my point. The 1976 bathing waters directive was not observed by the previous Labour Government. I do not want to get drawn into the past, because I have a lot to say about what we are doing now, and what we propose to do in the future. I am responding to an intervention. I did not introduce this lengthy look into the past.

Water pollution problems result from practices that have been going on for a considerable time. I remember reading the report, published by the Consultants in Environmental Sciences, of a study for the Department of the Environment of large domestic sewage discharging into coastal waters via a properly designed long sea outfall. It observed little environmental impact. Beyond 50 to 100 m from the point of discharge, the survey failed to detect measurable impacts. Outside the immediate mixing

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zone, the study said that it would be difficult to detect differences in sea water quality resulting from discharges of treated effluent, or screened raw sewage.

The point is that this Government have tackled the problems of water pollution. The Water Act 1989, with the consequential establishment of the National Rivers Authority, and our recent policy announcements are the pivots of our policies on water pollution and show clearly our commitment to resolving the problems. We are determined that the water environment should be improved by all practical steps and in the shortest time scale commensurate with the available technology and resources.

Mr. Holt: As my hon. Friend will know, the Select Committee on the Environment recently carried out a detailed examination of long sea outfall, and its report will be published next week. I cannot say what is in the report, but I can hint that the long sea outfall will be given a fairly clean bill of health.

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful, and I look forward to reading the report.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy spoke about quality. The last national survey took place in 1985 and these are the latest figures that I have been able to find. They show that river quality in England and Wales is such that 94 per cent. of Welsh rivers were in classes 1 or 2, and 83 per cent. were in class 1. Some 98 per cent. of estuarial waters in Wales were in those categories. A report published by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea said that, apart from Liverpool bay, where the mercury levels were close to the European Commission limit, although they are now declining, the problems of the Irish sea are essentially minor and short-lived.

The Government are also doing more about river quality. One aim of the National Rivers Authority is to achieve a continuing improvement in the quality of rivers. Good quality river water is essential for environmental improvement, and polluted rivers are one of the main sources of sea pollution. This year, the authority is conducting a survey of river quality in England and Wales. When it is published, it will form the basis on which I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will set river quality objectives. Those objectives will be the parameters within which NRA policies and decisions on matters such as discharge consents and abstraction licences will be founded.

With regard to Wales, the advisory committee that I established under section 3 of the Water Act 1989—and which will advise me on NRA matters—will be meeting shortly. It will closely study NRA policies and will give me the benefit of its advice on how best I can ensure that the NRA implements its policies in Wales. I shall certainly give the NRA every possible encouragement to take positive action to secure improvements in water quality in the Principality.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: I am glad that the Secretary of State is setting improved standards. Will he ensure that the NRA has a better record for prosecutions, especially for industrial pollution, than did the former water authorities, as shown in the statistics recently produced by the Department of the Environment? Some water authorities did not initiate a single prosecution when rivers were polluted in 1988.

Mr. Hunt: Although I did not attend all the debates, I should have thought that it would have been made clear that one of the main reasons why it was thought right to introduce changes was the lack of positive prosecution. We separated the different responsibilities so that there could be an effective prosecution service. One of the first prosecutions by the NRA was for the Shell spillage last year into the River Mersey. The NRA acted with commendable speed and considerable effect in that case. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has rightly highlighted one of the main reasons why the Government thought it right to introduce that legislation.

The 1985 survey gave a number of reasons why river quality was not as good as it should be. The primary reasons were sewage effluent and agricultural pollution. That is why, in the next 10 years, sewerage undertakers in England and Wales will be spending £12 billion on sewerage services, including sewage treatment works and sea outfalls. Dwr Cymru will be investing £400 million during the next five years, including £140 million on sewage treatment works, and a further £300 million in the following five years. Work on some of the worst plants will be completed by March 1992 and will have an immediate impact on the rivers into which the works discharge.

I have been concerned about the overall increase during recent years in the number of agricultural pollution incidents. In 1988 there were more than 4,000 reported incidents of pollution by agriculturalists, almost all from silage or slurry liquor. Both are far more effective than raw sewage in damaging the aquatic environment. Last year, the number of incidents fell by 30 per cent., which appears to be a good record, but which I regret was more likely to be caused by the exceptional summer than by good housekeeping. Later this year we shall introduce regulations setting minimum standards for the construction of silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil stores and given the NRA the power to require improvements to existing structures. That will go a long way towards reducing the devastating effect of such pollution.

The Government have also taken a number of policy initiatives that will have a direct impact on the sea. The North sea conference agreements, in which we played a leading role, are generally welcome and the Government have scrupulously abided by them. Not only that, but we took the decision to extend the agreement for the North sea to all other seas round the United Kingdom, including the Irish sea. All the agreements reached in the North sea conference have been applied to the Irish sea. That was clearly set out in the guidance note on the second North sea conference in 1988, which said:

> "In the Government's view . . . other seas around the kingdom require an equal degree of environmental safeguarding and the changes of policy implied by the declaration will in general be applied consistently throughout the United Kingdom."

That we have now done.

Particular policy agreements reached in the second North sea conference include, first, that the dumping of polluting material should be ended at the earliest practical date; secondly, that as from 1 January 1989 no materials should be dumped unless there are no practical alternatives on land and it can be shown that the materials pose no risk to the marine environment; thirdly, that sea

disposal for sewage sludge be retained as an option, but that urgent action be taken to reduce the concentrations of certain dangerous contaminants and to ensure that the quality of such contaminants disposed of should not increase above 1987 levels; fourthly, that marine incineration be substantially reduced by not less than 65 per cent. by 1 January 1991; and, fifthly, that the practice be phased out by 31 December 1994. We have abided by the North sea agreement.

On 22 February, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced that industrial wastes were not to be dumped at sea after the end of 1992. The 1987 agreement accepted that wastes such as those licensed by the United Kingdom could continue to be dumped at sea, provided that they did not harm the sea and that there was no practical means of land-based disposal. Nevertheless, we have gone further and, with the co-operation of the companies concerned, we will end dumping of all such industrial waste.

Mr. John D. Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman referred to industrial waste being dumped at sea. Does that include waste from Sellafield?

Mr. Hunt: It does not. Industrial waste is carefully defined. I used that definition, and it was accepted, in the conference at which that was decided.

On 5 March, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced that by the end of 1988 the United Kingdom would end the dumping of sewage sludge at sea. At present, some 70 per cent. of sewage sludge is disposed of on land. We have continued to encourage sewerage undertakers to develop land-based disposal methods for the remainder of the sludge. As a result of significant advances in incineration techniques, we decided that the disposal of sewage sludge to sea should end. The time lag is required because of the substantial programme of work and capital investment required to implement alternative disposal methods, including obtaining planning permission.

On the same day, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced that we had concluded that a case could be made for treating all substantial discharges of sewage. We have decided that, in general, municipal sewage should receive secondary treatment, but that primary treatment would be more appropriate for discharges to coastal waters where it can be shown that that would not adversely affect the environment. It is estimated that introducing that level of treatment will cost about £1·5 billion, which is additional to the investment currently programmed to improve the quality of our bathing waters. That in itself will cost £1·4 billion, of which £100 million is to improve bathing water quality in Wales.

In the third North sea conference in March, further agreements were reached that will again be applied to all waters round the United Kingdom, including the Irish sea. It was agreed to end sewage sludge dumping by 1998; to cease dumping industrial waste by 1992; to destroy PCBs by 1995 if possible, and by 1999 at the latest; to reduce by 50 per cent. or more by 1995 some 37 key hazardous substances coming from rivers; to reduce from 1995 by 70 per cent. or more emissions to rivers or to the atmosphere of cadmium, lead mercury and dioxines; to reduce by 50 per cent. atmospheric emissions of 17 dangerous substances by 1995, or at the latest by 1999; to halve from 1985 levels the input of nutrients in sensitive areas by 1995; and to strive for a substantial reduction in pesticides, with control of their use and application by 1992. Those are important agreements, and as those policies come into effect, they will make a considerable impact on the seas round our coast.

We have not finished there. The Environmental Protection Bill, now passing through another place, will provide further assurances of a cleaner, safer environment. We shall introduce the concept of integrated pollution control with, for the first time, a single regulatory body controlling emissions to land, water and air. In that respect, as in others, we are ahead.

Our initiatives in recent years, and our continuing efforts in pollution control and environmental improvement are, by any standards, a considerable achievement. They demonstrate our total commitment to the improvement and protection of our environment and give impetus to other countries to follow suit. But we have not finished there. In the autumn, we will publish an environmental White Paper that will bring together in one document our achievements and will also set out how we intend to move forward with setting an environmental agenda for the rest of the century and beyond.

The Environmental Protection Bill's 147 clauses cover much territory, but they are united by one goal—a cleaner and safer environment. Far too often these days, people come near to discrediting what is fundamentally a good cause. The best way of avoiding that is to provide more information, not less. The Bill will give the public more access than ever before to information on industrial pollution and on how individual firms will be obliged to clean up their operations. The Government have pressed for a Europewide agency to monitor environmental quality in every member state.

The view is commonly held that environmental issues will play a prominent part in national and international political debate in the last decade of this century. Therefore, it is appropriate to begin with a Bill which will, whatever arguments may be made about it, provide a secure framework for much of our pollution control well into the next century.

Control and regulations are vital for improved environmental quality, just as they they are important to the raising of health standards and securing safety at work. However, they provide only part of the means of enhancing environmental quality. Our unequivocal view is that the best way of achieving that objective is a judicial mix of government regulation and market economics. The market and private enterprise are often challenged by regulation to achieve higher technological standards and better performance, and that is right. The environmental history of eastern Europe in particular demonstrates that state control does not go hand in hand with better environmental standards and regulation.

I do not know where the Opposition would strike the balance, but I trust that they accept that such controls are not without cost, and that incentives other than controls are often the best means of achieving environmental goals cost effectively. Whatever may be the Opposition's views on that point, they must share our belief that sensible and sustainable growth is the friend, not the enemy, of a cleaner and greener environment. It is vital that the coherent and sophisticated system of pollution control that we are introducing in the Bill is credible. Credibility

[Mr. Hunt]

requires that such a system is operated by strong and effective institutions, and that it should be open to public scrutiny.

We are to some extent still in the early stages of establishing some of the institutions that will monitor and control pollution. For example, the National Rivers Authority has only recently started operating, and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution did not come into being until 1987. Institutional questions will inevitably take some time to get right, and we shall consider them in the context of our work on the White Paper to be published later this year. There would be little point in establishing an excellent system of pollution control without a means of implementing it.

I referred to the history of pollution, and we are dealing with problems that have their origins a long way back. Others were created in the 1960s and 1970s. We have reduced the discharge from Sellafield to 3 per cent. of what it was in 1979, for example, so there have been major advances.

The Environmental Protection Bill is far from being our last word on our environmental policies. It would be ludicrous to try to solve all the problems in one Bill—doubly so in respect of environmental issues, which require the most up-to-date scientific information and unparalleled international co-operation to resolve. We will set out in the White Paper our environmental policy for the United Kingdom for the rest of the decade and into the next century. It will bring together a strategy for the environment in a single, comprehensive document dealing with all aspects of environmental work. It will confirm that we as a nation are prepared to play our part in creating a preferred environment, and that we shall fully discharge our obligations as trustees for future generations.

5.7 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Before I comment on the speech of the Secretary of State for Wales, on behalf of the Opposition I welcome back to the Government Front Bench the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), with my best wishes for his full recovery. I cannot give the same welcome to the hon. Gentleman's beard, but that is a matter of taste.

We welcome this opportunity to debate environmental problems, particularly in respect of the Principality. The Government amendment allows more scope for debate than does the Plaid Cymru motion. The Secretary of State made several references to the Environmental Protection Bill. The Government were so concerned about that legislation and its impact on Wales that not one Minister from the Welsh Office or even one Conservative Member from Wales served on the Bill's Standing Committee—despite the fact that the Bill contains matters of considerable importance to Wales. The Minister from the Scottish Office did his best, but they were really matters for the Welsh Office. Doubtless that issue will be raised again.

Although the motion concerns pollution levels in the Irish sea, it touches on an issue of significance for the Principality. The Secretary of State referred to the benefits of water privatisation, but were he to undertake a survey in north, mid or south Wales, he would find almost universal condemnation of it. That is not simply because the people of Wales will have to pay a horrendous water poll tax in the next few months. They have other bills to pay, too, because they have, rightly, concentrated on improving the quality of the water in their rivers and reservoirs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) asked in a recent parliamentary question about the quality of drinking water in Wales. The answer that he received was that 21 of the 34 water works in Wales have failed the Government's tests for aluminium in water. Our beaches, which are so vital to the tourist industry, especially in the north and west of Wales, stand condemned in the eyes of the world because of the dirt and filth that pollute them.

Our marine environment is precious to us all. We are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for having referred to the cuts in the natural history museum's budget. In answer to an intervention by my hon. Friend, the Secretary of State said that the Welsh Office does not deal with the funding of museums outside Wales. However, the Welsh Office funds research. Research at the natural history museum in London could play a large part in helping to solve the pollution problems in the Principality. I hope that when the Secretary of State returns to Wales he will arrange a meeting with Professor Claridge and discuss these important issues with him.

The drinking water inspectorate and the National Rivers Authority will become part of a new environmental protection agency when there is a Labour Government. The agency would be mirrored at both regional and local government level. It would have an important role to play in determining and monitoring pollution in the Principality.

I am also grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) for having pressed the Welsh Office—it has been hard to do so in recent months—about the sewage outfall at Lavernock in south Wales. Only reluctantly did they receive the answer that it would be fully treated before it entered the Bristol channel.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman puts faith in the ability of local authorities to deal with waste. I remind him that local authorities in this country as a whole were given 10 years in which to submit their plans for waste disposal to the Department of the Environment. During that 10-year period, fewer than 50 per cent. of them bothered to do so.

Mr. Murphy: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. Were he to read the response given by the previous Secretary of State for Wales, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), to the Association of District Councils, he would find that the Secretary of State said that, in exercising their functions as waste disposal and collection authorities, Welsh district councils were doing an extremely good job. The main problem, however, is lack of resources. It is ironic that after more than 10 years of Conservative Government hardly any of the money that has come into our coffers from North sea oil has been used by the Government to deal with pollution, or with waste collection and disposal.

The debate highlights the problems connected with waste collection and disposal in Wales. The problems are different in Wales. The district councils are both collection and disposal authorities. They face new problems over recycling industrial hazardous waste coming to Wales

from eastern Europe via West Germany and other countries. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) will, I am sure, refer later to the landfill tip in Swansea which deals with waste from eastern Europe.

The Government have agreed to retain the existing structure in Wales. During the passage of the Environmental Protection Bill the Government assured us that Welsh district councils will still be the collection and disposal authorities. The same will apply to Scotland. Scottish district councils will also be exempt from the private competition regulations that are to apply to England, but the Government are unwilling to exempt Wales, even though the position in Wales and Scotland is exactly the same. The last thing that Welsh district councils want when they are burdened with the collection and disposal of waste is to be still further burdened by having to compete with private industry.

Waste disposal by private industry is exemplified by one firm in my constituency, ReChem International, which is a blight on Wales because of the pollution it causes. Last week the financial press referred to ReChem as a good investment; its profits were soaring, despite a slump during the past 12 months on account of bad publicity. Most of the company's profits are made from imports, most of which are polychlorinated biphenyls. The toxic waste trade is suspect and bitterly disliked. My constituency is the centre for the disposal of much of the world's most deadly poisons. That is wrong. Labour will end the commercial trade in toxic waste.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): This is an important matter. All of us are guardians of the world environment. What does the hon. Gentleman think that third-world countries should do with their PCBs if they are not allowed to export them to be destroyed by the countries which often provided them with the PCBs in the first place?

Mr. Murphy: That is an important point, but ReChem International does not import toxic waste from many third-world countries. I am glad that the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) intervened, because it allows me to tell him that the industrial waste comes from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. None of those is a third-world country. The figures provided to us by the Welsh Office suggest that the vast bulk of the trade in toxic waste coming to the ReChem incinerator in Pontypool is from developed countries. Our view, which I am sure is held by many parties, is that each developed country should look after its own toxic waste.

It will be of interest to those hon. Members with port constituencies that the following ports have been used to import toxic waste: Chatham, Dartford, Dover, Felixstowe, Gravesend, Harwich, Immingham, Ipswich, Liverpool, Portsmouth, Seaforth and Tilbury. Toxic waste comes to Wales for disposal from each of those ports.

We all welcome the report by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. Recently it recognised for the first time that people in south Wales are genuinely concerned about having the ReChem incinerator in their midst. The Select Committee's recommendations amount to a first step towards a major public inquiry into what should happen to that plant.

The Secretary of State has made much of the provisions in the Environmental Protection Bill and of what the White Paper will contain. However, that will have no significance unless appropriate resources are provided to deal with the problem. During the past few years, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has been seriously under-resourced throughout Britain, but particularly in Wales. There are not enough inspectors. The Government must give a full commitment to increase substantially HMIP's resources, to ensure that there is proper monitoring of pollution in both Wales and the country as a whole.

The most significant underfunding has been the underfunding of local authorities. We look to them not just to dispose of waste but to keep our streets clean and to ensure that litter is cleared away from our town centres. Throughout the past 10 or 11 years the Government have systematically robbed councils of rate support grant, which has made it increasingly difficult for Welsh councils to deal with litter. Although the Bill imposes a duty on local authorities to collect litter, it does not provide them with a single extra penny with which to carry out that duty. Therefore, that duty is bound to be empty and meaningless.

I hope that the Secretary of State for Wales will battle with his Cabinet colleagues to ensure that the Welsh local authorities—which have a good record in local government—have more resources put at their disposal. If the right hon. Gentleman spent more time exercising his mind about putting resources into the local authorities instead of wasting millions of pounds on administering the poll tax, he would be thanked by the vast majority of people in Wales.

The fundamental problem lies with the Government. They dislike local government, and that has been evident from the number of Acts of Parliament affecting local government—more than 50 in the past 10 years. The Government are obsessed with privatisation and ideology. I suspect that that is why they have abandoned the pledge on the privatisation of electricity—that they would ensure that there are flue gas scrubbers in our coal-fired power stations. That is a major problem. The Government do not realise that there should be a proper mix of public intervention, regulation and bans and private sector intervention, in the form of the market, the price mechanism and green taxes. Opposition Members are at one in believing that, until Wales is rid of the Conservative Government, our environment will not get much better.

5.21 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I welcome the debate, even though it is inspired by the Opposition, because I welcome any debate on the environment. This is an issue that is so important that it needs to be kept at the top of our agenda but unfortunately, all too often, we naturally become obsessed with inflation, interest rates, mortgage rates, the community charge, defence and so on. The environment tends to be lost from our sight.

It is important to give credit to the Government for what they have done well, as well as to demand action from them. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for the Environment are to be congratulated on the immense strides that they have made recently on the environment. I am delighted about that.

Suffolk, Central is landlocked and therefore has no coastal problems. My excuses for intervening in the debate are that I am especially fond of the sea, one of a declining breed of sea bathers, and an extremely keen sailor, and,

[Mr. Michael Lord]

perhaps more important—I hope that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) will forgive me—I have been visiting the island of Anglesey for my holidays almost every year for more than 50 years. I am very fond of it and extremely anxious about what happens to it. The hon. Gentleman and I have discussed the matter in the past.

I was in Anglesey at Whitsun, as were many other folk. The weather was quite good. I went, as I always do, to my favourite beach, Traeth Bychan. When I drew my curtains on the first morning, I was horrified to see my favourite bay looking as though it was full of brown Windsor soup. That is the only way that I can describe it. It remained like that for several days, during which families and young children wanted to go for a paddle or a swim and to enjoy the sea. The shallow water where children would paddle was even worse. To continue my culinary comparison, the shallow waters were more like chocolate mousse.

I took my own samples and sent them off. I do not yet have the results. I do not know the reasons for the appearance of the sea. I have made inquiries at the university at Bangor—to which the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) referred—and elsewhere. I hope that I will receive some satisfaction and help from the university. From what I have been able to discover, it is almost certain that sewage will be implicated one way or the other.

Mr. Anderson: I warn the hon. Gentleman to be aware that the scientists may claim that it is only algae that is at fault. We had a similar problem with the sea in south Wales which, with the sun, went brown. We thought that the problem was caused by "Douglas Hurds", but it was not. Whatever they were, they had the same effect. There was a direct correlation with pollution, although a form of algae was responsible.

Mr. Lord: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. Algae has been talked of as a possible culprit in the case to which I referred. Certainly, much of what I saw and waded into briefly did not smell like algae.

I have quite an intimate knowledge of the local sewerage system in that part of the world. When, as an undergraduate, I had to earn some money to keep myself alive during the long summer vacations—like many other people—I worked for the contractor who installed the two outfalls in nearby villages—Benllech and Moelfre. I was involved there, albeit only as a labourer or a hod-carrier. There was a huge debate at the time about whether the outfalls would do the job, how long they should be and whether land-based treatment would be more satisfactory. Everybody who was concerned about the standard of water at that time was assured that all would be well.

I cannot tell hon. Members precisely how far beyond low water mark the outfalls go, but my guess is that it is no more than 100 m. That means that their effectiveness depends on the correct use of tide flows, wind direction and so on. Bearing in mind those factors, it is not unlikely that whatever is realised from the outfalls may find its way back to our beaches—possibly just at the wrong time of year when people wish to enjoy the beaches. It has been suggested that Liverpool bay is implicated, and that may be so. One cause of the pollution could be discharges further up the coast in Wales and up the Lancashire coast, which may come back down to cause the damage.

No one can be really sure of either the cause or the long-term effect. But when our oceans are so precious, why take the risk? The only way to eliminate the problems in the long term is to deal with all our sewage on land. That is perhaps a radical solution, but I believe that we shall come to it eventually. I am concerned that, in all the huge projects that we are now discussing, the immense amounts of money involved—if not misspent—could perhaps be better spent. With hindsight we will wish that we had thought the matter through more carefully and seriously considered the possibility of treating sewage on land.

I know that there are difficulties. Every day, 300 million gallons of sewage are discharged to our rivers and seas. I know what an enormous task and challenge it would be to deal with that sewage on land. The Secretary of State has pointed out all the difficulties—the costs, the burden on industry and the possible environmental effects on the land as well as on the sea. I believe that the challenge is worth taking up.

For industry, necessity is the mother of invention, and I believe that industry would respond. When faced with the threat to the ozone layer in recent times, industry has responded rapidly to the problem of chlorofluorocarbons. In a more minor way, industry has solved the problem of the rings on Coca Cola cans which used to cause so many problems when they were thrown away or used to fiddle parking meters. The cans are now made so that the rings cannot be detached from them. Those are two examples —one major and one minor—of the way in which industry will respond to problems when forced to do so.

Mr. Holt: Has my hon. Friend read the report by the Select Committee on the Environment on land pollution, especially the part of it dealing with the problem that the Dutch have experienced because they simply do not have enough land to dispose of all the slurry? Their solution has been to cull some of their cows. Does my hon. Friend suggest that we start culling some of his farmers' cows in Suffolk so that we do not overdo the pollution that could be caused on the land? Perhaps my hon. Friend is not taking into account the fact that we should be incinerating a great deal of waste.

Mr. Lord: My hon. Friend has made a valid point. I am not suggesting that I have all the solutions to those problems. However, industry is working on them at the moment. For example, ICI is developing new plants to try to accelerate the process of treating sewage. It has also developed a product for treating the water that is released into our rivers after sewage has been treated. Although we can remove 90 per cent. of the bacteria that cause problems later, when the water is discharged to our rivers and seas, 10 per cent. of the bacteria remains. That is a major problem, although I understand that ICI has developed a system which eliminates that difficulty. It is an enormously beneficial move.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lord: With respect to my hon. Friend, I think that I should make progress. I am conscious that I do not represent a Welsh constituency, so I am imposing on the House tonight.

I appreciate that my remarks may be rather more emotional than scientific. In an age in which we can put a man on the moon, when it takes four hours to get from London to New York by aeroplane and when satellites

allow us to sit in our homes and watch what is happening on the other side of the world, I cannot believe that it is right to simply discharge our waste products into the ocean. Time does not allow this evening for detailed technical arguments like those which my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is encouraging me to enter into.

Anyone who has paddled or swum in the sea, sailed on it or fished it, thrown a pebble into it or simply sat and looked at it—that is, every one of us—must be aware of the physical and emotional importance of that hugely important asset and must accept that it should not be damaged or risks taken with it. I am aware of the difficulties, but as there is a White Paper in the offing I urge my colleagues on the Government Front Bench to consider the possibility of a commitment at some point to treat all our sewage on land.

5.31 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Many of my parliamentary colleagues from Wales travel weekly to London. When I left Cardiganshire today to motor over the Plynlimon mountains to join the InterCity train at Caersws to take me across the border, I took a look at the environment. The countryside from Cardiganshire to the border is worth looking at at this time of year.

Dr. Thomas: And then?

Mr. Howells: I will come to that later.

That environment was so beautiful, green and healthy-looking. Trees have been planted everywhere, perhaps with the help of the Forestry Commission, which planted many trees on the Plynlimon mountains 30 years ago.

I then asked myself, "Who has been responsible for our wonderful environment in mid-Wales?" I suppose the answer is the farming fraternity, the agriculturists and our fathers and forefathers who, over many generations, tilled the land and planted the trees. I also asked myself whether I could find any fault with the environment as I see it today. I could not find any faults. It all looked so beautiful.

I agree entirely with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) and by the Secretary of State that agriculture plays a major role in our environment. However, we must remember that agriculture is in dire financial straits at the moment. I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that our industry does not have the opportunity to compete on equal terms with its counterparts in Europe. It should be the Secretary of State's top priority over the next 12 months to try to ensure that our farmers compete on equal terms. For example, with regard to the ewe premium, there is a variation between Ireland and Wales. In Wales, the premium is £7 per head, while I am told that in Ireland it is £18 per head.

Confidence in our industry is at its lowest ebb. When I was a little child, there were about 30 full-time farmers in my village. They were all viable. They were all self-contained, and farmers' sons stayed at home. However, there are only three full-time farms in my village today and the rest are all part-time farmers like me. The others work in Aberystwyth and other areas. I am not against part-time farming. It is a wonderful achievement to farm 20 or 30 acres and also be employed in industry or in a profession of one's own choice. That is a wonderful life.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Meironnydd Nant Conwy on introducing this debate on the environment. I will not disagree with him, but I hope that, when we next have tea together, he will define what he means by an organic Welsh lamb. I am sure that there are quite a few of them in Meironnydd and Cardiganshire, but unfortunately for his constituents and for mine, the majority of all those small lambs that are born on the hills are being exported to Italy. I am afraid that he has not eaten an organic lamb yet, but time will tell.

What advice can the Secretary of State offer to the silage farmers, the majority of which are dairy farmers, some of whom unfortunately are breaking the law? That is a major problem in many parts of Wales, especially in Anglesey, the vale of Clwyd, Carmarthen, Pembrokeshire and my constituency. I hope that the Minister will be able to offer advice to some farmers who may be flouting the law unintentionally.

This motion is welcome. It focuses on an important problem. With concentration on the North sea, it is some times forgotten that similar, or in some cases greater, problems exist in the Irish sea. The condemnation in the motion is, if anything, too mild. The Government have no answer to the charges, as can be seen from the fact that their amendment does not mention the Irish sea, but provides the usual self-congratulatory, wishy-washy generalisations which are the hallmark of the Government's approach to the environment.

The Irish sea is gigantic proof, if any of us needed it, of the cavalier and irresponsible approach adopted by this Government and the previous Labour Government towards the environment. The Irish sea is shallow and slow to drain, and it will harbour some of its poisons for thousands of years.

I want to consider now some of the specific problems. Since Sellafield opened, half a tonne of plutonium has been discharged into the Irish sea, making it the most radioactively contaminated—not radioactive—sea in the world. There are more nuclear installations bordering the Irish sea than any other sea.

Britain's dirtiest estuary, the Mersey, drains into the Irish sea. In the recent Mersey clean-up campaign, the Government took steps to limit sewage discharges into the river. They shipped it all out to sea and dumped it. In other words, they made themselves reliant on sewage sludge dumping, which every other country has phased out. However, the Government intend to continue with such dumping until 1998. The Irish sea contains the second biggest sewage sludge dumping ground for the United Kingdom.

The biggest industrial dump site in the north Atlantic is in the Irish sea, just off Cork. Each year, millions of tonnes of untreated sewage and industrial wastes are dumped in the Irish sea. The Irish sea is heavily contaminated in certain coastal areas with synthetic materials and heavy metals, especially mercury from the ICI works at Runcorn, although, thankfully, that company has at last stopped that practice.

I now give some of the alarming facts. The Irish sea contains more man-made radioactivity than any other sea. It is bordered by more nuclear installations than any other sea. I have just mentioned Cork. Also, 250 chemicals were found in a single sample taken from a discharge into the

[Mr. Howells]

River Mersey. Three hundred million gallons of sewage go into the Irish sea every day, and 80 per cent. of it receives no treatment or is only screened.

Whales and dolphins are now rare, but I have a dolphin family in my constituency. The other dolphin family lives on the north-east coast of Scotland. We are proud of our dolphins, as they have been with us for a long time. Let us hope that, in their wisdom, the Government will safeguard their interests as well as those of our constituents.

After 1990, only two nations in the EC will be committed to dumping industrial waste into the sea. Those two nations are Britain and Ireland.

On swimming, there is a message about the North sea —swim at your own risk. Nine million holidaymakers visit the coast of the Irish sea, yet not one beach has a "blue flag" to show that it is clean. Eighty per cent. of sewage outfalls into the Irish sea receive no treatment, or only a simple screening. Seventy per cent. of the pipes discharge at or above the low water mark. Untreated sewage discharged into bathing water brings the risk of illness, ranging from salmonella poisoning to hepatitis. Full sewage treatment would virtually eliminate those risks.

I could go on for a long time, but the message is clear. I urge the Government to give extra financial aid and resources to research and development. It is a great pity that the Countryside Council for Wales is going to Bangor. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy and I agree on nearly every issue, but the council should have been in Aberystwyth, the agricultural capital of Wales. I ask the Minister and the Government to do what they can to safeguard the coastal belt. The National Rivers Authority will need more financial help in the years to come. Our rivers, whether they start in Plynlimon, Snowdonia or Cader Idris, all flow gently and take everything with them to the sea. We must do all that we can to ensure that our rivers are made clean for the next generation.

As I said, mid-Wales is a beautiful area. I thank the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who, as Secretary of State, established the Mid Wales development board. It is now 14 years later. I congratulate the right hon. and learned Gentleman because that board has done excellent work in mid-Wales. It is a great pity that the present Secretary of State cannot extend the boundaries of that rural board for mid-Wales to include areas in my constituency in north Pembroke, because we have an important link with Ireland at Fishguard and Goodwick. It would be a wonderful achievement if we could give the same facilities within the board area to that part of the country, which is in dire need of financial help.

5.44 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I, too, thank the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) for giving hon. Members this opportunity to talk about the environment. This is not my first chance to discuss Welsh matters with him. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his sensible remarks. When we consider the environment and pollution, we must remember that man-made problems are subject to man-made solutions. We should remember that substantial costs are involved in dealing with alleged forms of pollution. Therefore, we must be sure that the pollution that we identify is real and is as important as we see it.

The hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members talked about pollution of the seas and of the land because of mineral extraction and, in particular, the application of fertilisers. He did not talk a great deal about pollution of the air, which is of great significance to people in Wales, especially because of the alleged global warming and greenhouse gases. Dealing with that problem could have a profound effect not just on the environment but on jobs and industries in the Principality. We should deal with that issue at a little more length.

If we had been debating this matter in the 1970s, we would probably have been talking about acid rain. Our concerns for the environment tend to go in cycles. There are fashions—issues come and go. We are very concerned about them at the time, but they pass as scientists bring a new issue to our attention. In this case, we are discussing issues that affect Wales in particular. We should talk about the effect of the carbon dioxide scare and its relationship to industry and life in that part of the world.

Mr. Wigley: Although those matters certainly got more attention a few years ago, regrettably in Wales the problem has not gone away. In western Wales, there are 200 lakes in which fish life has died because of the acidity of the water. We are still struggling with that problem.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I commend to him a paper written by Professor Sir James Beament of Queen's college, Cambridge, in which he analyses the acid rain problem and casts grave doubts on the suggestion that sulphur dioxide is the cause of it. He identified leaching of the soil, magnesium and so on. I shall not go into the scientific details now, because of the time available, but there are other causes. We often identify the wrong cause and then set about dealing with it. In fact, we offer wrong solutions, and, in doing so, we can cause grave damage to industries and jobs and spend a great deal of taxpayers' money.

One of the important points that have been raised so far is the need to make sure that the scientific evidence on which we base some of our policies is accurate and valid. Many of our concerns in the recent past arose as a result of a conference called Global 2000, which was staged by the American Government in the 1980s. Many scientists got together to survey the future, and they came up with many apocalyptic scenarios, one of which included global warming and greenhouse gases. It was suggested that that problem was largely caused by carbon dioxide and other carbon gases being released into the atmosphere.

The conference neglected to consider other atmospheric gases, such as water vapour, which has important heat and radiation effects in the atmosphere, and oxygen. We all know that oxygen is never talked about in terms of radiation and global warming, but it is of great significance. Furthermore, the effect of the sun and our proximity to it was hardly mentioned. The sun is the great engine of our climate, as are sun spots, and both affect global temperature.

Such things tend not to be covered in scientific papers, because we cannot legislate to do anything about our position in relation to the sun or the occurrence of sun spots. We can, however, legislate to cut our use of carbon

dioxide. That means that we place increased restrictions on the coal industry and on the manufacture of motor vehicles. In so doing, we may be over-reacting to the effect of carbon dioxide on what is only a small part of global warming.

Hon. Members who represent the Principality know of coal's importance as a mineral. It is one of the most important minerals in all economies, and generates 40 per cent. of the world's electricity. We are all concerned about wasting energy and talk about putting tea cosies on our houses to keep them warm. However, we do not necessarily pay enough attention to making energy production more efficient.

That brings me to the role that Governments can play in reducing alleged pollution. That could sometimes take the form of backing research and development into making energy production more efficient, instead of concentrating on saving energy at the level of using insulating devices in our houses, which results in only a small saving when compared with what we could do in terms of improving energy production.

We must keep an eye on scientists. There have been scares throughout history. At the time of the millenium of the 10th century, people castigated themselves and their leaders because, according to the Book of Revelations, the earth was about to warm up and we would all frizzle and die. That apocalypse came and went, and nothing very much happened.

The earth is the most amazing self-correcting organism. When there are changes in the balance of minerals, atmosphere and temperature, the earth generally corrects them. The carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, which is produced partly by the coal industry, is a fertiliser and can be absorbed by plants and the ocean. The more carbon dioxide there is, the more plant growth there is and, as a result, there is sometimes more animal growth. Throughout its enormously long history, the earth has corrected the imbalances that occur in nature. Therefore, before embarking on costly and often ineffective methods of dealing with today's pollution, we should try to keep the scale of the problem in perspective.

The earth is a water organism—70 per cent. of it is covered by water. The tides and the movement of water have enormous significance for our coasts, and for other coasts around the world. Humanity clings to only about 15 per cent. of the land mass. If we keep in mind that percentage of human activity on our globe, and compare it with the effect that the evaporation of water and the formation of clouds has on radiation and with the absorption of heat from the earth, we begin to see that many of the problems that have been identified have far less significance than we may believe. We tend to measure things against the scale of humanity. We tend to measure pollution within our own immediate geographical areas. We then extrapolate from those facts and produce great proposals for legislation and to change industrial processes way beyond what is necessary or important.

Therefore, I urge my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for the Environment to keep the problem in perspective and to remember that, for every scientist who holds one view, another will hold a balancing view. The smaller voice may well be the voice talking the truth. Galileo's time did not believe that the earth went round the sun, but he could prove that it did, and he said so. His views were so welcome that he was forced to recant by the Church and ended up denying that solution.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am following my hon. Friend's argument with interest. I would not choose to cross swords with her about Galileo, who I assume is Welsh. I remind her of an old northern saying, "Where there's muck, there's brass." It therefore follows that, where there's brass, there's muck. Does she agree that, by creating lots and lots of brass, we have created infinitely more muck, which, however one sees it, cannot be to the advantage of Wales, the United Kingdom or anybody?

Will she accept that the real problem is to reduce the amount of muck—or its modern version, "pollution"—and to ascertain how we can do that without having too great an economic effect on the industries that produce that muck or on the taxpayer? There is no point in going around saying, "It it not this or that," because there is too much muck and we want to achieve the same amount of brass with less of it.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I am sure that he agrees that we do not want to tear up what we have achieved in industry and in the progress in people's standards of living for what could well be false hypotheses. There are plenty of false hypotheses in the scientific world, one of which is the greenhouse effect and the amount of attention that we pay to that effect.

As and when we identify real problems, such as industrial waste being poured into rivers, where we can see that it is killing our fish, we must make those industries stop such practices. We have laws to do that. Where we can be sure that savings in energy can be made by more efficient energy production and new methods, clearly we should do so and the Government should encourage that. However, we should not spend billions of pounds of taxpayers' money and do great harm to industry without knowing what we are doing.

The earth is not a delicate and fragile thing that is difficult to damage. It is resilient and has lasted for thousands of millions of years. A little alteration in terms of earth or water pollution—or even air pollution—will not destroy our planet as the greenmongers would have us believe. There have always been natural climatic changes. I refer now to the dinosaurs—but not those in this place. Dinosaurs are evidence that the climate of the earth changed naturally over time. Our greenhouse effect here and now is tiny in comparison. *[Laughter.]* I give up.

5.58 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I am glad of this opportunity to raise the problem of environmental policy as it affects my constituency in the context of the administration and control of pollution in Wales. I join all those who have expressed their concern about the level of pollution in the sea. However, in the few minutes available to me I shall concentrate on the Government's amendment with its strange and nauseating phrase that Her Majesty's Government and Minister "congratulate" themselves

"on the positive lead it is giving in areas of environmental concern".

That was the very Government who slaughtered the Clean Air Council which I chaired 25 years ago as a young Minister, and the Noise Abatement Council. It is late in the day for the Government to start putting the environment first.

It is my privilege to represent what I regard as an important industrial constituency. Without industry it is nothing. We have two major plants. Employment at the

[Mr. John Morris]

Port Talbot steelworks has been savaged. Enormous efforts have been made by the unions, the management and me to ensure that the plant survives and investment in the harbour, the concast plant and the new mill flourishes and provides opportunities for my constituents and others to work.

The other major industrial plant is BP Chemicals, which is much newer. It provides employment for a large number of people but on a smaller scale than the steelworks. We are an industrial constituency and I hope that we shall continue to be so. In future, industry must conduct itself in such a way that people's lives are not made a misery. I appreciate that large sums of money have been spent and will be spent locally by management to redress the balance and reduce pollution. However, my constituents continue to be dissatisfied with what they see, feel, smell and hear around them. The result must satisfy them, and that is what worries me about the smugness of the Government's proposals.

People simply will not put up with the standards of yesterday. Children must be able to play in gardens. People must be able to hang washing on lines and leave windows open at night. Cars must not be smothered with soot and the air that we breathe must not be as polluted as it is now. Air pollution is far to frequently a problem in our major industrial areas, and it is certainly a problem in my constituency.

After the problems of last year, I hoped that the problem at BP chemicals at Baglan, which persisted for so many days a few weeks ago, would not be repeated. The House can imagine my horror when I read the strongly worded letter from the chairman of the local authority's environmental committee expressing his anxiety and dissatisfaction. The local authorities in my constituency and elsewhere will do what they can, but the basic problem with pollution is the division of power and the ineffectiveness of existing powers. I fear that, if industry cannot come up to the required standard, it will have to compensate the locality. Compensation will have to be paid for each hour during which standards are transgressed.

We do not live in the era of the pre-Aberfan syndrome, when people were resigned to living in bad conditions. After Aberfan, a programme of land clearance began with which I was proud to be associated later. Before Aberfan, we simply put up with the tips. The same applies today to air and general environmental pollution. Today people simply will not allow the clock to stop in the pre-Aberfan era.

How can standards of pollution below which industries must not fall be measured? What is the acceptable norm? There should be public participation and consultation in making that decision. The standards are not necessarily the same everywhere. I wish that they were. Anyone who has had to spend time in London, even with the successful clean air policy in place, knows that. I pay tribute to the clean air policy. People such as Sir Gerald Nabarro and Mr. Harold Evans, when he was editor of *The Northern Echo*, played a formidable role in telling people about the importance of clean air and pushing for a clean air policy.

After it got rid of the smog, London made great progress. But even today, if one leaves one's shoes out for two days, there is a layer of dust on them. Unhappily, the standard of the air varies. I wish that the standard was always as good as that in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells). It is entirely different from the environment in our industrial constituencies and in London.

Therefore, we must tackle clean air and the environment with the same energy as our predecessors did —I played a small part in it—in tackling problems of burning smoking fuels in our industrial conurbations. The same energy must be applied to find acceptable standards which accord with a reasonable quality of life in our industrial areas.

The basic problem of dealing with pollution is the division of control over it. Local authorities have limited powers. I wrote recently to the chairman of the Health and Safety Executive, who took over three weeks to refer my letter to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The time of the inspector responsible for Wales and the west was so precious last year that no power on earth, not even the private office of the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, could make him change the day of his visit to my council. I willingly postponed my holiday to ensure that I was present when the great man arrived from his business in Nottingham or wherever it was. That showed the pressure on that inspector.

Underfunding and undermanning of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is a major scandal. It is peculiar that the inspectorate does not come under the control of the Secretary of State for Wales. I doubled the size of the Welsh Office and ensured that a vast amount of responsibility was transferred to the Welsh Secretary, so I was particularly sorry to learn that he had no control over Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. I had to go to the Department of the Environment.

Wales is part of the south-western region. The number of inspectorate personnel based in Wales was recently depleted. The Cardiff headquarters has become little more than an outpost of the south-western region which includes the whole of the Principality and a substantial part of south-western England. The number of inspectors who administer control of pollution measures in Wales was recently reduced effectively from three to one. The obvious result was a deterioration in the inspectorate's response. One gentleman from Cardiff has been seconded to a special project for an indeterminate period, so we shall not have a great deal of help from him. Is the Minister aware of what is happening to the inspectorate in Wales? It is simply not good enough. It is a major step backwards. My constituency and other industrial areas of Wales require the constant vigilance of an effective authority to minimise and control the effects on the population and the environment.

I wish to propose some ideas for the Government's White Paper to be published in the autumn. First, supervision and overall responsibility for pollution and the environment in and around Wales should come under the direct responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales. I do not understand why it is not already his responsibility. Perhaps he is not aware of it, but precedents have been set in other areas of policy. The Manpower Services Commission is part of a national body, yet the commission for Wales is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales. The Secretary of State could attend to that matter in the White Paper.

Secondly, the number of staff in the Cardiff branch of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution should be

increased immediately. Thirdly, local authorities should be given a new role as agents for the inspectorate on a day-to-day basis with statutory powers to impose restrictions on behalf of and in accordance with the policy of the inspectorate. That should ensure a more speedy response when it is needed.

Fourthly, there should be an immediate plan to assess and examine the worst areas of Wales to reach a view on a reasonable standard of and target for clean air in our industrial areas. It would start in the worst areas and be a sort of pollution Domesday book. What is wanted is an assessment of the position and a determination of what standards should be. We can then build on that and we could have a major breakthrough on improving the environment. I concede that it may take a little time to set the right standards and get the right machinery.

The Secretary of State mentioned the 21st century. As we approach the 21st century, people will not accept the standards of yesterday. For too long, fathers and mothers have put up with low standards which are no longer acceptable. We must put all our energies into ensuring that the quality of life is improved everywhere, taking into full account, as I did in my opening remarks, that we live in and represent industrial areas. Ideally standards should be the same everywhere, but I fear that that cannot be achieved.

A great deal could be done, if the Government ceased to adopt the smug attitude reflected in their amendment. Then we could at least target the main areas and have plans to counteract the worst difficulties.

6.11 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Before I make a brief contribution, I apologise for my late arrival. I was at a meeting of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs which had to approve our report on sea defences in advance of tomorrows' estimates debate on sea defences and the avoidance of sea flood damage in Wales.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) and his two colleagues on enabling us to have this debate. I am sure that we would agree on one thing—that we have debates on Welsh affairs on the Floor of the House too infrequently. It would be in the interests of the Principality if we had more. Equally, the hon. Gentlemen will acknowledge that much useful work on Welsh affairs goes on outside the Chamber, because all of them at one time or another have been members of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs.

I declare my interest as parliamentary adviser to Welsh Water plc. I was a member of the Standing Committee on the Water Bill. The Bill provided a much tougher regulatory framework than was hitherto in place. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was speaking, the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) asked him to ensure that the National Rivers Authority brought far more prosecutions against those who break the law than the water authorities did. In doing so, he acknowledged what we did in the Bill. That acknowledgement was confirmed by the moderate and basically sensible speech of the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy).

We recognised that the water authorities were both poachers and gamekeepers—both dischargers of sewage and monitors of sewage disposal. The hon. Member for Gower, who is Chairman of the Select Committee, is particularly aware of that, as the Committee undertook an inquiry into the coastal sewage pollution in Wales. The separation of those powers is one of the great provisions of the Water Act 1989. We now have a much tougher regulatory framework than we had before.

Even my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench may acknowledge that the Government learned from previous privatisations and regulatory frameworks which might have been better than they were. As we progressed with privatisations, our approach to regulatory frameworks became more professional, more specific and more effective.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Torfaen acknowledged that by saying that the Labour party would keep the NRA. I know that he did not serve on the Standing Committee, but his colleagues on it also said that. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who was the Opposition Front Bench spokesman from Wales on the Bill, will confirm that.

Apparently a Labour Government would subsume the National Rivers Authority and the drinking water inspectorate in an environmental protection agency, but Labour always wants to subsume things in huge bureaucatic agencies. Why cannot Labour leave something in embryo—I do not want to get into an abortion debate or a debate on embryo experimentation, so I shall say instead, something which has just been born—to develop and get on with its job, instead of planning to reorganise it, should the nightmare occur and a Labour Government take power? They should leave it to get on with its job effectively. I am glad that Labour Members have at least acknowledged that we have done the right thing. Obviously, they themselves had the opportunity to do what we have done in the past, but they did not take it. At least they have graciously conceded that we have done the right thing.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred in passing to pollution in eastern Europe, he was his usual generous, gentle self. He did not labour the point, although it could be laboured. In the past year, I have travelled to Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Hungary. Anybody who drives through what were the great and glorious forests of Bohemia and Moravia will see instantly the damage wreaked by acid rain. Anybody who goes to East Berlin will see the pall of smoke hanging over that once great city—hopefully soon to be reunited with West Berlin as a great city again—as soon as they step off the train. The appalling pollution there comes largely from those ghastly Trabant cars—amazing plastic vehicles which do not seem to go anywhere very fast, yet create a huge amount of pollution in the process.

The same is true of Budapest. The two-and-a-half hour train journey from Vienna to Budapest takes one from one of the cleanest urban environments in western Europe to one of the dirtiest and most polluted in eastern Europe. State control and state socialism are no guarantors of a clean environment. The Opposition have evidence of that before their very eyes.

I have alluded to the inquiry into coastal sewage pollution in Wales. I was already a member of the Select Committee when it undertook that inquiry in 1985. One of the points that came out of it was the large number of sea and coastal outfalls in Wales. We have a quarter of the total for the whole of England and the Principality put together.

Mr. Wigley *indicated assent.*

Mr. Raffan: I see the hon. Gentleman nodding vigorously. He sat next to me during many of our evidence sessions. He will remember as well as I do the damning statistics that emerged. Only 6 per cent. of the sea outfalls in 1985 were less than 10 years old, 75 per cent. were over 20 years old and 40 per cent. were over 40 years old. I well remember the hon. Gentleman intervening, rightly, to ask the chairman of the Welsh water authority, Mr. John Elfed Jones, about the size of his capital programme—and the time scale of it—to remedy this appalling situation. The hon. Gentleman was told that £75 million would be spent over 15 years. I subsequently asked the chairman:

"Perhaps you would rather be in the position of a private company so that you would then be able to borrow according to your needs"

and accelerate that capital programme. Mr. Jones replied:

"The proposition has immediate appeal."

That is precisely what has happened. The £75 million over 15 years has been replaced by a capital programme for Welsh Water of £500,000 every day every year for the next 10 years. That is a massive capital programme. Would that capital programme have taken place under nationalisation, under Welsh Water in the public sector? That is the crucial question.

Welsh Water plc is no longer subject to external financing limits. It can go to the City, borrow more money more cheaply and accelerate its capital programme—something that all hon. Members are united in wanting. It can bring forward the day when the 40 per cent. of sea outfalls which are over 40 years old, can be replaced. The basic achievement of privatisation is that Welsh Water can now undertake such a massive capital programme.

Welsh Water is no longer subject to external financing limits. If the Labour party were to have its way and return the company to public ownership—should the nightmare occur and it returns to office—the water industry would once again have to compete with housing, education and social services for its share of resources.

Mr. Wigley: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument with considerable interest. If the borrowing level is taken up by Welsh Water to the extent that he suggests —a level of £150 million to £200 million a year—the interest paid by the authority will have a considerable impact on the Welsh Water ratepayer—hence the £200 per household that they are now being billed. That is the bottom line of the policy advocated by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that Welsh Water is now a commercial company. He will know as well as I what it has achieved in the past six to nine months. It has embarked upon a massive capital programme; it has taken over Wallace Evans, the biggest civil engineering firm in Wales, so that it can commercially exploit its unique expertise, not just in this country but in many countries around the world. I think that Wallace Evans has 50 offices worldwide. Together with the French water company SAUR, Welsh Water has set up a subsidiary, Cambrian Water, of which it owns 50 per cent. —yet another commercial waste disposal venture. Welsh Water is already becoming a much more commercially orientated company.

The cost of the capital expenditure to which I referred will not fall soley on the ratepayer—far from it. I do not want to compound the embarrassment of the Opposition, particularly the Labour party, about privatisation by alluding to Welsh Water's results last week, but the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) will be aware, as I am, that they have been extremely well received in the financial press and elsewhere, and have met with a long silence from the Opposition. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Caernarfon for giving me the opportunity to make those additional points about the benefits of privatisation. It is a great tribute to Welsh Water that it has adapted so swiftly and effectively to the new commercial environment in which it operates.

The hon. Member for Torfaen was gracious enough tonight to concede the importance and effectiveness of the National Rivers Authority and the drinking water inspectorate, saying that they would be retained by the Labour party, albeit subsumed in an environmental protection agency. Will the Opposition give a public commitment in the House that, should the nightmare occur—I do not believe that it will, but perhaps we can ask this as a hypothetical exercise—and the Labour party were to return to power in a year or two, Labour will ensure that, if Welsh Water is brought back into the public sector, its capital programme will not be curtailed?

Can a commitment be given that a Labour Government would not indulge in the sort of cuts they indulged in pre-1979, when, as my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) said, they slashed capital expenditure on sewage and water works by a massive 50 per cent.? If Welsh Water is brought back into the public sector, a Government would be able to do just that. I hope that the Opposition will be able to give that commitment, because it will be of great interest to the House and of great importance to the people of Wales.

It is always interesting to see the Labour party turn green. I am not sure that its members have not turned green with envy at the Government's environmental record and the fact that we have, through the success of our economic policies which have all owed vastly increased capital expenditure in the water and sewage industries, begun to undo the damage that the Labour party wrought when it was in office. I think that Labour Members may also be slightly sickly green as they contemplate the, albeit remote, possibility of their party returning to office. They must be understandably nervous about how they would begin to compete with, let alone match, our record.

I assure Labour Members that that event will not occur; we will save them from first night nerves, because their first night will never come—the election victory will be ours, and we shall continue the excellent programme that we have carried out so far. Privatisation has accelerated the water industry's capital programmes, our environment cleaner day by day. A capital programme spending £500,000 a day for the next 10 years in Wales is ensuring that the Principality has a much better environment than ever before.

6.24 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) spoke of our being green with envy and embarrassment. If there is a clash of interest between the Welsh water authority, for which he gave a great hymn of praise and the interests of his constituents in terms of the £200 poll tax being imposed on them, will he speak for Welsh Water or his people and the people of Wales as a whole? We deserve an answer to such questions.

I wholly agreed with what my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) said about the smugness of the Government amendment. We do not perceive in that amendment the Government who are seen in Brussels as the dirty old man of Europe. We do not perceive in it the reductions in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and its low morale, evidenced by the number of resignations.

I wholly concur with the spirit of the speech made by the hon. Member for Meirionnyd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas). I congratulate him and fully accept what he said about the need for much greater research funding on pollution from the Welsh Office. I welcome the fact that we in Wales give much greater priority to pollution. When I first came on the political scene, the emphasis was on jobs at all costs. I saw that when Carbon Black polluted my constituency—jobs were then the high point of the agenda. I welcome the change, whether it be that Carbon Black no longer exists or the fact that people revolted against opencast mining, which their predecessors had been prepared to accept.

I accept what the Secretary of State said about the improvements in Wales. That can be seen in the greening of our valleys post-Aberfan, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon, a former Secretary of State, said. We can also see that improvement in the greening of corners of our cities. I congratulate my own city council of Swansea on the tree planting programme that has so transformed the city. The lower Swansea valley was once the most concentrated area of industrial dereliction in the United Kingdom, but improvements have been made.

However, who can doubt that, in many respects, the pollution is much worse? Most people are not worried about the great subjects of the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect, but local issues. In Swansea, the issue under discussion is the Cwmrhdyceirw quarry already mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), and the pollution in Swansea bay, mentioned in the report of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, presided over by my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell).

As a boy, I spent most of my summer bathing on the beach at Swansea bay, and used to collect cockles there with my family. Now, no one would dare eat them, even if they were to be found. On the only occasion last year when I ventured on to that beach from my house, which adjoins it, my throat was immediately affected, which is evidence of the bay's deterioration. We accept that Welsh Water and the Government have plans, largely thrust on them by the European Commission. Only one beach in Wales, Pembrey, has been given the European Community's blue flag, and we wish to know more about the timetable for the others.

The Cwmrhydyceirw quarry poses an environmental nuisance, and I agree wholly with what my hon. Friend the Member for Gower and his colleagues said in the Select Committee report, at paragraph 41. For reasons of time I will not go into the report in detail, but it is clear that Welsh Water expressed anxiety about its lack of powers in this area. It is also clear that the quarry has not been and is not being properly managed, and that the local authority has insufficient powers. I am glad that, under the Environmental Protection Bill, licences can be revoked or refused if the licensee is deemed not to be a fit and proper person. I also welcome potential regulations under the Bill on the import of direct landfill substances. I hope that the Government will respond speedily when the Bill becomes an Act.

It is bizarre that imported heat-treated dried sludge from Switzerland—not, I hasten to add for the benefit of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), from a third-world country—has been imported and sold to farmers as soil conditioner—at a time when sewage sludge from Mumbles is sprayed on land and when such sludge from other local works is dumped in the Bristol channel. Why the difference? Is it because of inadequate resources, or do we lack the technology that must be available in Switzerland?

For most of our people, the environment means whatever has the most immediate impact on them. That puts me in mind of Dylan Thomas's "Return Journey" in which he said that in the first world war people talked about casualties at the front, but the only front that he knew was just in front of his house. The same applies to most of my constituents, who are not concerned with the rather grand subjects of the ozone layer, although they may be worried about Swansea bay. What concerns them more are areas such as Penlan, where motor cycle scrambling makes so much noise that it is hell for the residents. I hope that the Government will put a curb on some of these activities; certainly the police have not given enough priority to tackling this sort of nuisance.

For many people in Portmead and Blaen-y-Maes the immediate environment is menaced most of all by stray dogs and horses. I ask the Government to accept the Lords amendment in respect of dog registration, because of the health hazards of dogs fouling the environment. Environmental health officers in my local authority do not know how many dogs there are or hence how to plan their resources or allocate money for wardens. Horses tend to congregate near schools because of the green areas nearby which provide cheap feed, but they are an immense danger to children: they can stampede, for instance. At present, the local authority can charge only for the bare cost of feed and for vets even when the horses are in a compound. The authority should be given penal powers to cover its full and real costs.

I am delighted that we in Wales are giving environmental matters a higher place on the national agenda, and we shall help to keep them there. We shall press for the resources and equipment which we believe have not yet been fully forthcoming.

6.34 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): That was the first I have heard about horse droppings from Swansea polluting the Irish sea.

I must agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) that the terminology of the Government amendment is nauseatingly self-congratulatory. I should have had the utmost difficulty supporting it had I not listened to the persuasive and reasoned speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in which he convincingly set out the steps that the Government are taking. There is still a long way to go, and I am anxious to see that they keep travelling down the same road.

The Government claim—backing up that claim with statistics—that our rivers are among the cleanest in Europe. Anyone looking over the Terrace would find that

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

hard to believe, but the statistics prove it. Our rivers are a great deal cleaner than those that flow through most continental countries.

Our beaches are a different story. It is not good enough to claim that we have no dirty beaches on the ground that we have no beaches at all. To refuse to classify beaches as bathing beaches because they are too filthy to bathe from is a dishonest way of evading our responsibility to clean up. I am sick of being told by one expert after another that Mediterranean beaches are filthy. I was unlucky enough to find myself in Benidorm at the end of August last year for one night. I bathed on the pocket hankerchief of a beach in spotless, crystal clear water. At Villefranche I was able to read the front page of a newspaper lying under four feet of water at the quayside—I doubt whether I could have done that at many of our beaches. We do not keep them clean and it is time that we did.

Anyone alighting from the train at Colwyn bay will find a delightful innovation—a restaurant set up at the edge of the station and serving food of the highest quality. It has a fabulous view over the beach; at high tide the outlook is pleasing, but at low tide it is a good deal less so. One can see the short sea outfalls discharging at what is optimistically called the low water mark, which appears to be about 100 yd above the point to which the sea recedes at low tide. The beach is littered with supermarket trollies. For the life of me I cannot imagine why Britain does not adopt the practice of most continental countries and require a £1 coin to be deposited in the trolley, to be retrieved when it is returned. The beach, in any case, seems a favourite place for leaving them. There are other even less attractive things littering the beach, too.

It will be difficult to persuade my constituents that long sea outfalls, even properly screened, are the answer. They may well be, but people will have to be persuaded that whatever goes out through them has been properly screened and treated.

I agree with a great deal of what my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) said about full inland treatment. It gives me no pleasure to say this, but I find it hard to argue against water authorities when they tell me that inland water treatment has its own serious drawbacks; it usually results in extensive leaching into the water courses nearby. If we went over to such treatment we might have cleaner beaches but even dirtier rivers, so we would not have made much progress.

The costs of all this cleaning up have been bandied to and fro, as have the failures of the local authorities—a long time ago—and then of the nationalised water boards to take the necessary measures to clean up. Hon. Members who were in the House 10 or more years ago will have to acknowledge that the extreme unpopularity of the water rates featured in a great deal of the mail that we received. Rates were bad enough: water rates were regarded as intolerable. Regardless of party, we have a duty to make people aware that cleaning up the environment will be an expensive business.

I am not enthusiastic about the privatisation of water, but, whether it is privatised or not, we do our electors a disservice if we encourage them to believe that, because of or despite privatisation, water has suddenly become expensive. The plain fact is that it will have to be expensive to pay the interest charges. Whether it competes with other priorities in the Treasury or for money on the London money markets, water is going to cost us an awful lot of money and we must face up to that.

6.39 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The debate has shown how well advised my party was in its choice of topic. I congratulate all hon. Members who have contributed to the spirit of this interesting and in parts well-informed and constructive debate because the subject is not partisan and was chosen in an effort to draw attention to major problems affecting our coasts. Many hon. Members have spoken about their constituencies, and such matters are also relevant to the debate.

People are becoming increasingly concerned about the effects of pollution at sea. The hon. Member for Clwyd, West (Sir A. Meyer) and other hon. Members mentioned that. Public awareness is so high that people are rightly demanding action. In recent years the quality of our bathing water has deteriorated and the effects of pollution can be clearly seen. Sea discolouration is apparent along the north Wales coast and it is accompanied by a nauseating stench. There are also vast areas of rotting vegetation.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I agree that we have much to do to improve the quality of our beaches. However, what evidence has the hon. Gentleman to support the idea that the quality of our water has deteriorated over the past 10 or 15 years?

Mr. Jones: I shall not go down that road now, except to say that the European Commission has prosecuted the United Kingdom over the quality of our bathing waters. The Government have had 10 years to solve the problem and have failed to do so. I shall return to that.

The hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) need not worry about gatecrashing the debate; he made a valuable and constructive speech and I and my colleagues agreed with most of it. As he said, regular visitors see a deterioration in the environment. I shall try to deal with some of the problems that have been mentioned.

A letter sent by Llandudno town council on 28 February 1989 to me, other hon. Members and Welsh local authorities galvanised many of us into doing something about the issue. The letter states:

> "The Llandudno Council is becoming increasingly concerned about the continual pollution of the North Wales Coastal Waters: the Irish Sea and Liverpool Bay.
>
> Despite concern and outrage prompted by the recent scientific reports, action has not been taken by the Government to prohibit, or even substantially reduce, the practice of dumping human and industrial waste into these waters.
>
> It is hoped that as many MPs as possible will be prompted to ask questions in Parliament and saturate discussion with this issue."

We cannot say that we have saturated discussion with the issue, but at least we have had a debate about it and tried to respond constructively to concerns expressed by many people in our part of Wales.

I have been in touch with most local authorities in north Wales about the issue and every one which has so far responded has expressed the same concern. The problems have been highlighted in the debate and I shall try to sum them up. The first problem is the raw sewage that is discharged into the sea and its effect on bathing amenities. Water turbidity causes problems in the Menai straits

because raw sewage is not diluted and dispersed as quickly as in other areas, where it is washed out to sea and does not come back for a long time.

Hon. Members have mentioned sewage sludge. North West Water plc dumps 85,000 tonnes of sewage sludge into Liverpool bay every year, and there is evidence that such sludge contains unacceptably high levels of heavy metals which can have toxic effects on living organisms. Industrial wastes may contain mercury. Off Ynys Seiriol in my constituency, a cormorant was found to have died from a high concentration of mercury in the brain. Nitrates, phosphates and other chemicals are discharged into our rivers from the land and then reach the sea. Sunlight may react with those phosphates and nitrates to create algae on our beaches. Such matters worry our constituents, but they are not just local or minor matters; they affect both sides of the Irish sea and all countries in Britain. Such problems are not exclusive to Wales. I hope that the experience of people who live in all parts of the United Kingdom can be highlighted to galvanise the Government into further action.

We acknowledge that the Government have responded to the North sea conference. However, that was a reaction to international concerns that were expressed by countries in the European Community. The Government are occasionally prepared to bow to international pressure, but they do not seem to be so ready to bow to pressure in the United Kingdom. That is why we have used the debate to introduce local issues. As my hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) said, the Government could demonstrate their concern about pollution by agreeing to an intergovernmental conference at ministerial level on problems in the Irish sea. Because of the pressure resulting from such a conference, the Government would have to act much more quickly.

No doubt the Welsh Office is aware of research by the north Wales marine study group which has conducted important surveys in recent years. It is worried about the effect of pollution on sea life. Its members have conducted underwater observations and have been able to highlight some of the problems. The Government amendment has enabled us to widen the debate and that has been to everyone's advantage. However, as hon. Members have said, the amendment is extremely complacent. It is not good enough to place responsibility for cleaning up pollution purely and simply on the shoulders of private industry. The issue is wider than that.

I hope that Welsh Water and other water authorities, whether privatised or not, will spend money on cleaning up our beaches and on providing proper sewerage works. The matter cannot simply be left to private industry. Resources must be devoted to research which will show that work has to be undertaken. When that happens, the Government will have to face their responsibility and work alongside industry. The commitment is enormous and we have discussed a range of issues that require investment. My biggest charge against the Government—especially in terms of their amendment—is one of complacency. It seems to me that they are not prepared to work alongside private industry.

The proliferation of marine algae has caused much local disquiet. We are not sure where it comes from or what causes it, but there should be an in-depth survey, and the Government should fund independent research. If that research shows—as many of us believe that it will—that we still need to take action, I will then demand from the Government a commitment to play their part and provide resources to clean up our beaches, rivers and environment.

6.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): This has been an interesting short debate, and I congratulate Plaid Cymru Members on tabling the motion: this is a subject that interests all hon. Members. Hon. Members who come from the country—as I do—will remember that 20 years ago trout could be seen swimming in roadside streams. Now, although the water may be clear, there are no trout swimming in it. I am pleased to see poppies growing on the roadside again: many hon. Members will remember when they could be seen in the corn, although that is bad farming. It is a joy to see colour in the countryside again, as it is to see some hedges.

I am afraid that the debate has brought forward some of the old scare horses about the environment. I shall use this brief opportunity to knock some of them on the head, at least partially.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn, for instance, referred to mercury in Liverpool. Trace levels of mercury in sewage sludge licensed for sea dumping have fallen from less than 4·2 tonnes in 1976 to 1·1 tonnes in 1986. Mercury concentrates in Liverpool bay fish have fallen substantially, and are within international environmental quality standards.

Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) used the debate to mount a small political attack. I thank him for his welcome of my return—although I did not appreciate his non-appreciation of my beard, of which Mr. Speaker seemed to think rather more highly. Nevertheless, he should know that Government policy is to allow the wastes about which he complained to be imported only for specialist treatment or incineration, and that transfrontier movement for direct landfill should be exceptional and take place only when permitted by the importing country.

We believe that advanced industrialised countries—those belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—should deal with their own wastes, and that is the line that we are taking in international discussions. It is now Community policy that the Community as a whole should be self-sufficient, as should individual countries. Our intention is to reduce the volume of waste to the environmentally justified minimum.

It is our clear intention that the volume of waste brought to this country—although small when compared with imports by other countries—should be reduced. To that end, enabling powers to prohibit or restrict waste imports are included in the Environmental Protection Bill. The powers are enabling because of the need to agree the detail in negotiations still under way in the EC and the OECD.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) spoke of the living conditions of some of his constituents. I came to know that area when I was a candidate in his constituency 20 years ago. I remember listening to a broadcast on Welsh radio about a year ago: a gentleman from Blaengwynfi was speaking about a visit from the then Secretary of State for Wales—my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker). He said that my right hon. Friend had done more for the Afan

[Mr. Ian Grist]

valley than any previous Secretary of State for Wales, including presumably his own constituency Member. When asked whether he would be supporting the Conservative party he replied, "Good heavens no, I'm a communist." That is the thanks we get, but never mind.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon also referred to the staffing of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. At present there are three HMIP officers in the Welsh Office, and another who is based in Cardiff and involved with air pollution. The HMIP office was created in 1987 and originally had 148 staff in post; it now has 211. It is recruiting hard. The complement has been raised to 250, and inspectors' salaries were increased by 20 per cent. last autumn. They are being kept under review, and we are recruiting actively. Therefore, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's fears are misplaced.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) referred to dolphins. It is known that persistent organic pollutants such as polychlorinated biphenyls—PCBs—accumulate in the blubber of dolphins, and they were identified in the body of a young bottle-nosed dolphin found in 1988 in Cardigan bay. However, the general background level of pollutants in the Cardigan bay area was very low, with PCBs below detectable levels. Therefore, there is no obvious source of contaminants.

The other day my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory)—the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—announced a project to fund analytical work related to the post mortem of cetaceans. The project will run for one year, and the Welsh Office is contributing to the cost. Hon. Members will know that, at the third North sea conference this year, it was agreed to destroy PCBs by 1995 if possible, and definitely by 1999 at the latest.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North also referred to the Irish sea in general. In 1988, the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas—a highly regarded international scientific body of the kind to which the hon. Member for Ynys Môn and others have referred, and which is concerned with all aspects of marine environment in the north Atlantic area—undertook a review of current knowledge of human influences in the Irish sea. His message was clear: it argued that, while there were localised pollution problems in the Irish sea, they were essentially minor, and the resulting problems short-lived. It described the claims of abnormal plankton blooms caused by human activity as unconfirmed or speculative, and said that it had no reason to suppose that observed fluctuations and change in plankton and zoo-plankton were anything but natural. Examination of seal carcases found that seals were accumulating heavy metals and other persistent contaminants, but not at levels likely to cause death.

In what he referred to as a rather emotional speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) referred to a brownish slick which everyone has seen off Anglesey. There have been reports from local fishermen about this brownish discoloration. As we have heard tonight, it is alleged to have been caused by sewage sludge or by waste from the road construction project at Conwy —the remarkable tunnels for the A55.

An analysis commissioned by the agricultural department at the Welsh Office through MAFF's Caernarfon office ruled out sewage pollution. As for the road construction theory, no dumping has taken place within the past 12 months. The National Rivers Authority is exploring the possibility that the discolouration has been caused by an erosion of boulder clay during the exceptional winter storms, the clay having been kept in suspension. The results of the authority's investigations are awaited.

The motion begins by deploring the dumping of industrial waste and sewage sludge in the Irish sea. No industrial waste is dumped in the Irish sea, nor will any be dumped in any of the seas round Britain by 1992. Sewage sludge from north-west England is dumped in the Irish sea under MAFF licence, and that will end—as announced —by 1998. I should point out that assessments made by MAFF about the impact of dumping show that it has no implications for the ecosystem of the Irish sea.

Many, if not all, hon. Members will have felt concern about the pumping of untreated sewage into our seas—more particularly when the outfall is close to the shore, but even when there is a long sea outfall. That is why last year the Government announced a £1·4 billion programme to improve our bathing waters, and why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced, on 5 March, a new additional programme costing £1·5 billion, whereby all sewage would be treated before being discharged to estuarial or coastal waters. Current measures involve the ending of sewage sludge dumping, and the treatment of all sewage discharged to sea. Some works, such as those at Lavernock—to which the hon. Member for Torfaen referred—will change, because of the change in design, from the proposed long sea outfall to one where sewage will in future be treated.

We shall give priority to introducing treatment for bathing waters that fail the bathing water directive. Hon. Members will be pleased to know that the remaining Welsh beaches at Llandudno west shore will comply with the directive by 1993, Rhyl and Kinmel bay by 1994 and the remaining Welsh beaches by 1995. That is an extraordinarily good change. The House will note the enormous sums being invested in cleaning up what we have inherited, and the new freedom that the establishment of the private water companies has given us. We are set for a clean environment under the Government.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 156, Noes 297.

Division No. 285] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Blunkett, David
Allen, Graham	Boyes, Roland
Alton, David	Bradley, Keith
Anderson, Donald	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Canavan, Dennis
Ashton, Joe	Carr, Michael
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Clay, Bob
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Clelland, David
Beckett, Margaret	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Beggs, Roy	Cousins, Jim
Beith, A. J.	Cox, Tom
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Cryer, Bob
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Bermingham, Gerald	Dalyell, Tam

Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain

Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the major programme of investment to be undertaken by the privatised water companies to improve the quality of water and the comprehensive measures outlined in the Environmental Protection Bill; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the positive lead it is giving in areas of environmental concern; and looks forward to the publication of the Government's White Paper on the Environment later this year.

Social Security Bill (Allocation of Time)

7.12 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott: I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [28th March] be supplemented as follows:—

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, subject to the provisions of the Order of 28th March, those proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion three hours after the commencement of proceedings on this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;
(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and
(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments, on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

The motion provides for a total of three hours debate both on the motion itself and on Lords amendments to the Bill. I do not intend to detain the House overlong, as I hope that there will be general agreement that we should move quickly to debating the important issues before us.

I make no apology for asking the House to agree that we should limit the debate on our consideration of these matters to three hours. The House will know that we do not introduce such motions lightly. I am especially mindful of the passionate speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) in the debate on the original timetable motion moved by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House on Report on 28 March.

The House will expect me clearly to set out why we are taking this further step. The motion is being introduced in the knowledge that the Bill is not an especially sizeable piece of Government legislation—it has only 23 clauses and seven schedules. Nevertheless, it has had a great deal of time devoted to it—I believe, its fair share of time—both here and in another place. To date, it has had 50 hours of debate on the Floor of the House and in Committee, and a further 30 hours in another place. Much of that time has been well spent as it has provided opportunities for amendments to the original Bill that have been widely welcomed, especially those on the pensions provisions and on the clause dealing with income support in residential homes. We have responded to debate and consultation both here and elsewhere and we have made important changes. There will be further evidence tonight of the Government's willingness to listen to Parliament.

The Bill has had a good run and the timetable motion is being introduced in the knowledge that only a limited amount of business remains. I have no doubt that the House will wish to spend some time debating benefit entitlement for students and, perhaps, the scheme for the recovery of benefit from tort damage awards. However, the bulk of the remaining amendments made to the Bill by another place are minor and technical and should not long detain us.

I emphasise that it is important for social security issues to be debated regularly and fully in Parliament. The contributions made during debates are almost invariably thoughtful and sincere, although I would not suggest for one moment that it always provides a comfortable time for Ministers or that the Government agree with everything that is said. However, it is important to remember both the limited time that we have available for the business tonight and the fact that there will be other formal occasions on which such debates will arise—for example, those that arise from the annual uprating statement and the associated orders.

I very much hope that the sensible motion for the timetabling of the business is acceptable to the House.

7.15 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): In an understandably and desirably short introduction, the Minister referred to minor and technical changes and suggested that the remaining business could be dealt with easily within the proposed three hours. I want to set out the Opposition's reasons for believing that such a timetable is pitifully and unreasonably short.

As hon. Members are only too well aware, the Government have already guillotined the Bill's proceedings. Since then, at least four highly significant changes have been made in another place. In particular, an issue is now developing that could blow up into a serious constitutional argument between this House and another place, especially in the wake of the War Crimes Bill. I am referring to the rights of students, especially post-graduates, to retain entitlement to housing benefit unless adequate alternative compensation is made. As I shall show, that is not being provided for in the Government's proposals. The issue incenses not only the Opposition, but widespread, independent and informed opinion outside this place. It has united 21 full-time academics and 12 university vice-chancellors in another place—mostly on the Cross-Benches—in opposition to the Government. Above all, it is a vital issue affecting the basic interests of hundreds of thousands of students, yet it has never been debated in this place.

We are now being allotted a mere three hours to debate not only the timetable motion, but the 20 Lords amendments that the Government are seeking either to amend or to overturn, plus other Lords amendments. That is the same abuse of the principles of parliamentary debate as Lord Justice Purchas complained of so bitterly last week, when he excoriated the Government for what he called wholesale and unregulated powers taken by the Secretary of State over the administration of the social fund. In his judgment, he assumed that Homer nodded—in other words, that Parliament had been asleep. In fact, we were not asleep; we were simply overriden by the juggernaut of the Government's guillotine. I advise the judge—or, indeed, any other judge—that on this occasion Homer is not nodding. We are protesting with the greatest vigour at our disposal about what we might call the laughable—if it were not so objectionable—truncating of the time for debate of what is fast becoming a significant constitutional issue.

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

It is not only the manifest and blatant injustice of withdrawing the entitlement of students to housing benefit that is being squeezed into a three-hour debate; there is also the significant losses being inflicted on disabled people and the nasty little issue of the Government's proposal to deduct social security benefits from the Motor Insurers Bureau's compensation payments. That is on top of the Government's action in deducting social security benefits from compensation payments for industrial injury, so that the injured worker ends up with very little—and nothing for his pain and suffering. That matter also needs adequate time for debate.

In addition, there are the Government's highly objectionable proposals to restrict entitlement in cases of error. The McKiernon judgment laid down that the rule that limited claims to five years from the time of the industrial injury was ultra vires. The Government are now advancing the constitutionally dubious doctrine that what was ruled to be illegal shall be made retroactively legal. Furthermore, the Government are introducing a new doctrine on the backdating of claims. They propose that a successful claim shall be backdated only to the date of the commissioner's decision rather than to the actual date of the claim itself. In other words, if the Department of Social Security gets the law wrong, the new law will deem that it got it right up to the point that it was told of its error. That is manifest nonsense. Those matters, too, urgently require adequate time for debate.

There are two other aspects that are new to the Bill since it left this House. One concerns the real danger of eviction of elderly people from residential and nursing homes as a consequence of what is still a major shortfall in income support, even after the Secretary of State's concession. The other is the £10 disregard for lone parents, to give them an incentive to claim maintenance from the absent parent. A whole range of other issues arise in the 20 Lords amendments. One is equal pensionable ages for men and women in respect of money purchase schemes. That is a major issue, if ever there was one, but we may not even have time to debate it tonight.

Other matters clearly require further and proper debate, but that will be denied by the guillotine. It will preclude discussion of the many outstanding social security issues, such as the continued freezing of child benefit, and abuse of natural rights under the social fund—which is regularly the subject of judicial attack. There is also the removal of all benefit rights from 16 and 17-year-olds, and the worsening plight of homeless families. To restrict debate on all the Lords amendments to only three hours makes a mockery of the principle of adequate parliamentary debate. To do so when one group of those amendments has huge financial implications strikes at the heart of our further and higher education system, and has never previously been debated in this House is, by any standards, an outrage.

I cannot believe that every Conservative Member denies that we are justified in rejecting the guillotine with a vote. Our only reason for not doing so is that we do not intend to collude with the Government in restricting even further the time available for debate. It is wrong and unprincipled to confine debate on 20 Lords amendments to three hours. Having made our position clear, we intend to concentrate debating time and the maximum number of votes on the subject of those amendments, to which we are so strongly opposed.

7.23 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): This is another preposterous motion to guillotine debate on issues of enormous importance to people who crave our help and concern for problems that most right hon. and hon. Members have never had to face. The problems of disabled students, to which several of the Lords amendments refer, alone merit a three-hour debate in this House.

There need be no speculation about the effect of the Government's motion. It will make impossible any debate on many of the amendments and that alone is a parliamentary outrage, yet even the amendments that will be dealt with must be debated with insulting brevity in what remains of the three hours the Government are allowing for debate on the motion and the amendments as a whole. It is put to me by one severely disabled person that even some of the most dictatorial regimes across the world allow more consideration of disputes over social policy than this House will be permitted by the motion before us.

The more we try to do justice to any particular amendment this evening, the less time we shall have to debate others. That happened when our debates on Report and Third Reading on the Bill were guillotined and I want to describe briefly just one of the consequences. We had no time then—just as we shall have no opportunity this evening, despite the summary dispatch of other issues—even to discuss a provision the Government inserted into the Bill that will cheat of disablement benefit a huge number of people who have been deafened by their work or who suffer from industrial asthma.

In the case of my constituent Mr. Frank McKiernon, now aged 74 and a victim of occupational deafness, it was unanimously held by the Court of Appeal that the Government acted illegally in denying him disablement benefit. They were also refused leave to appeal to the House of Lords. The Government's reaction to the referee's decision was not one of apology but of defiance. Having been given the red card, as it were, they resolved to sit it out on the pitch and then to use force majeure to change the rule book.

The Government decided, without giving their intentions any publicity, to use this Social Security Bill to reverse Mr. McKiernon's legal victory in the Court of Appeal. The guillotining of our consideration of the Bill had helped the Government both to avoid publicity for a tactic that is bitterly resented by the disabled people affected and to duck the debate that there ought to have been, or should be now, in this House.

The Government will save more than £100 million by their action, while countless thousands of deaf people and victims of industrial asthma will have the right given to them by the Court of Appeal taken away. Warm praise is due to Peter Rosenfeld of Wythenshawe citizens advice bureau for his work on Mr. McKiernon's case. My constituent's legal adviser, Richard Poynter, to whom great credit must also go for his handling of the case, says in a scorching criticism of the Government:

"For the DSS to change the law retrospectively in order to cheat a disabled old age pensioner of his court victory is an act of petty spite. Once again, the Department is putting itself above the law by changing the rules to suit itself after the

event rather than obey them while they are in force. Its vindictive action against Mr. McKiernon shows the Government's contempt for the rule of law."

That is a grave charge against the Government, one that merits vigorous debate, but there will be no opportunity even to express a view.

By their guillotine, the Government have succeeded in enacting the most odious kind of retrospective legislation, of which Lord Boyd-Carpenter, from the Conservative Benches in another place, described as "oppressive" and which everyone else who knows what is happening condemns as a shocking abuse of power.

It would be a stain on the reputation of this House for the Government to go unchallenged. Nothing more clearly shows the harm that has been done already by guillotining our consideration of the Bill and the authoritarian nature of the Governnent's further curtailment of parliamentary scrutiny of its provisions.

7.27 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I wholly applaud the attitude taken by the official Opposition in forgoing an extensive debate on the guillotine motion, so that we can spend the valuable time remaining considering the substantive issues that are before us.

I accept that Government need to resort to a guillotine in Committee and put their proposals to the House when a Bill is first presented. Sometimes, Opposition parties collectively decide to use time as a weapon. If I were the Government, in such cases I would reluctantly resort to the guillotine—but this evening we face a very different situation. The membership of the House of Lords includes many people of high standing and of considerable expertise in particular areas. That is particularly true of their knowledge of the academic world, and many of the amendments before us have a direct bearing on our educational system and the way that students are financed. For this House to skate over decisions taken by the other place, after full consideration, is wrong and is in a completely different category from the guillotines to which Governments resort when a Bill is being considered in Committee.

I have never been behind the curtain of secrecy in any Government Department. The Minister may say that I am the better for that. Perhaps it will never happen but I live in hope. However, the Minister's Department has the benefit of social security Bills each year. This issue will not be left to languish for three or four years. We cannot anticipate what will be in the next Queen's Speech, but unless something unusual happen the Department knows that there will be an opportunity in the next Session to address these important issues within a more appropriate time scale. The Department therefore has no excuse for rushing through these provisions, which will result in ill-digested legislation.

I do not know what power Ministers have over the authorities of the House and the Leader of the House. However, social security matters are getting slightly out of hand. The courts of the land, as well as Opposition Members, are now saying with monotonous regularity that the means by which we are implementing technical changes to a very technical social security system is not good enough. The Government's ill-digested legislation will lead to future problems. They will have to introduce yet more guillotines if they want future social security Bills to reach the statute book. Conservative Members should also be worried; their constituents will suffer from the effects of ill-digested legislation.

This is an issue of the House of Commons. Whatever view I may take of the contents of the Bill, the House is right to object strongly and loudly at its treatment. If we do not object, what will happen? The trend will get worse. I do not know whether it is the Department or the Leader of the House who keeps saying, "Don't worry; we'll slip this through in three hours. We did it last year and we got away with it; we had only a few court cases to clear up as a result. We've got to get our timetable through, so don't worry about that." It is a scandalous way to deal with legislation. If hon. Members did not take the opportunity to say so at this stage, it would be a great disgrace, and we should be doing a great disservice to the House of Commons.

7.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I shall be brief, in the interests of allowing hon. Members to debate the important amendments that have come to us from another place. However, I must repeat what my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People said at the beginning; timetable motions are not tabled lightly. The motion, however, provides us with sufficient time to consider the amendments.

The Bill has been given a fair amount of parliamentary time, both here and in another place. It will lead to changes in social security benefits for the disabled and provide greater protection for members of occupational pension schemes. The Bill includes interim measures to help lone parent families to obtain maintenance. It also makes changes to the law relating to income support and various other benefits, including national insurance contributions.

It is a short Bill; it contains 23 clauses and seven schedules. Eighty hours of debate have already been devoted to it. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) referred to a number of social security matters, as well as to the Lords amendments. I remind him that we are debating not the Bill as a whole but the Lords amendments. He referred to the McKiernon case, as did the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). I remind them that Mr. McKiernon was granted an award last week, including substantial arrears.

There will be an opportunity for the House to debate a number of the detailed issues raised by the hon. Member for Oldham, West and the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, who, I know, has a particular interest in disabled students. As long as we make progress, we shall have time adequately to consider the Lords amendments. I do not apologise for the number of Government amendments that have been brought here from the Lords for consideration. The vast majority are minor, technical changes. The House understands the complexity of the law, notably the law relating to pensions. I repeat that we regret having to introduce a timetable motion. However, it is important for the smooth conduct of both the remaining stages of the Bill and parliamentary business as a whole. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Lords amendment: No. 1, after Clause 2 insert the following new Clause—

Income support: disabled students

" . The following paragraph is inserted at the end of paragraph (c) of section 20(3) of the 1986 Act—

"(cc) he is a disabled person and he is participating in a course of higher education and he fulfills the conditions in paragraphs (a) to (c) of this subsection;"."

7.34 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3 and the Government motions to disagree with those Lords amendments.

Mr. Scott: I ought to explain that, when Mr. Speaker's original selection list was issued, Lords amendments Nos. 7, 8 and 9 were to be considered alongside Lords amendments Nos. 1, 2 and 3. As a result of discussions through the usual channels, it was agreed that it would be more convenient if we split consideration of the amendments.

This group of amendments brings us to the issue of students' entitlement to social security benefits. Wearing my hat as Minister for Disabled People, I initially approached Lords amendments Nos. 1 to 3 with some sympathy. They relate to the position of disabled students and how we propose to define and indentify those who will remain eligible for income support and housing benefit. Despite my sympathy, however, I intend to explain why I believe that the amendments should not remain on the face of the Bill. May I also explain briefly why we have taken the unusual step of making proof copies of the social Security Advisory Committee report on the draft student loan amendment regulations available to the House before the regulations are laid.

You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there has been a good deal of speculation in the press about the content of the committee's report, much of it wide of the mark. There were also a number of references to the report during the debates in another place. In these circumstances, and in view of the interest that hon. Members have already demonstrated in the subject, we thought that it would be helpful and to put proof copies of the SSAC's report in the Library and to make copies available in the Vote office in order to ensure that the House was as fully informed as possible before today's debate. It would, of course, have been inappropriate for the Government to lay the regulations before the House had taken a view on amendments that would affect the scope of the regulations. I hope, therefore, that hon. Members will agree that this unusual step was sensible and helpful.

The amendments seek to introduce a definition of a disabled student, based on the criteria used for the local authority register of disability. I have already said that I have some sympathy with the intentions underlying the amendments. However, they are seriously defective and I shall seek the House's agreement to overturn them. Rather than quibbling about the precise technical drafting of the amendments, I shall confine my comments to the intention that lies behind them, which I understand.

I am certainly aware of the concerns expressed by hon. Members and their Lordships about the position of certain disabled students under the new arrangements for student support, which will take effect from the next academic year. We, too, recognise the special circumstances of students in vulnerable groups, including the disabled. We have always intended to preserve their entitlement to housing benefit and income support. Our views have differed only in defining what we mean by a disabled student for the purposes of benefit entitlement.

Perhaps it would be helpful if I explained what our original proposals were and our reasons for putting them forward. The draft regulations that were referred to the SSAC in February provided for the continuation of income support and housing benefit entitlement for those students who meet the criteria for the disability premium and, additionally, any student who had previously met the definition of a disabled student under existing income support regulations.

In practice, we expect most—if not all—students who have met that income support definition to meet the new one. However, because the old definition is based on the decision of an adjudication officer, it could not be imported into the housing benefit system. The housing benefit scheme operates without adjudication officers and it was therefore important to establish clear and straightforward qualifying conditions which it would be easy for local authorities to apply efficiently.

The criteria for the disability premium are based on the receipt of one or more of the disability benefits, long-term incapacity for work or registered blindness. These criteria are now well established in the income-related benefits and are being successfully applied both by local authorities and by local Department of Social Security offices. We felt that the criteria would cover a sufficiently broad spectrum of disability to pick up those students who face significant extra living costs because of their disability. Moreover, they could be clearly expressed in regulations and would be familiar both to claimants and to those administering the schemes. The House will have noted from the copies of the report that have been placed in the Library that the Social Security Advisory Committee also believed the definition to offer a reasonable and practicable yardstick.

The existence of the premium structure in the income-related benefits recognises the fact that certain groups of people face additional financial burdens. The disability premium is no different in that respect. However, I should stress that neither the disability premium nor disability benefits generally are intended to cater for the special educational needs of students with disabilities. In our proposed definition we therefore sought to identify students who face additional daily living costs that were not necessarily consequent on their attendance at a course of education.

I am sure that hon. Members who have studied these affairs will not need reminding that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has substantially enhanced the financial assistance available

through the disabled students allowance. Those improvements will provide a good deal of support for disabled students to help them with their particular educational needs.

A number of debates have now taken place on disabled students—during our proceedings on this Bill and during the passage of the Education (Student Loans) Act 1990. In those debates the position of deaf students was of particular concern. Indeed, their Lordships' debate on the amendments before us focused almost entirely on those students, although the amendments would go substantially wider.

In one respect, however, I believe that the criteria suggested by the amendments would not go far enough towards meeting their Lordships' wishes. It would not be possible to identify deaf students in Scotland. Registration with the local authority of the kind operated in England and Wales does not exist north of the border, and there is no register of any sort for the deaf. It would therefore be impossible under those amendments for housing benefit officers and DSS administrators to identify the group at issue.

We have considered carefully the concerns expressed in both Houses and those voiced by organisations representing deaf people. As a result, I am pleased to report to the House that we propose to consult the local authority associations on draft regulations which will preserve the income support and housing benefit entitlement of students who are entitled to a disabled students allowance by reason of deafness. Incidentally, under these arrangements we would include any student who has such an additional requirement indicated on his notice of award, even if, because of the means of testing of the disabled students allowance, the student was not actually entitled to payment of that allowance.

That criterion will be additional to those that we have already proposed, and we will aim to have it in place for the start of the next academic year, subject to the consultation with the local authority associations. To allow adequate time for the consultation, I propose to lay the necessary regulations, which will be subject to the negative procedure, after the main body of regulations.

We believe that an extension of the present proposed arrangements to include deaf students who are entitled to a disabled students allowance recognises the needs and concerns expressed in this Chamber and elsewhere. In view of the Government's willingness to meet the concerns voiced on behalf of deaf students, and bearing in mind the defective nature of the amendments, I urge the House to reject them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have to inform the House that Lords amendments Nos. 1 and 2 both involve privilege.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Time for this debate is now so strictly rationed that I must necessarily deal only very briefly with these important amendments. In doing so, I note that the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), which would have had our support, has not been selected for debate.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and me, the hon. Gentleman is a trustee of the fund that Lord Snowdon so generously founded to help meet the costs incurred by students with disabilities for which there is no statutory provision. Work with that important fund strongly emphasises the truth that all such students by definition—and not least those who are deaf—have problems over and above those experienced by the generality of students. That is why I warmly welcomed the Lords amendments when they were accepted in the other place.

The Government oppose the Lords amendments in the terms in which they are drafted. In the case of the Minister for Disabled People, I am sure that he does so with some serious and sincere misgivings. The Minister has clearly lost at least part of a battle with the Treasury, and my purpose this evening is to make our contribution to ensuring that the overwhelming public support for the Lords amendments is properly reflected in this House.

7.45 pm

I sometimes have the feeling that, if the Lords were to dare even to amend factual or spelling errors in their legislation, Social Security Ministers would now be made to move,

"That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment."

In supporting the Lords amendments, we on the Opposition Benches are concerned to correct now the unacceptable effects of the Bill as it left this House and to vouchsafe to all students who are disabled the retention of their entitlements to housing benefit and income support.

The Government have recently stated that deaf students are among those least likely to incur extra weekly costs because of their disabilities and, therefore, that they should not continue to receive such help. That is not true. By design, housing benefit and income support are not intended to cover additional costs. They are income maintenance benefits and, in fact, the Government failed in the other place to respond to a direct challenge made to them by Lady Darcy de Knayth on this point.

The Royal National Institute for the Deaf has shown that, unlike other students, those who are deaf cannot top up their maintenance grants with earned income. They have to spend longer on their studies due to communication difficulties and, even if part-time or casual work in vacations or in the evenings is not an impractical option for them, they are seen by many employers as "difficult" employees. That is because they often have to rely on lip-speaking or sign language interpreters for effective communication. The Minister for Disabled People knows all this as well as I do, just as he knows that, by its very nature, part-time and casual work for students —which is often waitressing, bar or reception work—is not always suitable for deaf people.

There is much statistical evidence that deaf people not only find it harder to obtain jobs but are, on average, paid less than people who can hear. In that regard, deaf students face problems similar to those faced by other disabled students whose vulnerability is already identified. They are undoubtedly much more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than able-bodied people with the same qualifications. There is, of course, no shortage of able-bodied students looking for part-time or casual work. That is just one of the difficulties in which students with disabilities find themselves today.

From many recent case studies undertaken by the RNID, I want to cite just one to illustrate the way in which deaf students, through no fault of their own, can be worse off than their peers. A deaf student at London university

had numerous applications for part-time and casual work rejected. At long last, her persistence was rewarded by the offer of a job handing out magazines at tube stations in the mornings. But she was unable to keep the job, as it involved phoning in each morning at 5 am to confirm that she was coming and to receive details of the station at which she would be required to work that day.

In a letter to Lord Henderson of Brompton dated 17 May, Baroness Blatch for the Government referred to the problem of providing straightforward criteria

"which can be clearly expressed in regulations and readily understood by those who administer the benefits and, indeed, by those who might claim them."

But that is not a problem as far as deaf students are concerned.

The Minister said that he will now be consulting local authorities about definition, but is it not already solved? The clinically accepted levels at which people are judged to have a significant hearing loss can be used. Those levels, approved by the British Society of Audiology, were initiated by the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf. Their use would be a straightforward basis for assessing entitlement to the retention of existing benefits. All hearing-impaired students who can benefit from hearing aids must have regular audiograms and the proof that they offer could be simply understood by those administering benefits. I hope that the Minister will accept that the RNID, in its briefing for this debate, has already provided the way forward in solving the difficulties about definition to which he referred.

In supporting the Lords amendments, we are not asking for deaf students now to have their educational needs subsidised by social security payments. On the contrary, we are saying that deaf students should not have to use for other purposes the money given to them for essential communication support and equipment in the course of their studies. Before the introduction of the new allowances, deaf students often had to use their maintenance grants to provide educational support. Unless they all retain existing benefits, as I hope will now very soon be confirmed, further to the Minister's welcome statement, the opposite will happen and they will be left in financial hardship.

In a letter that I received today, Lord Renwick states that the Dyslexia Educational Trust is trying to make a similar case on behalf of dyslexics. I am sure that there are right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House who will want to help if parliamentary opportunities occur to argue the trust's claims. Nothing in all my years in this place gave me more pleasure than to legislate on the educational needs of dyslexics in the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. The Minister clearly does not intend to help them now. Sadly, he said nothing that took account of the claim of the Dyslexia Educational Trust for very urgent consideration of the needs of dyslexic students.

I should like the Government to think very carefully again about definition. In the case of students who are deaf, we are discussing perhaps no more than 300 whose problems are already daunting enough without adding to those of any one of them by rejecting the Lords amendments. The cost of helping them all is minuscule. In his statement the Minister said nothing about the anticipated cost, but it is clearly very small. He knows as well as I do that disabled students passionately want to succeed, by their studies, in exchanging dependence on social security for the independence of having a job and becoming a taxpayer. It would be wrong to mock their brave efforts by rejecting the opportunity to help all of them given to us by the Lords amendments.

If the Government refuse to listen to those who support the Lords in their amendments, I hope that the other place will stand by them if they are not satisfied with the response that we are given.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I very much welcome the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People about deaf students. I have been very concerned that the Government were taking the wrong path in seeking to exclude deaf and dyslexic students from entitlement to income support and housing benefit. We had been given repeated assurances at meetings of the all-party disablement group and on the Floor of the House that disabled students would retain entitlement to social security benefits.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) gave that assurance during the Committee stage of the Education (Student Loans) Act 1990. In a letter on 15 January to the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, he stated:

"I do not believe that the loans scheme will penalise deaf students or those with disabilities. On the contrary, the terms of the scheme—retention of benefit entitlement—are designed with their needs very much in mind."

There was no question of only some disabled students getting the benefit and it was therefore a bit of a surprise and a disappointment to find a different definition of disability introduced in the draft regulations. That definition would have excluded deaf students while entitlement to the disabled students allowance, which the Government have generously increased and extended, included all those disabilities that cause extra costs and earnings problems for students.

The argument put forward to me in a parliamentary answer on 7 March was that deaf students are unlikely

"to have additional weekly living expenses because of their disability . . . that income support and housing benefit are intended to meet."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1990; Vol. 168; c. *681*.]

I am pleased that that argument has now been overturned because it was completely illogical to say that those benefits are not and never have been designed to meet extra disability costs. They are, of course, income maintenance benefits.

As the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) said, much of the casual and part-time work for students is in restaurants, bars and in reception work in hotels. Those are not usually suitable jobs for deaf people or dyslexic students. Those students take much longer to study at college or university and they must work extra hours catching up on their notes for their lectures and tutorials. They do not have the opportunity to work part-time, even if jobs were suitable for them.

I understand the definition problems that certainly confronted my right hon. Friend the Minister and which benefit officers might face in identifying those groups with learning difficulties. That is why I and my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) tabled an amendment which was not selected. It was drawn up in conjunction with organisations representing deaf and dyslexic students and it was a genuine attempt to provide some criteria that would be useful for the assessment by benefit officers.

The question of cost should not really enter this matter. We are talking of only about 300 deaf students and probably a similar number of dyslexic students. No one in this House would want those deserving participants in higher education to be placed in an invidious position.

When talking about numbers, it bothers me that little accurate information is available about the number of disabled students in higher education. I hope that, in future, a much more detailed attempt will be made by the Department of Education and Science and my right hon. and hon. Friends to examine that matter and carefully to monitor the effect of any of the changes on the number of disabled students. I sincerely hope that we shall not see a reduction in the number of disabled university students.

Notwithstanding the very welcome concession by my right hon. Friend, I hope that we shall not forget dyslexic students and others with learning difficulties. I am sure that that matter will come back into focus. I hope that we shall look at their position again. I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend. He has always been most helpful in considering the problem of deaf students. His announcement will certainly be wholeheartedly welcomed by people concerned with deaf students. I congratulate him and I shall be happy to support him in the Lobby tonight.

8 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I wholeheartedly support the pleas that were made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), and the amendment in the names of the hon. Members for Exeter and for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). I had hoped that hon. Members would have a chance to discuss that amendment in detail, but we cannot do so because it has not been selected. We can do nothing about it.

I hope that the Minister will say more about the consultations that the Government have announced. He is right that there is no register of deaf students in Scotland. If there are to be such consultations, I hope that the system north of the border will get the benefit of any agreements or changes that flow from the consultations. I should be obliged if the Minister would say a word about that matter and reassure me. I agree with the hon. Member for Exeter on the need to monitor the position. If the Government are minded not to heed what has been said in this House and in the other place and intend to stick to their guns with this proposal, I hope that we shall get an assurance that there will be careful monitoring in the coming months and years to make sure that the number of students does not drop as a result of additional financial difficulties.

The Government have made no case in this argument, which is essentially about administrative convenience. I do not underestimate that; I do not wish to make light of the difficulties. However, the amendment to which I referred is a good attempt to try to categorise in clear, definable and understandable terms to those who follow these things, the extension of the definition of students with disabilities. It is difficult to balance that against the individual needs of students. The amendment, the discussions and the suggestions that we have heard are perfectly reasonable, sensible and workable ways in which to proceed.

If hon. Members stick to the proposal as it stands and disagree with the Lords amendments, we shall have a system that is administratively more convenient and easier to oversee, but it is inevitable that individuals will lose out substantially because their circumstances are not properly addressed by the broad brush approach that the Government are taking.

I agree with everything that hon. Members have said, and I hope that the Government will take account of it. The number of students about whom we are talking cannot possibly mean that the amount of money and resources to be deployed are an issue. Therefore, I cannot understand why the Government cannot accept the arguments that have been put so logically and lucidly.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I was very happy to join my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) in backing the amendment. I too was sorry that the amendment was not selected, because it has a number of possibilities for debate and would have been helpful in the theatre of disabled students. However, the point that we are able to debate is the excellent proposal that was put forward by my right hon. Friend the Minister, which will assist deaf students.

I must at once declare several interests. My first interest, apart from those who are profoundly deaf, is that I sincerely hope and believe that, in the foreseeable future, which should be very soon, deafness will not be considered a handicap any more than short sight, which can be fully corrected by spectacles, is considered a handicap. We have a large gulf between the situation today and that perfect position that I outlined. That gulf, I hope, is being bridged by new provisions of hearing aids.

The correct hearing aids exist, but people are simply not getting them. That is due to large defects in the system, which I have outlined to the House before and I shall not go into it again, but I do not mean to stop pressing that cause. We should be able to obtain hearing aids on the high street, just as readily as we can obtain spectacles. A surgeon wrote to me in horror, asking:

"Miss Nicholson, how could you be proposing this? Do you wish us to end up like the United States of America, where people can buy hearing aids in the supermarket?"

I most certainly do, because easy access to appropriate hearing aids means that most deaf people will not have to be considered handicapped. Once one has a proper hearing aid or proper spectacles, one is not handicapped.

I do not for a moment turn aside from the enormous and permanent difficulties that the profoundly deaf will always face. Even if, perhaps, that a large proportion of people who are partially hearing—or course, that includes those with a decibel loss above 45 decibels—have the correct hearing aids, they will need additional aids also. If we identify the need for income support and for housing benefits, additional money is required, because, to wake up in the morning, they need a different alarm clock. One may need something unique and special under one's pillow to bump one awake. One may need help with one's doorbell or telephone.

The great problem with being a student—I recall it so well from my time in the Royal Academy of Music—is that one never has any money. To get additional helps and aids, one must find the money somewhere. The rest of the world may not be able to supply them. How excellent it is that this new proposal will give the funds to provide additional aids for students.

As other hon. Members have already mentioned, the great problem is finding employment. As we all know, finding employment for the disabled is excruciatingly

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

difficult throughtout their entire would-be working lives. I say "would-be working lives" because, when students stop studying and seek work, whether they are leaving school, higher education, college or university, they have four or five times the difficulty of able-bodied students with no handicap. That is why it is so difficult for deaf students and many other disabled students to find work. It is really tough for them to try to earn their living during vacations, even though people with some form of deafness are marvellous employees, just as any other student is a good employee. Society's bias against disabled students, rather than the students themselves, is at fault.

Is it not true that one cannot look upon a human being as someone who is disabled? One sees a human being who has one or more than one motor function that is functioning at a lesser level than that of other people's, and that is all there is to disability.

We need money for disabled students who have a degree of deafness, in particular until proper hearing aids are readily available on the high street to people who need them. We shall always need additional help for deaf students because of their great difficulties in finding employment until employers throughout the British Isles are prepared to set aside their biases, use the grants that the Government have put forward for adapting their workplaces, and make employment more generally available.

The difficulties of definition have already been referred to. It has been suggested that graphs of hearing loss might be available to authorities, which could then decide who was aurally disabled. The great problem is that only a tiny fraction of those who need hearing aids obtain them. That means that only a fraction of those who need aid will receive a grant. Therefore, I beg my right hon. Friends and anybody else who is concerned about this matter to concentrate hard on considering how on earth we can get those readily available gadgets to everybody who needs them. All who need such aids would then have the appropriate graphs, which would be relatively easy to study and to define.

I do not believe for a moment that we are talking about 300 students—because there is such a pool of undefined hearing loss, we are talking about many more. The pity is that, if they do not catch what is going on, some of our brightest people may under-achieve. Deaf students, deaf youngsters and deaf older people significantly under-achieve, which is why we must think hard about this whole area.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People most sincerely. I thank also the chairman of the all-party disablement group, the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for his unremitting work at all times for all categories of disabled people. He is a most remarkable colleague.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): It is difficult for me to speak now, because I appreciated that compliment from the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), but I do not agree with some of her points. She is well-meaning and does a great deal for deaf people, but when she speaks about hearing aids being available in the high street, I must warn the House that we do not want deaf people to have to pay the price of private hearing aids. We want good hearing aids to be provided free of charge all the time to all deaf people. I am worried by the idea of hearing aids on sale in the high street. I know that the hon. Lady is seeking to help, and I admire her aims, but the private hearing aid industry must not be allowed to make a profit out of deaf people.

I am glad that the Secretary of State and the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People are present. I give them clear notice that many deaf people would object violently to any incursion into the provison of free hearing aids. I am sure that they will accept and understand that point.

The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West said that deafness should not be regarded as a serious handicap. Again, I appreciate her intentions, but the fact is that deafness is a grave and serious handicap, and it must be recognised as such. It is a devastating disability. Although it is true that a hearing aid can correct a slight hearing impairment and that those who are hard of hearing can be helped, a hearing aid is not a magic wand that can restore full facility to all deaf people.

I am sure that the hon. Lady will accept that there are many people who, like myself, are totally and irreversibly deaf and who have no hearing at all. I cannot even hear my own voice. No hearing aid can help me. Many other people like me cannot be helped by hearing aids, either. It is therefore wrong to imply that deafness is not a serious handicap; it is a grave and serious handicap. Even those who are hard of hearing find that that is a difficult handicap. I warn the House and the hon. Lady that deaf people must not be discriminated against because they can deal with and handle their handicap. I think that that is the thrust of what the hon. Lady meant.

8.15 pm

I had prepared a speech, but I do not have the time to deliver it now, because I have taken up too much time on that problem. Nevertheless, I thank the Minister for what he has said this evening. I welcome the concession that the Government have made, because it is important for deaf and disabled people.

I should like to put on the record a disturbing figure that is a reason for helping deaf people. Each year, only 100 deaf and hearing-impaired students enter higher education, of whom only 10 are profoundly deaf, yet in the years when those students were born, about 700 profoundly deaf babies would have been born. The fact that only 10 out of 700 of those young people enter higher education is a shocking and terrible indictment of our university system. Profoundly deaf people are being denied the opportunity of an education.

I do not have the time to describe the Bill's many flaws. However, in his usual precise way, my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) will attack the Bill with all due vigour over a wide area. Although I have been critical of the Government and the Bill, I welcome the concession that they have made. I thank them for their recognition of the problems of deaf and disabled people. Therefore, although there will be more criticism of the Bill, for now I thank the Government very much.

Mr. Scott: I begin by expressing my gratitude to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for the warmth of his welcome for the concession that I was able to announce. I was mildly surprised that some other hon. Members did not seem to recognise that

we have, in practice, solved the problem for deaf students. I hope that, on reflection, the whole House will warmly welcome the steps that we have taken.

Consultation with the local authorities will not delay the introduction of the provisions in any way. If they are in place at the beginning of the academic year, that will meet the need. We are under a statutory duty to consult the local authorities on housing benefit matters.

I explained earlier that the Lords amendments are defective. My advice is that if the House were to follow the advice of some Opposition Members and pass their Lordships' amendment, they would effectively exclude all claimants, other than disabled students, from income support and housing benefit. I am sure that that was not their Lordships' intention, but I cannot possibly advise the House to support their amendment.

However, I did not want to dwell on that aspect. I should rather deal with the intention behind it, and as I have said, I have some sympathy with their Lordships' intention and well recognise the difficulties that deaf people face. I welcome also the growing awareness in society of the problems faced by deaf people. For too long, the problems of disabled people were a subject for amusement. There is now increasing recognition of and an increasing response to the needs of deaf people in society. I am sure that we have further to go, but we are making progress.

The Royal National Institute for the Deaf has set up a new company, Sound Advantage, to ensure that, at the frontiers of technology, facilities are available to deaf people to improve the quality of their life and—perhaps most importantly—to enable them to enter employment and to enjoy the independence and self-respect that holding down a job can provide to those who suffer from disabilities of one sort or another.

On a trip to the United States last year, I was impressed when I visited the California Relay system. It is a telephone exchange for the deaf, which enables all the deaf and hard-of-hearing people throughout the state of California to have access to the state telephone system. Other states in the United States are developing such a provision for deaf people. I am happy to say that, as a result of my visit, and of subsequent consultation with Oftel and British Telecom, the development of a national service along similar lines for deaf people will begin here in the autumn.

I was most struck not that California and its telephone system provided a social service for the deaf and hard of hearing but that they enabled many thousands of deaf people in California to enter employment, hold down jobs and acquire independence. We are making progress, but we do not underestimate the difficulties that deaf people still face in our society. We must all do more to help them.

I appreciate the points made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) about the difficulties that face deaf students. It is precisely because we recognise those difficulties that we have introduced the concession to enable them to receive income support and housing benefit. The right hon. Gentleman suggested that we might have a medical test to establish entitlement to benefit. We already stretch the medical manpower resources severely in assessing other types of disability. I should be reluctant to accept the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion, particularly as a much better method is available to us.

When students who suffer a disability through deafness apply for an award from a local education authority to enter higher education, they will also apply for disabled students allowance. The form on which the notification is made will state the cause of their disability. Deafness will be defined as one of the disabilities that qualifies them for the allowance. That will be a passport for the student to income support and housing benefit. That method is simpler and clearer. It avoids the requirement for a medical examination and it will be in the interests of deaf students.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): So good for deaf students. Will the Minister advocate extending the concession to mobility and attendance allowance?

Mr. Scott: I have considered the matters in the light of the introduction of disablement allowance in 1992. We could not do away entirely with medical assessments for attendance allowance and mobility allowance. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the tremendous increase in take-up of those two benefits in recent years. I am anxious that we should make the common assessment in the adjudication process for the two components of disability allowance as simple and straightforward as possible, with only one assessment for both components if someone is entitled to both. That method will be easily understood and, in an overused phrase, as user-friendly as possible. An element of medical assessment will remain an essential part of protecting the public purse while responding to the needs of those who need help because of their disability.

I was asked earlier why, if we are making a concession for deaf people, we cannot do so for the dyslexic. Whenever one makes a concession, a line must be drawn somewhere. There will always be some who will urge us to go further. I have family experience of dyslexia. My son suffers from the condition. It is more difficult to define dyslexia than to define deafness, as we have done in making this concession. On balance, the concession that I have announced establishes a proper balance between the various needs. I am glad to have been able to announce that concession.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) for welcoming the concession. We believe that the improvements in the disabled students allowance announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science acknowledge the extra educational costs incurred by deaf students. But we were convinced of the case for extra help through the income support and housing benefit system. I recognise the point that my hon. Friend, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) made. They urged that we should monitor the effect of the changes. Of course, the Department of Education and Science will carefully monitor the overall effect of the new system of student support. I shall talk to my colleagues at the DES about making sure that the needs of disabled students are not overlooked.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked about Scotland. If we had implemented the initial proposal, we could not have properly recognised and met the needs of disabled students in Scotland. In our consultations with local authorities we shall include local authorities in Scotland. I am advised that there is no problem in extending the concession to Scotland if we

[Mr. Scott]

accept the proposal that I suggested to the House. In a sense the whole purpose of the new proposal is to meet the needs of Scotland, as well as the rest of the country.

I do not propose to enter into the dispute between my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West and the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South about hearing aids. Increasingly, deaf people are looking for choice and flexibility in the provision of hearing aids, so private provision might play an important role in future. I ask the House to overturn the three amendments.

Mr. Alfred Morris: With the leave of the House, I shall give the Opposition's response. We are not unappreciative of the Minister's endeavours to help, but, as I said earlier, he appears to have lost at least part of a battle with the Treasury. In supporting the Lords amendments, we were seeking not only a promissory note for all the disabled students to which the amendments refer, but a definite decision by the House tonight. As to definition, we already have a wholly objective definition. It is the one approved by the British Society of Audiology. The Minister spoke about the shortage of medical manpower, which I fully appreciate. I know that there are difficulties; indeed, I experienced them myself as a Minister. But I must stress that a definition is already available. Is the definition of deafness approved by the British Society of Audiology not good enough for the Government?

We intended to demonstrate our support for the amendments in the Lobby. But there is little enough time left to debate other important amendments even now. We shall not divide the House, therefore, but I hope that the Minister will make a further statement to the House soon on progress concerning the matters that we have discussed tonight. If he can agree to do so, I am sure that it will be a welcome undertaking to all the organisations of and for disabled people.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3 disagreed to.

Clause 3

REDUCED EARNINGS ALLOWANCE AND RETIREMENT ALLOWANCE

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 5, line 26, leave out subsection (8) and insert—

"(8) The following provisions shall cease to have effect—

(a) in section 2 of the Social Security Act 1988, the subsection (8) originally enacted (restriction on entitlement to reduced earnings allowance); and

(b) in Schedule 1 to the 1989 Act, paragraph 8(7) (which substitutes for that subsection a subsection (8) and a subsection (8A))."

Mr. Scott: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a technical amendment, necessary because subsections (8) and (8A) of section 2 of the Social Security Act 1988, amended in schedule 1 to the 1989 Act, had not been commenced.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 5

RETROSPECTIVE EFFECT OF SECTION 165A OF THE PRINCIPAL ACT

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 8, line 3, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

"(2) In Schedule 20 to the principal Act (glossary of expressions), the entry relating to "entitled" and cognate expressions—

(a) shall be taken at all times on or after 2nd September 1985 but before the passing of this Act to have had effect with the substitution, in the second column, of the words, "section 165A and 165B" for the words "section 165A"; and

(b) shall have effect as from the passing of this Act with the substitution for those words of the words "section 165A to 165D"."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 6 and 70 to 84.

Mrs. Shephard: The amendments correct minor drafting difficulties in relation to clause 5 and commencement. Their aim is to amend various provisions of the Social Security Acts 1975 and 1986 to re-establish the accepted policy that, generally speaking, a person shall not be entitled to benefit for any period unless a claim has been made within the prescribed time limits.

8.30 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): The Under-Secretary of State may say that these are minor, technical amendments but, certainly in one case, they reflect an outrageous constitutional precedent. They are all major pieces of retrospective legislation. We are dealing with a swathe of retrospective legislation.

The amendments to clause 5 have a long history, going back to the McCarthy judgment in the House of Lords in November 1984. It established that a person could be entitled to a benefit, even if he or she had not claimed it. That meant that a claim could be made outside normal time limits. In 1985 the Government tried to prevent that by adding section 165A to the Social Security Act 1985, but last year a social security commissioner decided in the Cartwright case that section 165A did not operated retrospectively. In other words, it was still possible to make a late claim, at least for the period before September 1985, when section 165A came into force. Tonight, the Government are retrospectively preventing that from happening from now on.

The amendments to paragraph 7 of schedule 6 deal with important retrospective principles. Paragraph 7 deals with what arises when a social security commissioner, the High Court, the Court of Appeal or the House of Lords has decided that the Department of Social Security has got the law wrong. It is intended to ensure that other claimants in similar circumstances cannot claim arrears of benefit for the period before the decision of the commissioner or court.

Paragraph 7 was introduced on Report in the House in April 1990. It was not debated because of the guillotine. That takes us back to the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and others when we debated the timetable motion tonight. It is outrageous that we have so little time to debate a

provision, which has been made even worse in the Lords, which we could not debate properly on Report because of the guillotine. The provision was amended in the Lords and the amendment almost completely rewrites the paragraph, which runs to two and a half pages of the Bill. We are debating paragraph 7 as a whole, not merely the points of detail.

Under paragraph 7, apart from the individual whose case is decided by the commissioner of the court, no one can claim the benefits to which they were legally entitled for the period before that decision. This is a major constitutional alteration, which denies thousands of claimants back payments of benefit. It is a complete reversal of the constitutional relationship between Parliament and the judiciary. Parliament makes laws and, if there are doubts, the courts, including social security commissioners, interpret laws. They decide not merely what the law means in future, but what it has meant since Parliament enacted it. Nobody, not even the Secretary of State, is entitled to substitute his or her interpretation for that of the courts. If the Secretary of State does not like what the courts decide, he can ask Parliament to change the law. Even then, the change would not normally be retrospective.

Paragraph 7 places every adjudication officer in a DSS office or unemployment benefit office above the highest court in the land. In effect, it says that the law means whatever the adjudicating authority thought it meant, even if the commissioner or the courts subsequently decide that it meant something entirely different.

Paragraph 7 raises practical implications. One category of claimants affected is the large number of disabled people who suffer from vibration white finger. I have considerable interest in the matter as thousands of my constituents have outstanding claims mainly as a result of working in shipyards, mines and heavy engineering. An important decision was made by the commissioners in respect of my constituent Mr. Kenneth Potts.

Thousands of people await review of claims for reduced earnings allowance. Provided that the review is carried out before this Bill receives Royal Assent, they will be entitled to 12 months' arrears from the date on which they applied for a review, but those whose cases are still in the pipeline will lose that entitlement. It is an utterly absurd, arbitrary guillotine. Apart from the fundamental objections to paragraph 7, it is plainly utterly unjust that its effect on individuals should depend entirely on the length of the administrative delay on applications for review.

In the same town, the backlog of reviews could be dealt with at a different pace in two different DSS offices. Those who claimed a review in one office considerably before someone who claimed a review at the other office could lose out simply because the administrative delay at one office is greater than at the other. To have these administrative delays on reviews is bad enough, but for the Government to compound that by bringing down an arbitrary guillotine on the procedure is outrageous.

The position of the Minister of State is somewhat peculiar and I hope that he will listen carefully. I pay tribute to him for listening to arguments about the particular problems that arise from vibration white finger and for laying an order last year. As a result of representations, he agreed to lift the order for a period which we welcomed. As a result, thousands more late claims were made by people who realised that they could claim as a result of the Potts decision. Thousands are now outstanding. The Minister has, in effect, cruelly lifted an order so that thousands more claims can be made, but now that those claims are registered and awaiting review, he has amended the Bill in the Lords so that, if the reviews are successful, they cannot be backdated.

When the amendments were debated in the Lords, Lord Henley defended them on the grounds that they gave effect to what the law was always intended to be. Who is to say what the law was intended to be? In the Crompton case, the commissioner, Mr. R. A. Saunders, commented:

> "One cause of the problem is that the expression 'non-dependant' in the provisions in question has been given what is on any view a completely artificial meaning. It seems to have nothing to do with dependency in the ordinary sense of the word."

The commissioner went on to say that he could see nothing in the wording of the regulation to suggest that it had the meaning attached to it by the DSS adjudication officer. Yet in Lord Henley's view, Parliament is now to be assumed to have intended it to have that meaning, although the commissioner has effectively said that that is nonsense.

The people who will be affected by the decision are those who were entitled to a severe disability premium in the light of the Crompton case. That decision was dated 17 May. A claimant who succeeds in getting his claim reviewed before Royal Assent will be entitled to arrears of premium, not for 12 months but at least for the period up to 9 October 1989 when the regulations were amended in anticipation of the commissioners' decision. If the claim is not reviewed before Royal Assent, the claimant will get nothing.

If from now on the law is to be not what Parliament enacts, but what the Government intend or the adjudication officer thinks was intended, what is the point of our coming here and debating these matters? The practical outcome of the amendment to paragraph 7 will be that if a number of claimants appeal on the same grounds, and the commissioner treats one of them as a test case and finds in favour of the claimant, only that one claimant will receive arrears of benefit. What an absurdity. I shall spell out the practicalities to Ministers and ask for a specific assurance.

Logically, if the Government persist in this nonsense, claimants will insist that massive joint cases are taken to the commissioners. Instead of the simplicity of one test case, each claimant will say, "I want my case decided by the commissioners." Will the Government say tonight, first, whether they accept that that is likely to be the position and, secondly, what administrative arrangements they will make so that, if necessary, hundreds or even thousands of claimants can simultaneously appeal to the commissioners for decisions when they believe that they have a common ground for claiming? That is the administrative nightmare into which the Government will have got themselves if they continue with this nonsense.

This group of amendments also involves retrospective legislation on industrial deafness. Last year, the arbitrary regulation put a five-year limit on claims for industrial deafness, which was found to be ultra vires. Tonight, the Government are retrospectively saying that, regardless of the commissioners' decision, from now on the law will retrospectively cut off those claims that people could make until tonight.

This is a swathe of retrospective legislation aimed at people with little power to fight back. It totally undermines

[Mr. Bob Clay]

the independence of the social security adjudication system. The precious little confidence that many people have in the system will be undermined even further. Many thousands of people in many districts, particularly those suffering from industrial vibration white finger, who thought that after a long struggle they were to obtain some rights, a fair review and a small entitlement as their just deserts, for whom orders had been laid, withdrawn and laid again, will now discover that they will not receive back payment. That is outrageous, and even at this stage the Government should think again.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As always, I congratulate the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on the force of his arguments and his intimate knowledge of the subject drawn from his constituents, particularly those suffering from vibration white finger.

In relation to amendments Nos. 5 and 6, the hon. Member for Sunderland, North is right when he quotes McCaffrey and Cartwright. A legal understanding on entitlement has existed through Administrations of both complexions at least back to the start of the national insurance scheme in 1948. He was right when he said that until a judgment of the House of Lords in November 1984, it had been our understanding that the law achieved such an effect on entitlement. In the McCaffrey case, their Lordships held that entitlement to benefit could exist even where no claim had been made. Although the McCaffrey judgment referred specifically to non-contributory invalidity pension, the decision had wider implications across the social security sphere. Therefore, we decided that the effects of the McCaffrey case should be nullified, and section 165A was inserted into the Social Security Act 1975 to achieve that, with effect from 2 September 1985.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the Cartwright case of June last year, when a social security commissioner held that the word "entitled", where relating to an event before 2 September 1985, meant "entitled" in the McCaffrey sense—without requiring that a claim must be made for benefit. I repeat that it has been the understanding of Governments of both complexions since 1948 that, in order to be entitled to benefit, a claimant should make a claim.

8.45 pm

The effect of the proposed change is to restore the law on entitlement to that which we had always thought it to be before the McCaffrey judgment, following the introduction of section 165A. Clearly, there must be a limit beyond which it is neither practicable nor consistent with the proper administration of public funds to have to investigate benefit entitlement. Until the McCaffrey judgment and the Cartwright decisions, the 12-month statutory time bar on claiming had always provided such a limit. All we aim to do now is to restore that position.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North overstated his concern about amendments Nos. 70 to 84. I ask the House to agree with those amendments. There have been statutory restrictions on the payment of arrears since 1948. The amendments correct drafting defects in paragraph 7 of schedule 6 to provide that arrears of benefit payable on the review of a claim or on a new claim following a reinterpretation of the law by a higher appellate authority are restricted back to the date of that reinterpretation. The maximum amount of arrears payable for new claims is limited to the current absolute time limit for claiming the benefit at issue or, where there is not one, 12 months.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the present arrangements provide a 12-month limit on arrears, where adjudication officers review decisions in consequence of a reinterpretation of the law by a higher appellate authority. However, the hon. Gentleman must know that the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration criticised that provision as inequitable because, where, following a reinterpretation of the law, an affected case does not come to light immediately, the claimant will effectively lose one week's arrears from every week's delay before a review decision is given.

It was in response to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration that we brought forward our amendments. We decided to introduce the arrangements provided by the amendments to give equity of treatment for all gainers from a reinterpretation of the law—by providing a common start date for payment of arrears—that the current backdating arrangements lack.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the Crompton case. I am aware of the concern about the effects of paragraph 7 on such cases affected by that decision. Anyone whose benefit is affected by that decision, and whose claim is reviewed before the introduction of paragraph 7 on Royal Assent, will have his or her benefit arrears calculated under the existing rules. Anyone whose case is reviewed after Royal Assent will have his benefit arrears limited back to the date of the social security commissioner's decision on Crompton.

I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern about the amendments. Their purpose is to return the law to the position that Governments of both complexions believed it to be. We think that the proposals are fair, sensible and desirable. I commend them to the House.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 205.

Division No. 286] **[8.48 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bright, Graham
Allason, Rupert	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Amess, David	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Amos, Alan	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Arbuthnot, James	Budgen, Nicholas
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Burns, Simon
Ashby, David	Butcher, John
Atkinson, David	Butler, Chris
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Butterfill, John
Baldry, Tony	Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Batiste, Spencer	Carrington, Matthew
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Carttiss, Michael
Bellingham, Henry	Cash, William
Bendall, Vivian	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Chope, Christopher
Benyon, W.	Churchill, Mr
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Body, Sir Richard	Colvin, Michael
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Conway, Derek
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Boswell, Tim	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Bottomley, Peter	Cormack, Patrick
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Couchman, James
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Cran, James
Bowis, John	Critchley, Julian
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Brazier, Julian	Curry, David

Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Greg Knight and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)

Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McFall and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords Amendment: No. 7, before clause 6, insert the following new Clause—

Exemption for full-time students

". In section 20(12)(h) of the 1986 Act, at the end there shall be inserted the words "provided that no person shall be so treated solely on the ground that he is a full-time student.""

9 pm

Mr. Scott: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 8 and 9 and the Government motions to disagree. The three amemdments involve privilege.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have said that these amendments involve privilege. Can you explain that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is because they have financial implications. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, perhaps more than any other hon. Member, knows as well as I do what we mean by privilege in a Lords amendment.

Mr. Rhodes James: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If they involve privilege, why have they been selected?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is for the House to judge whether to allow their Lordships' amendments to prevail.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What you have said is valid. However, when we had exactly the same proposals from the Lords on the Education (Student Loans) Bill, they were ruled out of order by Mr. Speaker and were not even allowed to come before the House. Now those proposals, which we thought were in order because they are in the Social Security Bill rather than the Education (Student Loans) Bill, are suddenly victims of privilege. What is the point of the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would not dream, retrospectively or in any other way, of commenting on the ruling by Mr. Speaker. I am sure that his ruling was right. The hon. Members for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) know that a battle was fought 300 years ago about the rights and privileges of the House.

Mr. Scott: After that short digression, I remind the House that I am asking it to disagree with the Lords in these amendments. I do not think that anybody will be surprised by that advice, because, if these amendments were not overturned, they would strike at the core of our policy on social security benefits for students, and they are intended to deal it a lethal blow. I understand that some hon. Members disagree with the underlying policy. Nevertheless, it has been clear Government policy to change the system.

In practice, the amendments would prevent the Government from withdrawing students' entitlement to housing benefit from the next academic year. That means that students would not only have access to grant, a top-up loan, access funds and any parental assistance, but continue to have access to housing benefit. The Government believe that it would be both undesirable and unnecessary for students to fall back on the benefit system under the new funding arrangements coming into force in September.

Mr. Frank Field: The Minister recites to the House the sources of income for which students might be eligible, and then says that the Government wish to put a block on them. Surely the test is whether their income is above the level of eligibility for housing benefit. By trying to reject the Lords amendment, the Government are attempting to create a special category of people who, irrespective of their level of income, will not be eligible for housing benefit.

Mr. Scott: We are making it clear that, unless students are members of vulnerable groups, responsibility for their maintenance will be a matter for the education authorities

and the education system, not the social security system. I believe that, as a whole, the House is perfectly well aware that there has been a long-standing commitment to remove the majority of full-time students from that system.

It would not benefit the House for me to rehearse again all the arguments that led the Government to that decision; suffice it to say that the educational maintenance system has been designed for that purpose, and that from the next academic year the system of student support is being enhanced to provide students with an income for the full year, including the long vacation. Overall, it will provide an additional 25 per cent. in total student support. In that context, we propose to withdraw students' entitlement to housing benefit. It makes no sense to duplicate the financial support arrangements for students; to do so would not be a sensible use of resources, and it would not liberate local authorities from the disproportionate administrative burden of claims that so often result in either no benefit or only small amounts being paid.

Mr. Field: Surely the Minister accepts that, if students' income was over the housing benefit level, they would be ineligible in the first place. The Government are only introducing the regulations to penalise those who would be eligible for housing benefit if they were not students. Their income from all the sources from which the Minister has told the House that they may gain help does not take them above the eligibility level for housing benefit.

Mr. Scott: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was preparing that intervention rather than listening to my remarks. Quite often, because total income will be either above that level—in which case they will receive nothing—or just below it—in which case they may receive a tiny amount—we believe that it is better to separate the whole thing, and relieve local authorities of the administrative burden.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Can the Minister tell the House how many local authorities have complained about the administrative burden of providing benefit in those circumstances?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman has any knowledge of the administration of housing benefit, he will know that it is complicated, and that not all local authorities perform to a high standard in that regard. As he knows, they are under a duty to pay it within 14 days of a claim being made. That is not always met by local authorities, especially where students are involved, and it can take a considerable time before benefit is paid. The measure would contribute in no small part to the administrative burden on local authorities.

Our statistics show that fewer than one fifth of students claim housing benefit during term time. Other survey data reveal that only a small proportion of those claim it during the summer vacation, and that the average benefit received across all benefits is £315 a year among students who do claim. That amount is well below the amount of student loan available.

Dr. Hampson: If the amount is so small, why does the Minister not accept the proposal from the vice-chancellors and from some hon. Members that the withdrawal should be phased out? I gather that the loss is about £560; the loan is £420. There will be hardship. How much of the take-up that he has announced is by postgraduates who have family and debt commitments? We should encourage them, not discourage them.

Mr. Scott: I shall return to that point about the position of graduates when I wind up. I should like first to make the basic case. I make no apology for this. I know that my hon. Friend feels strongly about the matter, and he has argued about it in a number of forums since the Government announced their plans. There is no question of the Government resiling from their commitment to separate students, unless they are in vulnerable groups, from the social security system and to make them dependent on the educational maintenance system.

The average amount of benefit received is £315 a year, among those students who claim. This amount is well below the amount of student loan available. The access funds have been set up, and increased, to assist students with additional needs. Furthermore, those students who have special financial needs, because of disability or lone parenthood for example, will continue to be eligible for housing benefit and income support.

I accept that the access funds will play a crucial role under the new arrangements, and our policy is predicated on provisions being introduced in the education system to meet the challenge. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has undertaken to monitor the operation of the access funds. I hope that hon. Members will accept the Government's assurances on this issue and support our policy, which——

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Scott: I am in the middle of a sentence. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will be courteous enough to allow me to complete it.

I hope that hon. Members will accept the Government's assurances on this issue and support our policy, which has been accepted by a majority on the Social Security Advisory Committee, that housing benefit should no longer be available to students.

Mr. Smith: Does the Minister accept the unanimous judgment of the Social Security Advisory Committee that some students could be left destitute as a result of this scheme? Why does he not cover that possibility, as the committee unanimously recommended, by providing for a safety net below which no student should be allowed to fall? If he does not accept that, is he not admitting the possibility that some poor students will be left destitute?

Mr. Scott: The committee said that, during the long vacation, some students might be particularly hard hit, and that they should have recourse to a safety net. There is already a safety net—the power for local education authorities to pay hardship payments. That is a better way, and more educationally attuned to the needs of the student rather than to the generality of the population, than turning to the social security system, which is designed for an entirely different purpose.

Lords amendment No. 9 would impose a provision in the housing benefit scheme that already exists in practice. It would require local or regional rent levels to be taken into account in the calculation of maximum housing benefit. The House will be aware that housing benefit is calculated to take account of three key factors. The first is that the level of a claimant's needs should be taken into account in the assessment—the applicable amount—the

[Mr. Scott]

second is the amount of the claimant's resources, and the third is the amount of rent that the claimant has to pay, less any ineligible costs.

Because the calculation is based on the individual claimant's rent liability, by definition it must reflect variations in local and regional housing costs. This arrangement does not differ for students now, and will not differ for those students who retain entitlement to housing benefit from September. In other words, the amendment is unnecessary, as it is already reflected in the system. I cannot advise the House to accept it.

9.15 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): The Opposition strongly repudiate the Government's attempt, at this late stage in the Bill's proceedings, to remove students from housing benefit entitlement. The Minister's talk of administrative difficulties for local authorities and the other excuses that he gave are unacceptable. It is particularly obnoxious that this is being done when the proposal was not contained in the original Bill, has not been debated and is being inserted even before the Government's student loans scheme is in place. It has been roundly condemned by senior independent academic opinion, including the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. It was the subject of not one, but three, Government defeats in the Lords.

The Government's proposals are ill-founded both in concept and in practical application. In concept, the justification given regularly by the Minister for disentitling students from social security benefits is that they have voluntarily withdrawn from the labour market. The vice-chancellors' committee, in its letter of 16 March to the Social Security Advisory Committee, called that a fundamental misconception. It said:

"This ignores the fact that a large number of students are not only available for work for approximately four months a year, but rely on the income which that work provides when they are studying during the rest of the year. In future, therefore, a large number of students will continue to be active in seeking work during the summer vacation, but if they fail to gain employment they will be unable to claim benefits and will, therefore, face further financial hardship."

I do not think that a condemnation of the basic rationale could be clearer than that.

The proposal to withdraw housing benefit is also flawed in its practical application. The Minister stated again tonight, as he did in a recent parliamentary answer, that an average of £315 a year would have been paid in benefits to those students making a claim in this year, while a student loan would be £420 on average, and that the average student would be better off. There is no more credibility in his figures on student costs than there is in the Government's figures on unemployment or on levels of poverty.

Ministers appear to be admitting that. On 26 March, I asked the Secretary of State for Social Security

"what is (a) the total value and average weekly payment of housing benefit currently being claimed by claimants aged 18 to 24 years, (b) the total value of housing benefit paid to students in the academic year 1988-89 in each region of the country"?

The Under-Secretary of State replied:

"Information is not available in the detail requested . . . Similar information for claimants receiving both income support and housing benefit is not held. Housing benefit spending on claimants who are aged 18 to 24 is not identifiable within total expenditure.

Information on housing benefit paid to students is not available in the form requested".—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1990; Vol. 170, c. *81*.]

She could not have more clearly shown her lack of knowledge of the issue.

The National Union of Students, which has more reason to know the facts than anyone—*[Laughter.]* I know why the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) is laughing, but he is a little premature. In its submission the Social Security Advisory Committee, the NUS cited a survey that suggested that, at present, the sum total of financial resources available to a student outside London is £3,260, while under the new system of loans it will be about £2,685—about £580 less.

There are those, such as the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding, who think that the conclusion of the NUS is one of vested interest by those who have a good reason to up the figures. However, that conclusion is almost identical to the conclusion of the vice-chancellors' committee. The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know that it said that, in the south-east in 1988-89,

"housing benefit could be claimed on rents in excess of £14 per week. The average rent for privately-rented accommodation in this area, cited by a number of universities, has risen to £37·50 a week"—

the point has already been made by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson)—

"so that a student stands to lose £560 in housing benefit during the academic year."

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is the most inappropriate comparison, because average rents take account of the whole range of housing available? Students are not expected, at such a stage in their careers, to be living in the higher range of accommodation available, so the average figure for rent is irrelevant when considering the basis of student costs.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman falls into exactly the same trap as the Government, in quoting average figures. The Government quote average figures of £420 and £315, but we know that there are substantial variations and that averages are inappropriate. However, because the Government used average figures, I quoted the arguments made on the same basis by the vice-chancellors.

It is not only the Opposition who think that the Government are all over the shop. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West will surely not mind if I quote his apposite article in *The Times Higher Education Supplement:*

"Recent Parliamentary Questions show that the Government does not seem to know exactly how much goes to students in various forms of welfare benefit. Clearly some benefits will be offset by a student loan, but some will not because of the difference in regional and urban housing costs."

That is exactly true. It can be said with certainty that housing benefit is something dear to the heart of the Government—a targeted benefit. It takes into account differences in income and in regional housing costs, and it is the only benefit that does so.

Because the variations in regional housing costs are now so large, if that benefit is replaced by a loans scheme, it is certain that many students would find themselves below—in some cases substantially below—the income support level or official poverty line. That runs wholly

contrary to the Government's declared intention not to deter students from low-income backgrounds from pursuing courses of higher and further education.

The White Paper refers to access funds, which the Minister also mentioned,

"to provide discretionary support, in individual cases of financial need, for students losing entitlement to benefits."

However, the £5 million to be made available for that purpose to those within the scope of the student loans scheme is derisory. The vice-chancellors estimate that it will provide less than £7 per university student per year. Frankly, that is useless.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Figures just released in Scotland on the amount to be made available under the access scheme show that, last year, Edinburgh university students received more in housing benefit than students attending 17 institutions controlled by the Secretary of State for Scotland. That puts the figures into perspective.

Mr. Meacher: That is an effective statistic, and I hope that the Minister will reply to that point when he winds up. My hon. Friend makes the case very forcibly.

There is one further aspect of disentitlement to housing benefit that is particularly scandalous. It relates to postgraduate students, who are the subject of amendment No. 8, and number 50,000. Not only will they be ineligible for student loans, but disqualified from claiming housing benefit. By any standard that is totally unjust. It is also an absurdly short-sighted economy measure, as it will deter many from pursuing postgraduate studies. Because we feel strongly about that aspect, we will, if we have time, put amendment No. 8 to a Division.

It is difficult to exaggerate the impact of the amendments on further and higher education. A study of the student rented sector in Manchester that was published last month by Rowntree found that housing costs after housing benefit represented 28 per cent. of students' notional income. In the current year, after including the full loan of £420 a year, it is estimated that that figure will rise to 36 per cent. to 40 per cent., depending on the rate of rent increases. Taken together with the 23 per cent. real decline in the value of student awards since 1979, that can only narrow the basis of recruitment for higher education in the next generation.

In their White Paper "Top-up Loans for Students" the Government say:

"The Government is committed to increasing the opportunity for people from all backgrounds to participate in higher education."

Because we passionately believe in that objective and because the motion shows that the Government do not, we intend to divide the House.

Mr. Rhodes James: If these Lords amendments were taken in isolation from the other Government proposals relating to student finance, the Government would have a good case. I am particularly strengthened by my right hon. Friend's response to the previous Lords amendments, which we greatly appreciated. I wish that it were possible to remove students entirely from the need to depend on social security benefits of any kind. The matter cannot, however, be viewed in isolation. It has to be seen in the context of the effects of the Government's full proposals and the regulations that we shall debate later.

I am grateful to Jesus college, Cambridge, for a detailed, factual and objective analysis of student expenditure and income in that college. It is particularly constructive, because it demonstrates how difficult life has become, even for Cambridge undergraduates who enjoy advantages that students elsewhere do not. The figure will be of interest to hon. Members and, perhaps, to the Minister.

If an undergraduate is living in Jesus college, the cost of accommodation varies from £900 to £500 a year, depending on the amenities. However, a large and an increasing number of undergraduates and graduates have to live outside college. They face a market rate for a room of, on average, £40 a week. Normally, it also has to be paid in the short vacations. This, on the basis of a 38-week year, amounts to £1,520, to which must be added £86·70 for the community charge. Unfortunately, we have a Labour council in Cambridge. That has to be found out of a total income in 1990-91 of £2,575: a grant of £2,155 and a loan of £420, if the regulations are approved. Thus, for a Cambridge student living out of college, allowing for a notional £334 for essential expenditure, there is £421 left, or £11·08 a week for 38 weeks, after accommodation costs. For the favoured undergraduate living in college, the position is better; he is left with £22·62 a week for 38 weeks.

The figures demonstrate the huge proportion of grant and loan that has to be spent on accommodation and why the removal of housing benefit will have such a disproportionate impact on student finances. I am talking about students who have a full grant. Many do not. They depend on parental contributions that some parents will not or cannot provide.

There is another point of deeper significance that relates not just to money. One of the great and unique strengths of the British university system as it has evolved is that it is not home-based. I know of some university systems that are home based. Their weakness, as real universities, lies in that fact; it applies to many of the state universities in the United States.

I had the privilege of going to university on a scholarship, before grants were available. One of the factors that made it such a unique experience for me, apart from leaving home, which was a happy one, was that I met people from entirely different backgrounds and from entirely different parts of the country and the world. That was a major part of my education. It was then that I appeciated the value of, for example, the Rhodes scholarships and of the arrangements for overseas students. That mixture of young adults from very different backgrounds, who are given the opportunity of coming together in a different place rather than in their home base, gives the British universities and polytechnics their special quality.

Ministers have not sufficiently realised that the abolition of eligibility for housing benefit, combined with the regulations that will be debated later this evening, will make British universities more home based. That will destroy not only the lives and the incomes of students and their parents, but something much more profound. I hope that Ministers will bear in mind those deplorable consequences, because we are talking not simply about housing benefit and the problems that affect this year's or next year's students, but about the whole future of higher education.

9.30 pm

Mr. Frank Field: I am particularly pleased to follow the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) because, as a modern historian, he, more than most in the House, can locate that certain point in a Government's life —the point at which the Administration begin to unwind. The events surrounding that point are often not dramatic, but they are telling. Tonight there are two examples of that in one measure.

First, if the Government press their will on the House and win—they have a large majority and may well win —we shall have an example of the Government spitting in the wind. They will win the vote but lose the argument, and the argument here is whether the Administration understand how the real world works. In the 11 years that I have been in the House, that is a badge that the Government have proudly worn, labelling Opposition Members as people who have no real idea of what goes on in the world outside. It is proper to say that we do not want students to have to rely on social security benefits to survive. Few hon. Members will go to the stake or anywhere else on that point. But we are dealing with the real world and our constituents who are students have to deal with the real world, and the plain and unalterable fact is that social security benefits are crucial for students' survival.

In the light of the information that the hon. Member for Cambridge and my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) have given, and if we are to prevent destitution and homelessness, it is important that we should not agree with the Government tonight but should stand by the amendment that the Lords have made. That is the first telling point—the Government are willingly spitting in the wind despite all the evidence presented to them.

Secondly, if the Government win the vote tonight, they will damage themselves in another equally fundamental way. They have based much of their social policy on what they like to call targeting but which hon. Members on both sides of the House call means-testing. There could not be a more perfect example of the market system at work. If one is above the line, one does not get help, but if one is below the line, help is targeted towards one. But now the Government are saying to the House, "Never mind how that market system works. Never mind if students can prove that their income is below the level of eligibility for housing benefit. We will step in. We will interfere and take actions that prevent that part of the market system from working." We are asked to approve that argument, and that is what will happen if the Government win the day.

We are debating an issue that concerns students which, sadly, does not command the respect in the country that it should. But we are also debating something that is perhaps much more important: that point in the Government's long life at which the whole of their policy begins to unwind. We are seeing that in two important respects. In the first place, they are denying what we all know to be true—that students need that help—and, secondly, they are setting aside 11 years of targeting policy because they know in their heart that it does not work.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I have the deepest respect for both the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), whose independent views on social issues are so often echoed on the Conservative Benches, and for my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James), whose views on social issues broadly mirror my own. However, on this issue I cannot agree with them and I hope that the House will agree with the Government and reject the amendments.

The debate so far has revolved around two key issues: the proposed new structure for student support and the level of provision. The new structure for supporting students embodies the principle that students should no longer look to the Department of Social Security for help. Instead, they should look to the Department of Education and Science, which, after all, already funds the bulk of their living costs. I find no difficulty with that principle. I see some merit in having one Department instead of two concerned with the financial viability of students. I also see an advantage in educational institutions managing the access funds instead of students looking to housing benefit. I honestly believe that the new structure has much to commend it. It is tidier.

Part of the DES grant already goes on housing. Students who do not receive housing benefit already spend part of their grant on housing. I see nothing wrong in extending the principle by saying that instead of looking for just part of their housing costs from the DES, they should look for the whole of their costs from the DES. I see nothing offensive about the principle that students in future should no longer look to two Government Departments, but should look to one for the support to which they are entitled from the Government as they pass through university or higher education. I see nothing to go to the stake for on that.

The second issue has been the level of support. The proposed access funds have already been increased in response to representations. I am sure that they have been designed to be adequate for the purpose for which they are intended. If it turns out that they are inadequate, Conservative Members who follow such issues will be the first to press for more funds. However, housing benefit has not been immune from cuts. There have been several changes to housing benefit which have reduced its appeal. When there have been reductions in housing benefit, it is not particularly logical to say that we should stick with the housing benefit scheme because that is what is of most benefit to students. There are positive advantages in encouraging students to look to the access funds that are designed for students, as they are likely to be far more targeted to their needs.

Overall, the new regime will cost much more. It will involve £178 million in the loan scheme and £25 million in the access fund, making about £200 million in all. However, there will be only a £68 million saving in benefits.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): My hon. Friend has campaigned more eloquently and more persistently than most against the community charge. Does he realise that to bring this new change in at precisely the same moment that students are being caned by the community charge will create real prolblems?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend refers in flattering terms to the doubts that I had about the community charge. However, I see no particular logic in trying to relate what has happened in respect of the community charge to this debate. The structure for student support

that we are now proposing is perfectly logical. The resources being devoted to that new structure are more generous than under the present structure.

Dr. Hampson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir George Young: No, I must conclude and if I do so, perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) will have an opportunity to address the House.

Neither on the structure of the proposal nor on the level of provision do I believe that there need be doubts on the Conservative Benches about the matter and I propose to support the Government.

Mr. Kirkwood: I must take issue with one half of the proposition of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). His case for the system of payment from one source and one Government Department is perfectly reasonable. I have no quarrel with the Government's long-stated social security view that students should not have to rely on social security payments. No hon. Member would dissent from that view. However, page 6 of the Social Security Advisory Committee's report states that, if the value of the grant is allowed to depreciate and wither over a period, it will not be possible for students to exist under the educational system of support. The hon. Gentleman seemed to accept that point.

Hon. Members who examine the way in which the level of grant in real terms has been eroded, and who consider their own constituency cases, must conclude that there are students below the income levels that we use as definitions, unofficial or otherwise, of the poverty line. The hon. Member for Action cannot have both parts of his proposition. Of course the structure should be unified. Of course we should all like the DES to provide the money, but if the DES is not to provide the money, there must be a safety net somewhere. The safety net has been the social security system.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has made the key point in the debate. If the Government's scheme is approved, we shall discriminate against students, who will be the only group in society who will knowingly be asked to subsist on levels of income that, for other social security purposes, are judged to be inadequate. I do not think that that is acceptable.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of a survey that was carried out by welfare officers in Edinburgh, which is near his constituency? It was found that the average housing benefit claim during the academic year was £290 and, during the summer vacation, £209, giving a total of about £500, which was well in excess of the student loan available. Is not that bound to lead to a situation in which students are much worse off and are dissuaded from taking up full-time higher education?

Mr. Kirkwood: Absolutely. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I am aware, of that survey. No doubt, if he had had time, the hon. Gentleman would have made the point that it will have a disproportionate effect on low-income families and their access to higher education. That point has not been mentioned, and I do not think that the Government have properly addressed it.

I should like the Minister to address some of the questions that the Social Security Advisory Committee has raised, particularly about the long vacation and postgraduate students. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) rightly mentioned that point and said that about 50,000 postgraduate students are not eligible for loans but will be disqualified for housing benefit. Amendment No. 8 is a particularly objectionable proposition. The Government are putting postgraduate students into an indefensible position.

The intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) deserves further attention. As far as I am aware, there have been no great complaints by local authorities about the administrations of the housing benefit system as it affects students. Of course there are difficulties in the complexity of the scheme that the Government ask local authorities to administer, but I have heard no complaints in relation to students.

It is not good enough for the Minister to say that it is only bawbees in any case, that they are not deriving a tremendous amount of benefit, and, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West rightly pointed out, that the Government do not have cast-iron statistics or figures relating to the amounts of money that we are talking about; if they have, we have not seen them and they did not come to light in the important debates in the other place. The Government are taking a great leap into the dark and playing ducks and drakes with the future of a vulnerable and valuable group of people in our society. I do not think that the amount of money will be enough. Some students will struggle.

The access funds are totally inadequate. The hon. Member for Acton was quite wrong to talk about £5 million for the further education sector, £14 million for those who are undertaking first degree courses, and £6 million for postgraduates. It is totally inadequate, according to the evidence from Cambridge and Edinburgh and all other available survey evidence. The Government have not paid enough attention to that matter. The administration of the scheme will prove an even bigger bureaucratic nightmare than the administration of housing benefit by local authorities.

For all those reasons, I believe that the Government's proposals will be fraught with difficulties and will cause increasing hardship. The House will be forced to return to this issue at an early stage. The Government will have to come back, cap in hand, and Opposition Members will take great pleasure in saying, "We told you so."

9.45 pm

Dr. Hampson: If I may, I shall address my remarks directly and immediately to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). I must advise him that there is a valid parallel with the community charge. When Conservative Members told the Government that there would be immediate hardship because the scale of the increase in the business rate would be too acute, the Government responded and phased in the implementation. Why, therefore, are they not prepared to phase out housing benefit when there is hardship, especially for postgraduates?

I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Acton to consider the community charge bill for a postgraduate student couple, who might have a house and a mortgage, hire purchase payments on a car and television, and perhaps even a family. Postgraduate students make a sacrifice—they are not eligible for loans—but the Government are

[Dr. Hampson]

withdrawing housing benefit. Furthermore, the access fund is so small that in London, even if he was eligible for access funds, a postgraduate student would have to find an extra £500 because of the withdrawal of housing benefit.

Postgraduate students are at a premium. In the next 10 years there will be a shrinking pool of talent, especially in science and engineering. However, the amount of money that is currently available to help postgraduate social science students is also shrinking. The Economic and Social Research Council currently has only 220 graduate scholarships at its disposal, whereas 10 years ago it had 2,000. We are squeezing the amount of help to postgraduates. The access funds are inadequate and scholarships and loans are not available.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who is responsible for higher education, is on the Treasury Bench, because I believe that it is no coincidence that only a week ago, with great panache, the Department of Education and Science announced increases in postgraduate award rates. The fact that that happened just a week before this debate is meant to say, "Yes, we believe that there is a problem and we —the DES—recognise that postgraduates will suffer because of what another Department is insisting on doing."

I do not object to the principle of what is being done. The principle is to try to ensure that students are not dependent on welfare benefits. That must be right. I am sure that no Conservative Member would question that, but some of us believe that, by withdrawing housing benefit in such a rigid and determined way, the Government are causing hardship. Because the DES knows that, it has tried to claim that it will increase postgraduate awards by £400 a year. However, that increase of £400 will not come in until next April. Awards increases have always been granted in October. If, this October, postgraduate students automatically received the increase that they have received every year, more or less in line with inflation, they would be getting £370. However, they will not automatically receive £370 this October; they will receive £400 next April.

Without any question, postgraduates will suffer at every level. Financially, they will not be as well off as they have been. Housing benefit was a targeted benefit that helped especially those postgraduates in real hardship because of their family or other circumstances. No Minister has shown tonight that the Government even know how much money is currently given to postgraduate students through that benefit. I suggest that it is a relatively small amount. It is a shame that the Government, of whom we are all a part, are not prepared in this instance as they have been in so many instances —I refer particularly to business men and the community charge—to show sensitivity, to recognise hardship and at least to try not to create further disincentives to postgraduate education, which will affect the future development of the country.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Like other hon. Members on both sides of the House I accept the principle that students should be paid for out of the education budget. There is widespread agreement on that. I am not particularly worried by amendment No. 7, but we should think hard about amendment No. 8.

I am sorry that my right hon. Friend the Minister did not speak on amendment No. 8 in his opening remarks. The point behind it is not entirely new. It has been raised on other amendments. What my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) said carries a strong ring of conviction. When my right hon. Friend the Minister replies, he must give accurate figures on how far he believes that the access grants will alleviate the problems of post graduates. He must also fill out the position on their grants. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West made those points eloquently.

I, like other hon. Members on both sides of the House, believe deeply that it is crucial to this country that we produce research scholars of the highest possible standard. Anything that prevents that must be contrary to the national interest. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will either come up with good arguments or, better still, think again.

Mr. Cormack: I can do little more than echo what has been said by my right hon. Friend for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), and most of all by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James). The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge showed what Cambridge will lose. He is a splendid Member of Parliament, who knows the universities well. We heard what he said in his short speech. I for one am extremely sorry that he has announced that he will not seek re-election at the next general election.

It is a great pity that the Government are so obdurate on this matter. It is sad that the people who will be hit are the very people on whom the Government have relied for their support. The measure will hit at the middle of middle England.

Mr. Kirkwood: And Scotland.

Mr. Cormack: As the hon. Gentleman says, it will hit Scotland too. If only because they want to maintain their bedrock support, the Government must think again. After all, the creation of an access fund shows that the Government recognise that there is a need. The access funds are woefully inadequate to meet that need, yet we are cutting out a whole category of people and treating them uniquely in the process.

The people who will be hit include constituents of mine who have been hit—I make no apology for returning to the subject—by the community charge. Suddenly they have found that their student sons and daughters face the prospect of entering their earning life substantially in debt. Because of their increased burden, they cannot give their student son or daughter as much as they would like. Now their children are not eligible for housing benefit. Their sons and daughters will also have the community charge to find—albeit only 20 per cent.

What do such people do? In some cases they seek to dissuade their sons and daughters from going to university or following any higher education course. I do not wish to speak disparagingly of an institution, but in other cases parents encourage their children to go to the local polytechnic rather than to go away to university. That point was made eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member

for Cambridge. Such a trend could distort the social balance of the country and the pattern of where people seek higher education. That would be a great pity.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury, I am especially worried about postgraduate students. Such students have often taken on family commitments. We are supposed to be the party that believes in the family. I do not suggest that other parties do not believe in the family, but the Prime Minister has rightly made great play of the family in recent months. We are the party that believes in the family and in encouraging the integrity of the family. Yet the Government make it difficult for families which include one or perhaps two postgraduate students to benefit not only themselves but the whole community by following a postgraduate course.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister and other Ministers on the Treasury Bench to think again. The sums involved are small. We are dealing with flexibility as opposed to inflexibility. There is virtual unanimity about the desirability of the Government's general aim. We do not want students to depend on social security benefits. None of us, or hardly any of us, wherever we sit in the House, wants that. Why cannot we for once listen carefully to what the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has said? We should phase in the scheme, bring it in gently, adjust, respond and consider. */Interruption./* My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) can groan, but she has a university in her constituency——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): A very good one.

Mr. Cormack: —and a very good one. Many of the students who attend it will suffer as a result of the insensitivity of this proposal.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My students seek employment in the long vacation, and the vast majority of them find it. The right way to bring up children is to show them how to be independent and to seek employment if they can possibly find it.

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend makes the case for me in her intervention. The vast majority of her students and mine find employment. I encourage that, just as she does. Nevertheless, there are exceptions who, through no fault of their own, cannot do so. That is particularly true of postgraduate students.

I have great respect for my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench, particularly my right hon. Friend who will reply. He has an extremely good record as a listening Minister and a man who is genuinely concerned. I ask them, for goodness' sake, to think again, and not to become so inflexible as to create the problems to which the vice-chancellors rightly pointed.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I am surprised that the Labour party has decided to take up so much of the limited time for this debate to press this Lords amendment. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about all the Tory Members?"] It is the Labour party, not my party. In mitigation, Labour Members have not turned up in large numbers. Perhaps the strength and extent of feeling is not as widespread as some Labour spokesmen have been inclined to make out. I am surprised, because our welfare state, to which I am enormously committed, has been built up—as you Mr. Speaker, will be the first to acknowledge—by the contributions of statesmen from all three parties over many generations. All those statesmen, Conservative, Liberal and Labour, would have been horrified to imagine that the welfare state would be used as a form of student support. William Beveridge, Clement Attlee, Ernie Bevin and Herbert Morrison would be spinning in their graves if they heard some of the remarks of their successors.

I cannot think of a more inappropriate use of the social security system or of anything more demoralising for students than to start life on the benefit system and, indeed, to be encouraged to play that system for all it is worth even before they have taken any paid employment. I cannot think of anything more damaging to the credibility of social security among the general public as a whole. The Government are to be greatly congratulated on removing this impardonable anomaly, which has lasted for too long.

The Government could not simply withdraw the benefits of the social security system from students without ensuring an effective alternative means of support. They have done that. They have taken advantage of the introduction of top-up loans to increase by about 25 per cent. the resources available to students in the forthcoming academic year. That is a substantial increase by any standards.

It has been said on both sides of the House, by my hon. Friends as well as Opposition Members, that in some cases those new resources will be insufficient. The Government have gone even further and provided access funds that are infinitely preferable, as a way of supporting students who run into financial difficulties, to the social security system. That is not merely because of the psychological and moral reasons to which I have referred, but because the access funds provide an opportunity for that support to be decided by educationists and educational institutions, taking into account the student's individual circumstances. The funds will not be allocated according to some anonymous rule book by a large army of bureaucrats—which, unfortunately, is inevitably how any social security system works. It is an enormous improvement.

It has been hinted on both sides of the House that access funds will be insufficient. I wish that Opposition Members who take that line would have the intellectual honesty to say that they want the access funds to be increased. That is simple, and if that is what they had in mind, they should say it. I congratulate the Government on a humane and timely measure.

10 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): This debate has shown the price of the guillotine. An enormously important change that will damage the lives and opportunities of many individuals, our education system and the country's future prosperity has to be squeezed into a small space of time. Nevertheless, there have been a number of significant contributions, much criticism from Government Members, and even more from Opposition Members. Some of my hon. Friends who wished to speak have held back so that Conservative Members would have a chance to do so.

Britain has become, and is increasingly becoming, a backward educational country compared with other countries in Europe and even the world. In South Korea, of all countries, there are more students, as a proportion of population, in higher education than in Britain. That is

[Ms. Clare Short]

a disgrace, and, it will damage the prospects of our country. It is a measure of our backwardness and continuing slide and decline, particularly during the 11 years of this Government.

There have been measures with bad effects on nurseries, standards in schools, quality of books for school children and buildings. Our staying-on rates are appalling, and tonight we are considering a measure that will make matters considerably worse. It will make significant numbers of students gravely poorer. It will affect those with the greatest difficulty in entering higher education —groups with the lowest participation rates, people from low-income backgrounds and working-class and black students. There is no doubt, and everyone who has considered the matter seriously predicts, that those under-represented groups which we need to get into higher education if we are to compete with other countries will be put off by the measure.

During the past 11 years, the Government have cut the value of student grants by 27 per cent. in real terms. As in so many other sectors, there have been repeated cuts in social security benefits to bring the system into disrepute —as the Government are currently doing with child benefit—and push students on to loans. The Government pretend that it is all right if they cut grants further and introduce a national loans system to cut the cost of young people going into full-time education.

There is no disagreement between the two sides of the House that the principle that the education system should provide for the maintenance of students is a good one, and they should not be funded from the social security system. It is disgraceful hypocrisy to use that sort of logic as an excuse for cutting students' income and driving many of our talented young people from low-income backgrounds out of higher education.

The whole principle of student loans is ridiculous. They should be provided according to need and then, when people did well and found better jobs as a result of having been students, they could pay them back through the tax and national insurance systems. That is the fairest, most universal and most sensible system.

These three amendments deal with the abolition of the right to housing benefit. I apologise to Conservative Members who have spoken about postgraduate students; we share their concern, but because of the guillotine we have the opportunity to vote on only one amendment, so we must vote on the one that restores the right to housing benefit for all students. It affects the largest number. We wholly agree with what has been said about the needs of postgraduates, but the guillotine has meant that we have had no chance—there was already no chance when I rose to speak—to vote on the amendment related to them.

The Minister of State was at his least eloquent this evening. I have paid him this compliment before, but when the right hon. Gentleman does not believe in something, he speaks badly. Tonight he spoke worse than I have ever heard him speak.

Mr. Scott: There has been a certain amount of gloom and doom from various quarters in the debate. I see no need for that when I look at higher education in this country. This year there were more applications to get into higher education than ever before, and it looks as though that number will be exceeded in the coming academic year. If the whole country were petrified by the idea of student loans, that would not be so.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) queried the basis for the estimates that we make in this area. The average of £315 which I announced earlier as the total benefit is based on an independent survey carried out by Research Services Ltd. during the academic year 1988-89 and adjusted to 1991 levels. The average loan of £420 is greater than that, and those who cannot receive more will have access to the funds that have been specially established.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West derided us for having access funds for undergraduates of £5 million—but the correct figure is £14 million. These funds will be monitored once they are in operation to determine whether they are adequate for the needs for which they have been set up. That is the right way to tackle the matter.

The hon. Gentleman said that there was unanimous opposition to the proposal to remove housing benefit entitlement. He omitted to mention that a majority on the Social Security Advisory Committee accepted the Government's proposal to withdraw housing benefit from full-time students. The committee also shares our view that student support should come from the educational system rather than from social security benefits, and several of my hon. Friends backed up the Government by supporting the basic principle that we are implementing.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West then returned to a question that he had asked my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and said that we did not know what was happening in this area. I confess that the statistics that we have do not differentiate between different sorts of students. However, they clearly show that fewer than 20 per cent. of students claim housing benefit during term time, and for those who receive it, of whom some will retain entitlement, the average amount claimed is under £10 a week.

We heard a great deal from my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and others about postgraduate students. Of course it is true that, if the postgraduate's spouse is not herself a student, the couple will still be entitled to housing benefit. Secondly, a postgraduate student pays only 20 per cent. of the community charge—not the full whack. The uprating of the grant for postgraduates is for this autumn, not for next April. The couple that the hon. Gentleman exemplified were paying a mortgage, in which case they would not be entitled to housing benefit.

Dr. Hampson: This is important, because the official press release from the Department of Education and Science said that the uprating of the postgraduate award is from April. Of course, postgraduates are not entitled to student loans if they have access to housing benefit.

Mr. Scott: One increase has already been announced and there will be another in April. My right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Education and Science are well aware of the need for support in this area and are honouring their obligations.

Postgraduate students may also qualify for education maintenance grants that are intended to cover all their financial needs for the year, including long vacations

falling within the course. An access fund of £6 million is being established specifically to provide additional support for postgraduates who face special difficulties.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) accused the Government of setting aside their normal policy of targeting. The new student support arrangements through the education system are not intended to replicate the benefit system. It was never intended that students should fall back on the benefits system and the fact that they do is a totally unplanned by-product of changes in the benefit system in recent years. Education maintenance is designed to meet the particular financial needs and expenditure patterns of students. The benefit system is not. We firmly believe that students should be supported by the education system and we are putting in more than £100 million of extra resources to achieve that.

The House is being asked to decide whether the Department of Social Secrity or the Department of Education and Science knows more about the needs of students and the need for educational maintenance. I have no doubt that the Department of Education and Science will be more in touch with student's state of life and will be better able to run a system suitable to their needs.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Order [this day] relating to the Social Security Bill (Allocation of Time) MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the said Order, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question agreed to.

Mr. Speaker *then proceeded to designate Lords amendments Nos. 8, 9, 11, 24, 25, 28, 42, 59, 70, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89 and 91 as appearing to him to involve questions of privilege.*

Mr. Speaker *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions on motions moved by a Minister of the Crown,* That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords amendment.

Lords amendment No. 8 disagreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 9, before clause 6, to insert the following new Clause—

" . In section 21(6) of the 1986 Act, at the end there shall be inserted the words "and may provide for the regional or local level of housing costs and any payment for the purpose of meeting such costs to be taken into account in determining the maximum housing benefit where the claimant is a full-time student." "

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.:

The House divided: Ayes 306, Noes 218.

Division No. 287] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambaSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Males, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus

Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Alastair Goodlad.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*

Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John McFall.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 11, 29, 31, 33 and 40 to 42 disagreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions on amendments moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to Lords amendment No. 42 disagreed to.*

Schedule 1

AMENDMENTS RELATING TO THE RECOVERY FROM DAMAGES ETC OF SUMS EQUIVALENT TO BENEFIT

Amendments made to the words so restored to the Bill:

(a) in page 28, line 13, leave out paragraph (b) and insert—

'(b) for the words following that paragraph there shall be substituted the words—

"but does not include benefit or an exempt payment or so much of any payment as is referable to costs incurred by any person;".'

(b) in page 28, line 20, at end insert—

'(3) In consequence of the amendment made by sub-paragraph (1)(b) above, in the definition of "relevant period" in the said section 22(3), the words from "whether or not" onwards shall be omitted.

(4) In paragraph 13 of Schedule 4 to that Act, after sub-paragraph (2) there shall be inserted—

"(2A) A person who makes any payment (whether a compensation payment or not) on behalf of himself or another—

(a) in consequence of any accident, injury or disease suffered, or any damage to property sustained, by any other person, or

(b) which is transferable to any costs, or, in Scotland, expenses, incurred by any such other person by reason of such an accident, injury, disease or damage,

shall, if the Secretary of State so requests him in writing, furnish the Secretary of State with such particulars relating to the size and composition of the payment as may be specified in the request.".'.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Consequential amendment made: (c) in page 70, line 25, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 22(3), in the definition of "relevant period", the words from "whether or not" onwards.'.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question, with respect to the Lords amendments designated by him which had not been disposed of,* That this house doth agree with the Lords in the said amendments.

Lords amendments Nos. 24, 25, 28, 59, 70, 73, 74, 76 to 78, 83, 84, 86 to 89 and 91 agreed to. [Special entry.]

Remaining Lords amendments agreed to.

Ordered,

That a Committee be appointed to draw up reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments Nos. 1 to 3, 7 to 9, 11, 29, 31, 33, 40 and 41.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Ordered,

That Mr. Paul Flynn, Mr. Greg Knight, Mr. Michael Meacher, Mr. Nicholas Scott and Mrs. Gillian Shephard be members of the Committee.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Ordered,

That three be the quorum of the Committee.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Ordered,

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Student Loans

10.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): I beg to move,

That the draft Education (Student Loans) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 25th June, be approved.

The draft regulations are laid under the Education (Student Loans) Act 1990. They will establish the loans scheme with effect from the autumn of 1990. The Government agreed that they should be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, a course which provides a welcome opportunity to lay the detail open to the scrutiny of both Houses of Parliament. There was approval following a constructive debate in another place.

The draft regulations set out the detail of the policy that the Government have already announced and which the House has already debated. They demonstrate the merits of the flexible approach which the Government have adopted. That approach was criticised at the time, but I think that all can now see the advantages of the procedure that we have followed. The basic Act is underwritten by detailed regulations which are capable of being adjusted annually. Some of the provisions will need to be changed each year while others may need to be altered in the light of the monitoring to which we are committed. The general substance of the scheme is outlined in this first set of regulations, and that is why it should be adopted under the affirmative resolution procedure, which gives the House an opportunity to examine the scheme.

The draft regulations set out the detailed eligibility criteria for the loans scheme. Basically, the scheme is parallel to the criteria for mandatory awards, but we have deliberately drawn the criteria wider. This means that 50,000 or more students who are not eligible for grant will be eligible for loan. The regulations set out the terms of the loan. The amount that is outstanding will be indexed to inflation so that no real interest will be charged. The repayment period will be five years, or seven years for those who are taking the longest courses. We expect that the amount of repayment each year will be about £400 per annum for those who are eligible to repay. The deferment and cancellation arrangements will protect those with low incomes. Under the regulations, no graduate with an income below £11,500 will be expected to repay his loan.

Finally, the regulations set out the responsibilities of the higher education institutions in confirming their students' eligibility. The House will have seen the minutes of evidence of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which caused some excitement last week. I am pleased to see in his place an eminent member of that Committee, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). Now that the House has had a chance to study these matters, I hope that it will think that any delay has been worth while.

I should explain to those who have not read the regulations that they bear on three main points. First, there is clarification of the position of disabled borrowers. That is to be found in regulation 8. Regulation 9 includes provision—this has been announced already—for the disregard of disability-related benefits when income is assessed for deferment purposes. Disabled borrowers may claim deferment on higher incomes than other borrowers. In regulation 8, we have added to the discretion of the Student Loans Company Ltd. in relation to the starting time of, or the period for, the disabled borrower's repayments.

Regulation 3(3) is a technical amendment which deals with loans for Scottish minors. It recognises that, under contracts that are governed by Scottish law, a minor should obtain the prior consent of his curator, who in most instances is his parent or guardian. Courts in Scotland may possibly take the view that a minor can validly ratify contract on reaching his majority only if he obtains such consent or if he was already independent of his family when he entered into the contract.

Regulations allow for students under 18 years of age on higher education courses to be eligible for loans. Obviously we must expect such students to repay their loans once they have graduated.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Have the Law Society of Scotland and the Scottish banks formally agreed to this?

Mr. Jackson: The issue of Scottish minors and their responsibilities vis-a-vis credit is one of the more recondite points of Scottish law. There are different views on the matter. It has never been tested in the courts. The Government take the view that the issue is not ratification. If the issue is enforceability of the loan, the loan will be enforceable.

Mr. Dalyell: It is not quite so technical a matter as the Minister makes out. It is a practical matter and affects many people. I repeat the blunt question that I asked: have the Law Society of Scotland and the banks agreed to this? The frank answer is no, is it not?

Mr. Jackson: I have difficulty in answering the hon. Gentleman's question, because I do not see how the banks come into it. I do not believe that the Law Society of Scotland has been asked about the matter. Ultimately this is a matter for the courts to determine. If the hon. Gentleman studies the regulations, he will see that the issue that we are considering is ratification at the age of 18, not enforceability. The Government's view is that the loans will be enforceable.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will my hon. Friend remind the House that on 11 May the parliamentary assembly of the council of Europe, meeting at Strasbourg, passed a unanimous resolution, to the effect that

"Systems of loans . . . can be encouraged".

That resolution was proposed by the rapporteur, Mr. Bassinet, a French Socialist. Not one of the 12 British Labour Members of Parliament who are members of the Council of Europe's parliamentary assembly voted against it. Why is the Labour party so hopelessly inconsistent? Why does it say one thing at Strasbourg and the opposite at Westminster?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend asks a very good question, but we could come even closer to home. There is a marked difference of emphasis and tone on student loans between some of the Front-Bench Opposition spokesmen in this House and some of the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen in another place. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that inconsistency.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Minister suggest that the Government are so incompetent in the law relating to minors in Scotland that they cannot draft

appropriate regulations, but they have to rely on test cases in Scottish courts? It is ridiculous to place any Scottish student in that position. I ask the Minister to take the regulations back. It seems to me that the Government drafted panic measures before the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments met.

Mr. Jackson: The enforceability of loans against minors who take them out before they reach 18 is an obscure area of Scottish law. There are differences of view about it. The issue can be determined only by the courts. Under the regulations, students who are minors will be allowed to make use of a loan. That is entirely as it should be. We expect the students to repay their loans. The general rule is——

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does the fact that the Minister of State is not occupying her normal place on the Treasury Bench have any implications, as rumoured in the press, or does it mean that we ought to be told something that so far she has not been allowed to tell us?

Hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I think that the hon. Gentleman had his answer while he was raising his point of order.

Mr. Jackson: The general rule is that students under 18 can claim the loan. We expect them to repay it. To do so, we need to protect the taxpayers' interests. I am sure that the House will agree with me that the interests of taxpayers, whether they are in England or Scotland, should be safeguarded.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I have an interest to declare, in that I have two children who will be going to university this autumn, and they will probably be taking out loans. My hon. Friend has been talking about the enforceability of loans in Scotland. Is he implying that, if the loans turn out not to be enforceable in Scotland, Scottish students will not have to pay back the money, whereas my children will have to pay it back because they have attended English universities?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is looking too far ahead. There is a question about the enforceability of loans to minors in Scotland. The Government believe that such students would be obliged to repay their loans for that period but there is some dispute about the matter. We have made arrangements in the regulations for ratification as a way of handling the problem. We shall have many opportunities to return to the issue, because repayments will not start for some time to come.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Have the Scottish Law Officers been consulted about this matter, and what is their opinion?

Mr. Jackson: The matter has been discussed within the Government. As I have said, the Government's view is that loans taken out by minors in Scotland are enforceable, but there is an argument about it. That was one of the matters that surfaced during the deliberations of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments.

Let me proceed now——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jackson: I shall give way finally to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

Mr. Hughes: Why will not the Under-Secretary be honest with the House and say that there is an omission from the regulations because the Government cannot deal with the point? And is not that only one of the omissions? For example, the name of the company administering the scheme is omitted: the regulations contain no reference to the Student Loans Company. Does that betoken an omission or was it the result of an intentional decision to provide for privatisation in the near future?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman is very good at speculation. The Government have said previously that that course might be followed—it might not be—but it is certainly not an intentional feature of the regulations that that should be so. No decisions either way on that point are made in the regulations.

Let me press on to the third technical point arising from the regulations—the clarification of the role of the higher education institutions. For those who are following the matter in close detail, that is dealt with in regulation 11(2).

In assessing students' eligibility for loans, the higher education institutions must determine whether they meet residence requirements identical to those that apply for mandatory awards, which are verified by the local education authorities. That is mostly a straightforward matter, but there are a few cases in which detailed information may be needed from the student.

The regulations now ensure that the institution's investigations go only as far is reasonably practicable. There is no need for them to pursue the matter exhaustively. In addition, the unqualified requirement in the earlier draft to certify the accuracy of information on students' eligibility is replaced by the requirement to certify accuracy to the best of the institution's knowledge and belief.

I take this opportunity to repeat the tribute that has been paid in another place to the constructive approach that is adopted by the institutions' administrators, who have been attending a series of meetings and seminars arranged by the Student Loans Company. They have provided invaluable feedback. They have allowed the company to refine its procedure. They have also demonstrated their professional commitment to making the scheme work in the interests of their students, and I am sure that that approach will attract the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

On 20 June, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that the Student Loans Company's provisional budget for 1990-91 is £14·25 million exclusive of VAT. That includes payments to the higher education institutions for certifying their students' eligibility—£3·50 for each correctly completed application form. The administration costs therefore fall within the £10 million to £20 million range to which the Government referred throughout the passage of the Bill, and are far lower than the extraordinary figures that were bandied about by the supporters of alternative approaches. I can remember some of them citing the figure of £150 million.

Hon. Members already know the justification for the Government's scheme, but let me repeat the basic points. The idea of the loans scheme is to lift a financial restriction on the growth of higher education. There are now more than 1 million students in all kinds of higher education

[Mr. Jackson]

—almost a quarter of a million more than in 1979. Both the Government and the Opposition are committed to continued expansion. However, the expanding cost of supporting students' living expenses cannot be supported by taxpayers and parents alone. Between 1962 and 1989-90, the cost in current prices of student grants has increased by 264 per cent. Parental contributions have increased under successive Governments and about 40 per cent. of students whose parents are assessed for a contribution find them unable or unwilling to make up the full amount.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Is the Minister going back on earlier answers that he has given to me, which show that, over the next 20 years, it would cost £2·17 billion more to operate the scheme than it would cost to uprate grants in line with inflation?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that with any loans scheme there is a period when money is advanced before it starts to come back. If the hon. Member studies the White Paper he will see our projections and we have given the basis of the projections in exhaustive answers to the hon. Gentleman's parliamentary questions. As the number of students starts to grow substantially at the end of the decade, we will reach a point at which the student loans scheme will be repaying larger and larger sums of money and that will help to fund the expansion to which we are committed and which we intend to pay for in the way that we are proposing. The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) is committed to expanding, but he has not said anything about how he will pay for that.

Loans offer additional funding through the anticipation by students of their own future income as graduates. We follow the line that is taken by every other country that has large numbers of students. In an earlier debate, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) referred to other countries that have large numbers of students in higher education. All those countries have loan schemes, and those schemes help fund those students.

The loans are being offered on generous terms and there is full protection through deferment for those not achieving high incomes. Providing additional resources as grant is simply not a viable option, as no savings would accrue. The cost to the taxpayer would continue to rise inexorably.

Around 500,000 students will be eligible for loans in 1990-91. We are budgeting to provide £178 million in loans next year and there will be more than that if the take-up exceeds 80 per cent.—the sum is not cash-limited. We are also making available £14 million of access funds for those who are eligible for loans. Discounting the estimate of £68 million in social security benefits forgone by those students, there is an increase in the public support for eligible students of about £124 million. Students will also, of course, benefit from the uprating of mandatory grant. Loan and grant together will constitute a 25 per cent. increase in student funding in the course of a single year.

There are substantial additional resources for students in the next academic year. The freezing of the grant means reducing the parental contribution in real terms from 1992 eventually to little over half its present level. We have in prospect the relief of a burden on taxpayers as loan repayments accrue and cumulative savings are produced.

The scheme is necessary to the future of higher education. The regulations are necessary for the implementation of the scheme. There is no need to debate the principles of the scheme, but I shall respond later to the points that are raised about the details of the regulations. I commend the regulations to the House.

10.47 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): We oppose the regulations and the scheme behind them. The loans scheme is ill-considered, misconceived and extraordinarily wasteful of public funds. As the Minister has just admitted, it will cost over £2,000 million extra above the cost of uprating the grant system in line with inflation between now and the year 2009—nearly 20 years away.

The scheme has been brought in with a degree of administrative chaos that has rarely been seen for any new scheme. That is reflected in the fact that the regulations had to be withdrawn last Tuesday and in the way in which they were pushed through the other place. Lord Boyd-Carpenter, who we should remember is chairman of the Association of Conservative Peers, launched a strong attack on the way in which the regulations were physically presented to that House. He said:

> "Can my noble Friend really say that this dirty bit of paper with inked-in corrections, deletions and amendments all over it and with two typed-in so-called riders is the form in which your Lordships' House should be asked to approve legislation?"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 28 June 1990; Vol. 520, c. 1766.]

That would be funny were it not serious. It shows that Ministers have been working hand to mouth, not knowing what they have been doing from one minute to the next. That was clearly demonstrated when the Minister failed to answer a number of questions about the applicability of Scottish law to the regulations.

The regulations are unfair. They provide no help for postgraduates, and there are no special conditions for low-paid professionals such as teachers or nurses. It is true that, if someone is earning less than £965 a month—£11,500 a year—he or she can defer the loan, but, during the period of deferral, for every minute that he or she defers, interest accrues. Therefore, people will have to pay more when they come to repayment when their salary rises above £11,580. In case the Minister is wondering about that, it is specified clearly for the avoidance of doubt in paragraph 9.6 of the regulations. No help is provided for women returners to work, and there is a lack of serious concession for disabled students.

Let me refer to the detail of the regulations and to the applicability to them of Scots law. They had to be withdrawn in their initial draft form because it was clear that they did not properly take account of the law of Scotland relating to minors. I concede that the law of Scotland relating to minors is complicated. In certain circumstances, under the doctrine of quadrennium utile, it is possible for a minor to enter into a contract and for it then to be voidable at his suit within a period of about four years if he can show that he entered into the contract under duress. There are also certain circumstances that appear to apply here. It is essential that a contract for a loan is guaranteed by the student's or the minor's curator—his parent or guardian.

I, in common with the Minister and his officials, am no expert on Scots law, but it is appalling that the Minister has admitted that no consultation took place with the Law Society of Scotland. Nor, as became clear from his evasion of my question, has there been any consultation with Scottish Law Officers. It is not good enough for the Minister simply to say that the matter was dealt with in government. Everyone knows that, when Law Officers are brought in, Ministers are able—they frequently do so—to state categorically before the House that the Law Officers have been consulted and that they assent to what has been brought before the House. In this case, the Minister either does not know whether the Law Officers have been brought in or, as I suspect, knows that they have not been brought in and wishes to avoid giving that information to the House.

There is then the detailed matter of the deferment of the arrangements that apply. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) was told by the Minister:

"The terms and conditions of a loan agreement will not authorise the Student Loans Company to investigate borrowers' incomes through their employers or banks. Borrowers wishing to defer repayments will be required to produce evidence that their income falls below 85 per cent. of national average earnings."—*[Official Report,* 19 June 1990; Vol. 174, c. 504.]

Hon. Members were pleased to hear that, but how does his answer square with information that the Secretary of State gave in press notice 6590 on 26 February 1990? It said specifically:

"Verification could be required of banks."

Paragraph 6 of the press notice states:

"In applying, the borrower authorises checks of current income with employer, bank, etc."

Are banks to be consulted without the direct knowledge of the student application?

Then there are the duties of the Student Loans Company and the duty of the institutions that are required to implement the regulations. There is a marked contrast between the great powers given to the Student Loans Company and the Secretary of State which are not specified in the regulations—indeed, as has already been pointed out, the Student Loans Company is not even mentioned in the regulations—and the overbearing duties that are imposed on higher education. Why is the Students Loans Company not specified at any point in the regulations, and why not are its duties specified?

Ministers have produced an extraordinarily complicated administrative scheme for student loans. Under paragraph 11(5) no fewer than three separate forms will be required from individual students. Under paragraph 11(2), the student is issued with and has to return an

"eligibility questionnaire provided by the loans administrator."

Having returned that, under paragraph 11(2)(d), the student then has to complete

"an eligibility form provided by the loans administrator",

and then, under paragraph 11(2)(g), the student is provided with and must complete

"a loan application form provided by the loans administrator."

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has claimed—Opposition Members accept this—that the procedures are

"unnecessarily cumbersome . . . Universities are quite capable of making effective administrative arrangements and may well be able to find more efficient ways of doing things. As currently laid down the procedures are more complicated than for grant applications to the LEAs."

Is it really necessary for students to be required to complete three separate forms before they get a loan? Why cannot they complete one form, and if they turn out to be ineligible, be sent a note telling them so? What is the purpose of laying one layer of bureaucracy upon another, upon another?

There is also the question of the fee of £3·50 to each institution in respect of each set of applications that is completed. That fee is insufficient, given the burden of the administrative arrangements.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): More resources.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State's private secretary, who should know that his job is to be seen, not heard, says, "More resources." As he knows only too well, this is a very wasteful scheme—and his deeply embarrassed Secretary of State knows it, too. We wish the scheme to be scrapped altogether, but if it is to go ahead, the Government must pay the institutions the cost of the scheme, or, the institutions will be using money that was given to them for other purposes, such as teaching students, to run this damn silly scheme. Is the Minister genuinely satisfied that the £3·50 fee is sufficient?

During the considerations of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, the official who gave evidence accepted that the original draft was "very harsh, perhaps . . . oppressive" on the institutions that are required to implement the regulations. It is a great tribute to the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and his colleagues in this place, and counsel to the Commiteee, that they were able to force these changes in the regulations. However, the truth is that the regulations are still oppressive on the institutions and, above all, on the students.

There is a nice irony and contrast between the debate that we have just had and this debate. In the previous debate, at the behest of the Government, a carefully targeted benefit, housing benefit, was denied to students. Now we are having a debate that will force through regulations to help those students who need it least. As the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) said on 20 October 1989:

"Far from helping poorer people to gain access to higher education, the scheme will amount to an indiscriminate subsidy to the middle classes who need it least."—[*Official Report,* 20 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 428.]

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet) *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I am just about to complete my remarks.

This is the truth about the scheme. In tonight's *Evening Standard,* we read that, according to a Gallup poll, four out of five parents believe that the state should pay all or part of the costs of their children's higher education, and only 4 per cent. think that their children should contribute anything to their further education—*[Interruption.]*—except through taxes, of course. That finding is paralleled only by the proportion of Conservative Members who think that the Minister should stay on after the mini-reshuffle.

Mr. Batiste *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Straw: No, I am just about to complete my remarks —[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I shall be delighted to give way to the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste).

Mr. Batiste: The hon. Gentleman said that a Labour Government would scrap the scheme. If that is added to his intention to uprate the benefit in the form of grant, what does he intend to do about all the students who are included in the loans scheme but are not at present eligible for grant? Will he include them in a new scheme? Has he quantified that cost, and if so, where does he intend to find the money?

Mr. Straw: I think that that was the hon. Gentleman's first intervention on the grants scheme. If he had attended the debates on it more assiduously, as many of his hon. Friends have, he would have worked out what they have and what has made them oppose the scheme with such force—that not only is this a rotten and unfair scheme but it will cost the country far more than the grants scheme. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that we are satisfied that by replacing loans with fair grants we shall not only do better for students but save the country a great deal of money.

This is a rotten scheme and these are rotten regulations, and we shall oppose them tonight.

11 pm

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): In this debate on the regulations, I do not want to go over in detail again why I find them so astonishing. That is why I propose to take only two or three minutes to say why I oppose the regulations.

No one outside the House who is associated with higher education has a good word to say for what we are doing tonight. I should be interested if any hon. Member could mention any responsible body which says that it is the way forward.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that, in Sweden, the socialist Education Minister says that a loan scheme is the right way to proceed and that he is not prepared to introduce a grants scheme in Sweden, because it would damage the motivation of students in Sweden?

Mr. Miscampbell: Of course, other countries have schemes which are different from that which I favour. The West Germans are changing their system. The Americans are also changing their minds. But we must understand that we are tail-end Charlie in producing graduates. It is not a question of charging students but of finding out how we can cease to have the lowest production of graduates in the industrial western world. Of course, it would be those who have no difficulty. We should examine West Germany's production of graduates and compare it with what we produce. We should ask why there is a difference and what we should do to produce more.

I shall take only a moment or two, because other hon. Members wish to speak. We must understand that the scheme will produce nothing for the Government as we move into the next century. It will do nothing to supply our present lack of engineers and many other graduates whom we need badly and who are the seedcorn of our future. We are not producing sufficient numbers of such people.

My constituency of Blackpool produces people capable of going to the top. Many of them come from fairly humble backgrounds. Let us consider a simple practical problem. How will it help us if, by the turn of the century, such people face a heavy debt? Never mind the figure now —it may be £300 or £400—but by the end of the century students may have a debt of £7,000 or more around their necks. How will that help us to solve our problems?

At the beginning of the 1980s, students were radicalised. By the middle of the 1980s—I know, because my children were educated through the 1980s—they had stopped agitating. They had decided that a good job was available for them and that, with a good degree, they had a future. That has all changed now. The Government have simply made students today angry with us. How will that help?

It may be that those who have a privileged education and a further degree could be asked to pay more. I do not agree with that, because I believe that such people are the seedcorn of all our futures. If one accepts that, that is what should happen. It is not as if the scheme were the only one open to the Government. The academics offered two schemes, either of which would do. Why not simply pick up the money in income tax from those who had a proper and substantial grant, if that is what is wanted?

If, 25 years ago, when I and, dare I say, others were adopted by our executive, I had said, "I propose that when your children have completed their university education they should leave university with £7,000 round their neck in debt," I would not be here, for the good reason that I would not have been adopted.

11.5 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I associate myself with the remarks of the hon. and learned Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell). He spelled out the fundamental objection that there must be to the student loans scheme which the Government have persisted in introducing. He is absolutely right to object to it on that principal ground. His objection goes to the heart of the debate, although Ministers have seen fit simply to shrug it off, despite being plagued with difficulties that others predicted they would run into from the start. A Government with a little more humility might well have withdrawn the proposals at an early stage or at least gone back to the drawing board to start again, rather than attempt to cobble the regulations together as they went along. The Government will be saddled politically with this for a long time.

Rather than make general criticisms, I shall deal with specific points, as important detailed problems have already been highlighted in the debate. The problems arise precisely because of the way in which the Government have cobbled the regulations together in response to one crisis after another as their original proposals were undermined and fell apart, even as they tried to present them.

The Minister should at least have the humility to acknowledge that this is an important debate and that it is as well that it is taking place under the affirmative resolution procedure. He was wrong to reject that principle originally as unnecessary. If nothing else, the hasty, additional handwritten amendments to the regulations, even as we came to debate them, and the embarrassing events of last week have proved that this is a worthwhile procedure.

Mr. Jackson: I am happy to pay tribute to the Liberals, who proposed in the House this idea, which we decided to accept in the House of Lords.

Mr. Taylor: That is courteous of the Minister, and I thank him for his comment. I hope that in future he will advocate the principle on Bills and on other occasions. In some circumstances, it is a lifebelt for Governments and Parliament.

Why does there appear to have been no consultation on the regulations, at least in relation to part V? It is hard to believe that it is Department of Education and Science policy not to pursue consultation on these matters. Had there been consultation, some of the problems would not have arisen and some of the hasty amendments would not have been needed at an earlier stage.

Given that the Department has not consulted on the matter, why has it opted for such a cumbersome administrative system? It requires questionnaire forms, security checks, eligibility forms, further security checks and final despatch to the Student Loans Company. I cannot believe that a system as administratively complicated as that was proposed by Price Waterhouse or any other leading management consultant. I wonder why Ministers have insisted that such a system should be used.

I am amazed that the regulations lay out the range of specified tasks for universities and polytechnics, but do not even mention by name the company that will administer the loans scheme. It seems that civil servants, in drafting the regulations, have sought to put the problems that they are creating on to the universities and polytechnics that have opposed the system and not acknowledged—through detailed regulations about the operation of the Student Loans Company and its taking on board some of the difficulties—that such problems should be tackled by the Government Department that pushed the system through.

We have every reason to expect such details about the Student Loans Company to appear in the legislation, not least because the Bill states that we shall receive them. The fact that such details are missing has already led my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to ask whether the Minister would pursue privatisation for the Student Loans Company. The Minister has again, following a number of interviews outside this place, suggested that that option is still on the agenda.

Perhaps the Minister will make his position on that clearer later. If we have not received the details in order to open the way for privatisation of the company, would it not be more appropriate for the Minister to spell out what the administrator of student loans would be expected to do as a public, and potentially private, service?

We can envisage moving rapidly towards the privatisation of the Students Loans Company, as the Government originally intended. We shall do so without any idea or debate in the House of the details of what the company, in the public or private sector, is expected to do, how it is expected to do it and what commitments and obligations it will have. It is high time for the Minister to spell out the discussions that have taken place with the Department about how the company will operate and what its long-term future is. I do not believe that discussions about the possibility of privatisation and how it will happen, have not taken place in the Department.

There has been strong pressure from both Houses about future loan arrangements for disabled people. Concern about that should unite Members across the House. Schedule 2(3) of the Education (Student Loans) Act 1990 makes it clear that the availability of loans is not intended to bring hardship to any disabled borrower. The regulations have gone some way towards meeting that aim, but they have not achieved what was intended, particularly by the other place.

The fatal flaw lies in the tie for a student or subsequent graduate to be in receipt of a disablement benefit before he or she is eligible to begin repayment at a later date or to have the length of repayment extended. It is well known that many disabled students who come within precisely the criteria mentioned in both Houses are not in receipt of benefit, of which the outstanding group must be deaf students, although there are many others as well.

Research shows that deaf students, who will mostly not be eligible for this sort of support, are likely to earn lower incomes than other students after graduation. British studies confirm that the number of deaf students going into higher paid professions is proportionately lower than the number of other students. Disabled people face living costs associated with their disability, and that is not recognised in the regulations. By tying the regulations to eligibility for benefit, the Government have missed the essential point, which is that we should tie repayment to ability to repay, not to eligibility for benefit.

The regulations are unamendable—that is one of the faults in the way in which the government have decided to proceed—so I want an assurance from the Minister that, when the regulations made under the Education (Student Loans) Act are examined next year, the Department will ensure that disabled students are not defined by virtue of their receipt of benefit; a wider definition of disability must be used, under which repayment exemptions for disabled borrowers are based on need, not benefit entitlement.

The regulations fail to make clear the legal situation of people under the age of 18 who take out loans. The Under-Secretary of State referred to Scottish law, and we shall await developments with interest. But it appears that the Department itself is uncertain about the position of 18-year-olds, whether in Scotland or in England or Wales. What preparations has it made to fight legal battles in a year or so—or even next September—when people start to make claims against the Government and refuse to pay?

It is dubious whether the Government, under any legal system, can impose on students who are not old enough to enter into one an agreement by which they must abide under threat of receiving no further payments. That they should attempt this is extraordinary.

The Government stand condemned by the regulations in general and the student loan scheme in particular—and by the faults of detail that they have left in the regulations. The Liberal Democrats will vote against them, and they deserve to be defeated.

11.17 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I shall try to be briefer than the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) who rather selfishly used up too much time.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said that he was in favour of a fair grant scheme. Does he believe that the present grant system is fair given that it denies grants to some students and means that others do not receive the assessed parental contribution? My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) said that no academic approves of these regulations. As a former academic, I must point out to him

[Mr. John Marshall]

that 364 academic economists signed a letter to *The Times* in 1981. They were wrong, just as the academic opponents of the regulations are wrong.

I recognise that the universities of this country offer a first-rate system of education and provide a unique ladder of opportunity for the students who go to them. I welcome the regulations because they will play an essential part in the expansion of higher education.

The paradox is that we have the most generous system of student support in the western world, and a lower percentage of young people in higher education. The hon Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) adversely compared the United Kingdom with South Korea. She did not tell the House that Japan, which has more students than the United Kingdom, has no system of university grants. Our opponents ignore the fact that our present grants system is unsustainable if we are to have the expansion in higher education that we all want. The choice facing us is between grants for the few or higher education for the many. The vast majority of our people want to see more people entering higher education rather than a system of privileged grants for the few who are currently in education.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge) *rose*——

Mr. Marshall: I will not give way. My hon. Friend has said that I am the temporary Member for Hendon, South. The temporary Member for Hendon, South is not giving way to the temporary Member for Cambridge.

Our opponents also fail to recognise that even with the proposed changes we will still have the most generous system of student support anywhere in the western world. Our critics compare our performance with that of Japan, Korea, Germany, and Sweden but fail to say that even under these proposals we will be far more generous than any country that they can name. The proposals are socially just. On the whole, those going to university can look forward to a much higher income than those who do not have the privilege of such an education.

It is right that those who benefit financially from higher education should make a contribution, albeit small, to the cost of that education by repaying a loan. Of course some graduates will have a low income, but that is no argument for saying that no one should repay the loan. It is an argument for deferring the repayment for such people, as the scheme does. It is also an argument for higher salaries. It is no argument against a loan scheme to say that teachers, vicars, nurses and social workers are paid too little. That is an argument for paying such people more and not for presuming that in our system of support for university students all students are underpaid. The vast majority of British students receive very large incomes when they enter the real world.

Those who talk about access fail to mention that, last October, a record number of students entered higher education. A parliamentary reply to me last week showed that in October there will be a 4 per cent. increase in the number of students going to university. Those who will repay the loans do not share the doubts of my hon. Friend for Cambridge. They know the worth of higher education and are willing to take the chance.

I am appalled by the patronising attitude of some people towards children whose parents are on low incomes. Those potential students recognise that a course of higher education will provide them with the best possible opportunity in life. They will not be put off by the need to repay a loan at some stage in the future. They recognise that, if they do not take the opportunity of higher education, their future will be bleak.

It is important for children from low-income families to stay on at school. If they do not remain there beyond the age of 16, they have no chance of entering higher education. The Conservative party has been responsible for encouraging more children to stay on after the age of 16. The introduction of the GCSE, which is more interesting and relevant than the old GCE O-level, will encourage more students to stay at school and proceed to A-levels and university. The regulations are fair to the taxpayer, the student and the country. They will help to underwrite the expansion in higher education which all Conservative Members so earnestly desire.

11.24 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I genuinely intend to be brief; however, I feel that it is incumbent on me, as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, to confirm that the evidence that the House decided should be available has illuminated the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) mentioned the debate in the House of Lords. It is worth pointing out that the House of Lords cannot debate these or any other regulations until the Joint Committee has reported: it was therefore quite wrong of the Minister to try to continue the debate—as he did at one stage—when a vital piece of information had not been made available.

It is clear from the evidence that the regulations were rushed into existence. It is worth pointing out that they were changed only on the representation of counsel to the Committee, who pointed out that, in their original form, they made unusual use of powers and were almost certainly ultra vires, as well as being mistaken in another context. That referred to the proposals for disabled students, the Scottish legislation and the attempt to ensure that the academic institutions provided information that was certified correct when it was patently impossible for any such body to do so. As a result of those representations, and for no other reason, the regulations were withdrawn and retabled.

It is incumbent on the Department and the House to endorse regulations that are as clear as possible, so that people—students in particular—are not faced with court actions, whose costs could run into tens of thousands of pounds, in an attempt to clarify the legal position. I am delighted that tonight the House has demonstrated the value of the Joint Committee's work—work that the Minister was prepared to ignore.

I have dealt with the Committee's point of view; I wish now to speak briefly about the merits of the regulations, with which the Committee does not deal. The loan scheme is anathema to me. I speak as probably the only hon. Member who had to go to university with a loan: in 1953, when it was very difficult to obtain a grant, the local authority refused me one. Had I known that I would have to go through university on an annual loan, I would not have entered in the first place. Instead of spending pleasurable weeks at home, as all the sons and daughters

of wealthy Tories will be able to do, I had to work week after week in a part-time job to eke out my university existence.

The loan was a millstone round our necks. I say "our necks" because it continued well into my married life—and I was married at 29; I was not exactly a child groom. The burden of those repayments was still there in my early 30s. I would not wish to impose such an onerous duty on any other student, and for that reason alone I strongly oppose the regulations: they are unfair and unjust. All credit to Tory Members who have had the guts to stand up and put their point of view—to the intense and sneering displeasure of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who dismissed a potential intervener with a disdain and lack of courtesy that I have never before witnessed on the Conservative Benches.

I can say from my experience that the loans system is unfair, unjust and onerous, and should be opposed.

11.28 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): My hon. Friends will know that, way back in the days when the Conservatives were in opposition, I supported one of the colleagues of the present Leader of the Opposition—a member of his education team when he was a political adviser to Baroness Castle—who advocated student loans. It always seemed admirable in principle, for the very reasons that the then Government advisers gave, which is that the grant system is a millstone around the neck of expansion of higher education, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said. I have opposed the scheme as inadequate in a number of ways. I shall now ask some specific questions about the regulations.

The regulations say about the designation of courses that the Secretary of State will have power to

"designate courses of higher education at institutions other than institutions receiving support from public funds."

Can my hon. Friend the Minister say categorically that he will be allowing loans for students attending the University of Buckingham? Will he consider other vocational qualifications, which increasing numbers of students are taking, as the Government's philosophy encourages them to do, at institutions other than universities and polytechnics?

As that is about qualifications through institutions, what would be the position regarding the eligibility of categories of students? Am I right to suggest that nothing in these regulations, and certainly nothing in the statute, prevents my hon. Friend the Minister, or his successors, from allowing loans to be granted to postgraduates or part-time students? I recall that the Prime Minister, when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science, came out against student loans for graduates, but was keen on grants to postgraduates. My hon. Friend should explain whether, with the statute as we have it, that would be possible.

An admirable provision allows deferment and reduced repayments for those who have problems. It says that a person will not have to repay if his income for any month does not exceed £965. That is a precise figure. Is the suggestion that, as inflation goes on—even under this Government, it goes on—the Minister will regularly return to the House with regulations, which will all be subject to affirmative resolution of the House?

I agree with the provision in regulation 9(4):

"In determining whether a borrower's gross income in any month exceeds the amount specified in paragraph (1) no account shall be taken of any disability-related benefits paid to him in that month."

However, what about other sources of income? What about unemployment pay, and what is the position of deemed interest? We have the acute problem with the community charge that, under social security regulations, it is necessary, when determining the income rate at which the threshold operates, to count an exorbitant interest rate, of 20 per cent. or so on capital. Does that apply to mature students, who may have to defer their payments?

Will my hon. Friend look at the German scheme? Regulation 7(5) on page 4, says:

"Nothing . . . shall be taken to prevent a borrower from reducing or discharging his liability".

That is admirable. If people wish to pay off their loan faster than five years, that is great. However, are we not in the business of building incentives into the system? In Germany, lower interest is charged if one pays back early. Equally, it should be possible to get concessions on the interest and repayments if one gets good grades. That is also a feature in many other loans systems. Why are we not thinking like that?

11.33 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): The debate on these regulations was delayed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said, because of Government incompetence. The evidence that we sought on Tuesday last week is now available. Those of us who have had the chance to look at it know that the officials concede that the first set of regulations published were flawed in that they did not adequately reflect the law north of the border.

That was just the latest in a production line of disasters throughout the sorry passage of the Education (Student Loans) Act. It has been blighted by one disaster after another. The consultation process on the loans scheme was a sham. On Second Reading, Conservative Members lined up to attack the plans, and the Bill was a disgrace—only a few pages of enabling clauses, with no mention of the limits of the scheme. During the Committee stage, in which I participated, the faults in the Government's arguments were largely exposed.

Matters went from bad to worse. Earlier this year, under pressure from all sides, the banks withdrew their support and left the scheme in tatters. It had no friends then, and it has picked up few in the intervening period. The Under-Secretary contributed to the Bill's misfortunes at its various stages. On Second Reading, he made the remarkable statement that the top-up loan equated to nothing more than the cost of a skiing holiday, seemingly unaware that skiing holidays are relatively rare in my constituency and, I am sure, in his.

In Committee, he made another remarkable comment to the president of the Edinburgh university students' association. He said that he had published the address of the Student Loans Company in Glasgow for the specific reason that the demonstrators could smash its windows, and apparently thereby give added weight to the Government's case. That was mentioned in Committee. The comment may have been made in a jocular manner, but it called into question the Under-Secretary's judgment in the way that he has guided the Bill through the House.

When the Bill went to another place, several important amendments were carried—but the Government ran

[Mr. Mike Watson]

scared and, in a dramatic move, introduced a guillotine to curtail debate on the Lords amendments. They did the same this evening when entitlement of students to housing benefit under the Social Security Bill was discussed. The Bill has been little more than an unmitigated disaster for the Government, yet it will be forced through at the last minute.

Two substantive issues arise in Scots law. It is regrettable that it is impossible to amend the regulations to take account of them. First, the regulations set out the Scottish legal position—that a loan to a minor cannot be made without parental consent, other than a minor without a curator. Secondly, what will happen to a student with a curator or parent who refuses to sanction the loan? Would the Student Loans Company still make the loan? If it did, that would be against Scottish law. It gives rise to the question of discrimination as English and Welsh students do not require parental consent; they need only have the agreement ratified when they reach the age of 18. That is an important point, because more 17-year-olds go into higher education in Scotland than in England or Wales because of the different system of education.

A sizeable minority of parents fail to complete the forms for student grants, so it is possible that a greater number will not give their consent to a loan application. In Scotland, if a loan were granted on the expectation of the consent of the parent or curator, but it was subsequently refused, I presume that the loan would have to be returned and the agreement made null and void. I hope that the Under-Secretary answers those points.

The regulations do not rectify an anomaly. All that they do is to spell out the legal position. They do not facilitate the provision of loans to all eligible under-18s in Scotland, and that is just one of a number of serious faults in the regulations and in the Bill.

11.39 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): The objections to the regulations seem to fall under two broad heads, and the first set relate to technicalities. Those who are familiar with parliamentary procedures will know that any regulations, in whatever form of words, on a controversial issue of this sort would undoubtedly be subject to criticism. If every proposal that has been advanced by the opponents had been set out in the regulations, the opponents would have found other proposals. The regulations need to be in place for the coming academic year, and the Government have acted properly in trying to bring them forward as quickly as possible, so that there is as much time as possible for them to be understood and implemented.

It is no fault of the Government's that the banks withdrew from discussions at a late stage and that alternative arrangements had to be made for the administration of the scheme. It is—*[Interruption.]* The scoffing of Opposition Members reminds me of a saying that was coined at the time when the railways were being built. It was said that no one would ask a stagecoach company to build a railway.

With the benefit of hindsight it was not an especially good idea to ask the banks to be involved in the student loans scheme. We were asking them to act in direct competition with a fair part of their lending. Only this week I visited a polytechnic, at which the academics said clearly that one of the benefits of the scheme will be that many students who are borrowing from the banks by using plastic credit cards and paying 34 per cent. and more in interest charges will be relieved from their present onerous obligations.

Most students who go to a university, as I did many years ago, and many other students, end up borrowing. They borrow on straight commercial terms, which leads to an onerous burden. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has drawn attention to that already. The scheme will enable borrowing to take place on much more realistic terms.

Mr. Miscampbell: How will the scheme save students a penny? Loans that are made under the scheme will be only a substitute for grants. Students will be borrowing from the banks as well as entering into loans under the scheme.

Mr. Batiste: That just is not so. I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend will come to understand the position more clearly when he thinks about it.

If students want to borrow more than the sum which is made available to them under the scheme, they will be able to do so. The reality, however, is that students will have a loan option that will broaden the base of their financing from Government grant alone, and on terms that are far more advantageous than at present through normal commercial lending.

As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) will know, there is never a final word on detailed regulations for a complex scheme. Experience will be gained as years pass and lessons will be learnt. I hope to hear from my hon. Friend the Minister that the Government will have an open mind when they consider ways in which the technicalities of the scheme can be improved.

Whatever the regulations were about and whatever they included, the Opposition would oppose them. That is because they do not want a loans scheme in principle. There lies the fundamental division between the two sides of the House. That is why I ask the hon. Member of Blackburn (Mr. Straw), the Opposition spokesman on education and science, what his commitment to an alternative would be. We heard the same weasel words from the Opposition tonight as we heard from them last week about schools. We are told, "We shall introduce a fair loans scheme." It is then said, "When resources permit, we shall add resources to the scheme." No one believes that a Labour Government would ever be capable of managing the economy better than a Conservative Government. Extra resources would never be available to a Labour Government.

We know from our surgery experience that there are flaws in the existing grant system. Students tell us that they cannot obtain either mandatory or discretionary grants to enable them to take courses. Those students are not covered by the present system and they will be major winners as a result of any new proposals that are included in the regulations. When I asked the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who led for the Opposition, whether that large number of potential students would benefit from the Labour party's alternative proposals, he deliberately avoided answering the question. The Labour party will continue to avoid answering it. The hon. Gentleman has no discretion to commit additional resources to student funding.

I shall use the device that the hon. Gentleman used last week. If he is prepared to give a commitment on behalf of the Labour party that in his definition of a fair loan scheme he will include in the uprating of all students who at present do not qualify for grants but who will qualify under this scheme for loans, including help for all those students who are entitled to a parental contribution but who do not get it, I shall give way to him now. I see that the hon. Gentleman is making not the slightest effort to rise to his feet. Nor will he, because the Opposition's case is based on humbug. They imply that they will devote more resources. As soon as they had an opportunity to do anything about student loans, however, they would welsh on their commitment.

The scheme is vital. It represents a great step forward in broadening the basis of financing higher education. It is a basis on which future Governments of this complexion will build. I would take a bet with anyone that there is no way in which a future Labour Government could find the resources that would enable them to undo the loan scheme.

11.46 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East) *rose*——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This has been a short debate. The Front-Bench spokesman will have consumed more than half the allotted time. I do not cavil at your calling of hon. Members, but on the next occasion could the usual channels come to an understanding? There does not need to be a summing-up speech from an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have sympathy for the hon. Gentleman and for other hon. Members who have not been called. However, the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman rose to his feet and, as is customary, I must call him. Mr. Andrew Smith.

Mr. Andrew Smith: The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) should not judge my speech before he hears it. The time that remains to me means that my speech will be far shorter than those of other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate.

It has been true from the outset of this half-baked and mean-spirited legislation that the regulations have all the hallmarks of a rushed and botched job. The Government embarked on a dogma-driven dash for the statute book and have tripped themselves up all the way. It is significant that the only two speeches that we have heard in support of the regulations were from the hon. Members for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and for Elmet (Mr. Batiste). Their speeches must have reassured the Minister. On the strength of what they said, we can be sure that they will not be in the front rank of candidates for his job.

The scheme has been a comedy of errors from the word go. However, it is not very funny for the students who will lose or for those who may never become students because of the barriers that it places in their path. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) pointed out, it began with the Government's refusal to publish, even in summary form, the responses to the White Paper consultations. When we analysed them, we found that 95 per cent. of the respondents rejected the scheme. That was why the Government refused to publish the responses.

The Government dragged their feet for almost 12 months before they would even provide time for a proper debate on the scheme. On Second Reading, the Under-Secretary told the House that we could amend the regulations. However, as he subsequently recognised, and as we recognise tonight, we cannot do so.

Then there was the, "will they, won't they?" pantomime of the banks pulling out of the scheme and the Prime Minister fizzing with fury and promising retribution. And so it has gone on. As the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) pointed out, the universities have not been properly consulted about the regulations. The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has drawn our attention to the fact that the version of the regulations that was put to it was ultra vires on three counts.

More recently, such was the rush to incorporate last-minute amendments in time for the equivalent debate in the other place that properly printed copies of the regulations were not even available, and their Lordships debate was delayed while hapless officials leapt back to the printers for copies without handwritten corrections and typed riders. We have witnessed a Government display of concentrated incompetence from start to finish.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Should not the hon. Member who closes the debate for the Opposition sum up the debate rather than reading out word for word what was written yesterday?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let us get on with the debate. Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) did not hear all the debate. In any case, numerous hon. Members mentioned the concentrated display of incompetence to which I referred.

In implementing the Education (Student Loans) Act, the regulations will reflect all the damaging consequences of the parent legislation—the deterrent effect on poorer students, to which the hon. and learned Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) referred; the unfair penalties for longer courses and on students in Scotland; the difficulties imposed on those entering poorly paid jobs; the administrative burden and the £2,170 million extra that the scheme will cost for the next 20 years, over and above the cost of uprating grants in line with inflation; as well as all the hardship that will be caused by the withdrawal of entitlement to social security benefits, which we discussed in the previous debate.

Dr. Hampson: That is all very well, but is it not about time that at least some Opposition Members acknowledged the fact that both the Minister for higher education in the last Labour Government, Gerry Fowler and Maurice Peston, now Lord Peston, who was special adviser to Fred Mulley, now Lord Mulley, when he was Secretary of State for Education and Science, agreed with the principle of student loans? Will not the hon. Gentleman accept that?

Mr. Smith: That is not true, and our record speaks for itself. We did not cut student maintenance by more than 20 per cent., as this Government have done during their period in office, making that an excuse for introducing the regulations before us. On the question of the much-vaunted but hopelessly inadequate access funds, what incompetence it is that, even now—not a couple of months

[Mr. Smith]

before students will be making applications—institutions still do not know how much they will have available to allocate to them.

I invite the Minister to attempt to answer the question that he failed to answer earlier about the technical position in Scotland. Has he or has he not taken the advice of the Scottish Law Officers, and is it or is it not the case that the last-minute amendments that have been spatchcocked into this wholly inadequate legislation do not cover the position in Scotland in respect of a minor who does not have the consent of his parent or curator? Let the Minister answer that question in his reply and let him answer, too, the points raised by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on other vocational qualifications. What about the physiotherapists and others registered under the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960? Are they or are they not covered?

Time does not permit me to go all through the inadequacies of the regulations, but they are flawed from start to finish, as is the legislation on which they are based. That so many questions should remain unanswered at this very late stage in the introduction of the student loans scheme is as bad for parliamentary democracy and public accountability as it is for the many students who, like their places of study, Will be facing enormous difficulties this autumn. These are bad regulations under a bad Act, and they give effect to a thoroughly bad scheme. I urge the House to vote against them tonight for the sake of the educational opportunities that should be available as a right and not a privilege. The Labour party will stand up for that right when in government.

11.53 pm

Mr. Jackson: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall respond to the debate in the six minutes that the hon. Member for Oxford East (Mr. Smith) has left me. It is important that students should have access to loans in the academic year starting this autumn. There is no trace of the deterrent effect that has been argued by the Opposition. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) pointed out, applications in both the university and the polytechnic and colleges sectors are up by 6 to 7 per cent., and that is a substantial—indeed, a record—number of applicants.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) asked about the use of the banks to verify graduate income. Policy has developed since February. The Student Loans Company will not contact a graduate's employer or a bank for evidence of income, but it will seek evidence from the graduate. That may include information that is available to the graduate from such sources as employers.

The hon. Member for Blackburn and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) both asked why there was no Student Loans Company by name. The reason is simply consistency with the main Act, which does not mention the Student Loans Company either. According to the main Act, the Secretary of State is empowered to make arrangements with

"such person or persons as may agree to do so . . . or bodies constituted . . . for that purpose."

That is the basis on which we are proceeding in the regulations.

The hon. Members for Blackburn and for Truro also asked about the alleged cumbersomeness of the procedures. Of course, there is a need to protect public money in the scheme. We also need to square the operation of student loans with the requirement of the Consumer Credit Act 1974. However, we can review the procedures each year in the light of experience and that is one advantage of the flexibility that we have allowed ourselves. We will keep the matter under review. We can also keep the £3·50 fee to the higher education institutions under review in the light of experience.

The hon. Member for Truro asked about disabled students. A happy feature of the legislation is the considerable improvement in the position of disabled students and graduates. They retain their entitlement to benefits as well as to the loan and that has now been extended to include deaf students. Disabled students allowance, which is payable with the mandatory grant, is increasing by 30 per cent. and we have introduced two further allowances to help disabled students for non-medical personal helpers and for major items of specialist equipment. For disabled graduates, we have provided that disability-related benefits will be disregarded when income is assessed for the purpose of deferment, and we have given discretion to the Student Loans Company to provide for a longer grace period.

The hon. Member for Truro asked for assurances that we would keep the position of disabled students under review. I am happy to repeat that we will continue to keep the position of all students under review.

The hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) asked why we changed the regulations after they had been tabled. The simple fact is that the draft regulations were submitted to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, of which the hon. Member for Bradford, South is chairman. The Committee was inquorate, and that gave my officials the opportunity to discuss the draft with counsel. Although we were not obliged to, we were happy to revise the form of the regulations in line with counsel's advice on a couple of technical points. I emphasise that those are changes in the form of the structure of the regulations and not in their underlying policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) asked several questions. We have to consider the designation of private sector institutions and we will make an announcement shortly. He asked about part-timers and postgraduates. They could be brought within the scope of the scheme, but that would require an amendment to schedule 1 of the Education (Student Loans) Act 1990. The deferment threshold will be reviewed annually and the revision will not be subject to affirmative resolution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East also asked about the possibility of scholarships. We have considered that, but the loans are being made on favourable terms and there is no need for us to make them more favourable.

I was also asked about the Scottish Law Officers.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely we are not going to pass the regulations without a clear sign from the Minister that the Scottish Law Officers will—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Jackson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman has left me time to answer that point. The Scottish Law Officers were not consulted, because there is no specific question to

put to them. As indicated, only the courts can rule whether a loan agreement is enforceable in the particular circumstances of any case.

We are now in the last stages of the enactment of student loans. It has been a privilege for me to have had a share in the responsibility for the legislation. As hon. Members have pointed out, some with greater relish than others, we have had some exciting——

It being one and half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 300, Noes 217.

Division No. 288] [12 midnight

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*

Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ikuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Robert N. Warring.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Education (Student Loans) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 25 June, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

INCOME TAX (ITALY)

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Italy) Order 1990 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 6 June.—*[Mr. Lightbown]*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INCOME TAX (NETHERLANDS)

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Netherlands) Order 1990, be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 6 June.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

AGRICULTURE

That the Farm and Conservation Grant (Variation) Scheme 1990 (S.I. 1990, No. 1126), dated 21 May 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8 June, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Horse Racing (Northern Ireland) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 6 June, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

COAL INDUSTRY

That the draft Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 7 June, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That—

(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Patten relating to Local Government may be proceeded with, at the sitting on Wednesday 11 July, though opposed, until midnight; and, at the sitting on Thursday 12 July, if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of Mr. Speaker shall at Seven o'clock put the Question already proposed from the Chair and shall then put forthwith successively the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings in the remaining Motions; and

(2) If proceedings on the above Motions have not been completed before Seven o'clock at the sitting on Thursday 12 July, the Private Business set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means for consideration at that hour shall stand over until the conclusion of such proceedings, and the said Private Business may be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours after it has been entered upon.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Cambodia

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

12.11 am

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): This is the second time that I have raised the subject on the Adjournment and the third time that I have spoken in the House about Her Majesty's Government's policy on Cambodia. Having put that on the record, I do not intend to repeat the points that I have made previously. I am sure that all hon. Members who take an interest in Cambodia are anxious about the lack of progress towards a settlement. We recognise that, perhaps inadvertently, delay cuts right across the Government's declared policy as I understand it, one of the major elements of which is to prevent the return of the Khmer Rouge. We have stated that strongly on more than one occasion.

The present delay leaves longer for the Khmer Rouge —which we and other EC countries, as well as the Association of South-East Asian Nations, have declared unacceptable in the strongest terms, if words mean anything—to undermine the existing order in Cambodia and to maim and kill even more innocent people by indiscriminate use of mines and hit-and-run tactics, to boycott the talks in Tokyo. It was behind the fourth occasion on which Prince Sihanouk, as leader of the so-called coalition, signed an agreement with the Hun Sen regime and backed out of it.

In previous debates, I have never suggested that recognition of the Government is a good policy. It is essential to reconcile the internal and external Khmers. They need to work with each other if a democratic, neutral future is to be assured. However, as the months go by, that seems an increasingly attractive alternative.

I remain deeply worried about Her Majesty's Government's inability to make any further direct moves beyond the delegation that visited Phnom Penh in December last year and the welcome distribution of £1 million announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development to United Nations and non-governmental organisation operations in Cambodia.

I recognise the diplomatic skills of senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials in moving the Security Council to overall agreement on 16 January. Two of the 16 points agreed were that no acceptable solution can won be by force of arms and that there is an urgent need to speed up diplomatic efforts to achieve a settlement.

On 26 May, a further agreement was made. It said:

"The Five reaffirmed that a comprehensive political settlement must include specific provisions, as follows:

(a) To ensure the verification of the withdrawal of all foreign forces and the cessation of external military assistance, . . .

(b) To establish formally a supreme national council;

To enshrine the fundamental human rights and freedoms which the Cambodian people must enjoy, together with the necessary protections and guarantees;

To provide a system of guarantees for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability, neutrality and national unity of Cambodia."

We understood that there was to be a further meeting of the Security Council tomorrow, but that has been postponed to 17 and 18 July. It is in advance of that that I want to raise these points, because it is at that meeting that we hope that some progress will be made.

[Mr. Jim Lester]

Since those two rounds of meetings, we have seen the results of the recent Tokyo discussions, after considerable preparations by the Japanese Government. They tried to promote what many of us have argud for—a supreme national council based on a 50:50 split between the Hun Sen Government and the coalition. I understand from the Minister of the Cambodian Government that there was an agreement to form a supreme national council on the basis of six from the Hun Sen Government and two plus two plus two from each of the other factions. The Khmer Rouge boycotted it.

The second agreement was that, if the Khmer Rouge boycotted the discussions, the other formula could be six plus three, plus three from each of the other groups. I understand that all that work has been rejected by Prince Sihanouk as of no value.

Meantime, we have seen a rush of recent claims about what is happening inside Cambodia. Nobody knows the true security position. We have seen reports of the four-five-six stratagem cutting the main routes in the north-west to starve the people in Phnom Penh of food. We have heard further assertions by the Khmer Rouge that they want to cut the routes to the south, which would bring about the fall of the Government. We do know, however, as there is plenty of evidence, that Cambodian boat people are now in Australia, where they seem far from welcome, and in Indonesia, and that between 20,000 and 80,000 are internally displaced people. This certainly was not the case when I last visited.

I understand that there are 11 relocation sites, some of which have been visited by the Red Cross and Oxfam. That shows that people are on the move because of this continuing civil war, which is indirectly assisted by external support for the coalition. It is taking its toll of innocent civilians and making genuine settlement more difficult.

I press my hon. Friend the Minister to make more contact in Phnom Penh to get even-handed information better to form our policy. Other countries, such as Thailand, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden and Australia, have closer contacts than we have. India has a diplomatic representation. France has opened an office of the Alliance Francaise, which is the equivalent of the British Council, but is staffed by a diplomat. Does my hon. Friend share the information from that office? Does the Soviet Union, which is also knowledgeable about the short-term situation in Cambodia, keep the Government informed?

I am worried that this delay means a gradual undermining of the Cambodian economy and the military situation so that only the Khmer Rouge could gain a victory. We are all set against that. If it ever happened, where would we, despite all our protestations, hide our face?

It is not seriously disputed that the Hun Sen Government have instituted a generally constructive administration under great difficulties. Certainly nobody would dispute that they stand qualitatively superior to their predecessor. I hope that my hon. Friend will at least refrain from the hostile language of previous debates when, despite condemning the Khmer Rouge, we have tried to argue that the regime in Phnom Penh is of Khmer Rouge officers imposed by Vietnamese bayonets. After 10 years and many visits from hon. Members from both sides of the House, that is no longer a legitimate argument.

If we cannot set up our own mission, at least we should back a European or United Nations' mission in Phnom Penh to show that we are even handed in our assessment of the external and internal Khmers. A great deal of work needs to be done to plan for aid projections for the future when a settlement is agreed. We should provide economic assistance to balance the withdrawal of Soviet and east European aid, a welcome sign of the change in those countries' attitudes. But in countries such as Cambodia, and certainly Vietnam, it poses short-term difficulties.

We should work enthusiastically towards a ceasefire, so that we can implement the Secretary-General's Paris recommendations. I hope that we can talk in strong terms to China, the United States and the USSR to agree to stop shipments of military arms and resources. I should like Thailand to take active steps to ensure that human rights exist in the coalition camps, and at least move those who wish to go to neutral camps under United Nations protection, so that they can avoid conscription to fight in the civil war.

I should like us to press the United States, and particularly China, to change their policy of treating the the existing regime as an extension of Vietnam, which it is not. There are many sources of information, including congressmen and senators who have been to see the position for themselves. I welcome the report in today's edition of *The Independent* that the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Baker, is talking about reviewing American policy on Cambodia. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister has any idea what that means, but if he does we shall be pleased to hear from him.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his persistence on this issue. Does he agree that, whether or not the United States changes its policy on Cambodia, the British Government should get together with other EC Governments and pursue an independent foreign policy in relation to Cambodia? Time is short—the hon. Gentleman will have seen the detailed report by Mr. Raoul Jennar stating that the regime in Phnom Penh has between 12 and 18 months, after which time it will go under. Some substantial assistance, more than just a seat at the United Nations, will have to be rendered to Cambodia if it is to survive.

Mr. Lester: I wholly agree with the hon. Gentleman. One of the reasons that I asked for this debate was because I sensed that it is a critical situation. I believe that nobody genuinely knows the military state in Cambodia. The Government is in a catch-22 situation. If they say that they cannot win, they are not regarded as able to defend their territory, and so are not seen as a potential Government. If they say that they are strong and intend to fight, it gives the impression that they seek to continue to solve the problem by military means.

One of the criticisms that I heard in Washington when I was there arguing with the United States Administration was that they said that they do not support communist regimes, and they described the Hun Sen regime as communist. The question that I, and perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister, should ask is, in that case, why do they support Laos and have an embassy there? Why do they give China most favoured nation trading status? Why

cannot they normalise their relations with Vietnam, which would be one of the most significant factors in bringing about peace in south-east Asia?

One of the comments made by the Cambodian Government is that their only fault is that they were liberated from Pol Pot by the Vietnamese. They say that, if they had been liberated by any other force—the Thais or anyone else—they would now be in a much happier position. They are given no credit for any of their actions.

I wish to ask a question of my hon. Friend—this time well in advance of the United Nations General Assembly. Last year, ironically, it passed a resolution that was profoundly out of date with the day-to-day position, but which there was not time to renegotiate in between the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces and the drafting of the ASEAN countries.

My question is: what view are Her Majesty's Government going to take in the next session? I hope that they can influence the nature of the ASEAN draft in good time and accurately reflect the fact that the Vietnamese have withdrawn; that there is a civil war in Cambodia; that it is being fought against a ruthless army led by men who have been universally condemned for their past actions; and that they are now establishing, in the hiatus, a strong guerrilla base trying to win by attrition what they could not win by negotiation or the ballot box.

The second issue at the United Nations is that of who will occupy the seat increasingly being held by the dubious external Government of the coalition. I know that my hon. Friend will say that the British Government do not recognise them as the external Government but just go along with the rest of the United Nations by using the term. We have all seen that the fact that the Khmer Rouge has held the seat on behalf of the coalition has given them incredible advantage in terms of the negotiations.

On 3 July, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"In future, we shall reconsider our vote as to who shall take that seat for Cambodia."—[*Official Report*, 3 July 1990; Vol. 175, c. 856.]

Tonight I ask my hon. Friend to reconsider our overall policy and actions on Cambodia and to tailor them to meet the statement made by my hon. Friend the Foreign Minister to me on 26 March:

"Our abhorrence of the Khmer Rouge remains absolute, and we are doing what we can to prevent Pol Pot and his friends from returning to power."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1990; Vol. 170, c. *29-30.*]

I am asking whether what we are doing will prevent Pol Pot and his friends from returning to power.

12·26 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secetary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) for providing this further opportunity to discuss the efforts of the international community to restore peace and stability to a country and people that have known war and desperation for too many years.

We may be approaching a decisive stage for Cambodia's future. The five permanent members of the Security Council meet again on 16 and 17 July to pursue their efforts to formulate a comprehensive political settlement acceptable to all the Cambodian parties; we are waiting to see whether the agreement between Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk in Tokyo in June will lead to an end to hostilities and the creation of a supreme national council by the end of this month. There are signs that the Hun Sen regime is faltering as economic difficulties bite and military pressure from the resistance increases; and we and others are already considering how to handle Cambodia at this year's United Nations General Assembly. This is clearly a good moment to review recent developments and to consider the prospects for the peace process.

My hon. Friend asked how we get our information to furnish the background against which to carry out this reconsideration. Although we do not have diplomatic representation in Phnom Penh, we keep ourselves well informed of events there. Our embassy in Bangkok is responsible for reporting on Cambodia and draws on a wide variety of sources for its information. We exchange information with our friends and partners, including the French, other members of the 12, our partners in the permanent five and, of course, the Australians. We take every opportunity to meet people who are living and working in Phnom Penh. There is, however, no question of our having Government-to-Government relations with the state of Cambodia without a comprehensive political settlement.

We continue to play an active part in the search for peace, based on a conviction that a comprehensive political settlement is the only effective way of safeguarding Cambodia's future and preventing a return to the atrocities of the Pol Pot regime. When the House last debated Cambodia, in November 1989, hon. Members may recall that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State referred to new diplomatic ideas coming forward, in particular an

"interim United Nations authority, as suggested by Congressman Solarz".

He added:

"A return to the negotiating table is becoming increasingly urgent".—[*Official Report*, 13 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. 51.]

His remarks were clearly in tune with the thinking of our friends and partners. In late November, the Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Evans, proposed a settlement based on an enhanced United Nations role in Cambodia, including an interim United Nations administration. Meanwhile, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council have also been considering their role, given that they are uniquely well placed to influence the development of a settlement in Indochina.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The Opposition substantially share the view advanced by the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). The Minister says that the permanent five are especially well placed to put forward a solution. Britain, which is one of the permanent five, is even better placed, because it is not seen to have any axe to grind. So far, the Minister has spoken as an observer. It would help the House if he could tell us what positive proposals or suggestions the Government will put forward at that meeting to try to help solve the difficulties.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am coming to that. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that the permanent five must work together on the problem if there is to be an effective solution and real progress.

The five were encouraged by the international response to Senator Evans's initiative, and in particular by the fact that none of the Cambodian parties dismissed it. They

[Mr. Sainsbury]

concluded that they could usefully develop Australian ideas with the eventual aim of putting definite proposals to the Cambodians themselves. We regard this as a helpful and important step towards reviving the negotiating process.

Against this background, the Asia directors of the permanent five have made encouraging progress in their four meetings so far. At the first, in Paris, they agreed 16 principles to guide them and others in working for a peaceful settlement. These confirm the objectives that Britain has consistently pursued in the search for peace: that no acceptable solution can be achieved by force of arms; that a comprehensive political settlement is the only way of ensuring a durable peace; and that free and fair elections must be held. Those principles have since been widely accepted, most notably by the three members of the resistance coalition National Government of Cambodia, as the best foundation for a settlement.

At their second and third meetings, the five had more detailed discussions on specific aspects of a possible settlement. These included the modalities of peacekeeping —including military aspects—the administrative structure in Cambodia in the period before elections; the organisation of elections; and a supreme national council as the repository of Cambodian sovereignty.

The most recent meeting of the permanent five, in New York, took place in rather different circumstances. There were indications of a rapprochement between China and Vietnam, and Prince Sihanouk and Hun Sen were about to meet in Tokyo. The five, therefore, while indicating that they could be flexible over the scale and scope of a United Nations role in Cambodia, also stressed that there must be certain indispensable conditions for a comprehensive settlement in Cambodia if the United Nations was to play an effective part without quite unacceptable risks to its personnel and if the settlement was to be durable. They spelled these out, and I think that they are important enough to repeat in full.

Such a settlement must ensure the verification of the withdrawal of all foreign forces and the cessation of external military assistance; a durable ceasefire; the re-grouping of the armed forces of the factions into designated cantonment areas—all under the control of an effective United Nations peacekeeping operation. It must formally establish a supreme national council and ensure free and fair elections for a constituent assembly under United Nations auspices. It must enshrine the fundamental human rights and freedoms which the Cambodian people must enjoy, together with the necessary protections and guarantees. It must provide a system of guarantees for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability, neutrality and national unity of Cambodia.

These conditions reflect our hopes for Cambodia's future, and are the minimum guarantees that the Cambodians will eventually be able to live in peace and stability, free from the fear of civil war and the return of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge.

We hope that the Cambodian parties can agree a settlement on that basis. The structure and powers of the SNC are really for it to decide and we would not wish to insist on any specific formula for the inclusion or otherwise of all the Cambodian parties. But it is an open question whether the Cambodians will be able to agree without strong outside help. Their record is not good. Earlier this year, the Australians pursued a useful but inconclusive series of contacts with the Cambodian parties in an attempt to establish what common ground existed between them. In February, the Indonesians hosted a meeting of regional countries, including the four Cambodian parties, but the participants failed to agree on a final document, mainly because Vietnam and the Khmer Rouge did not seem ready to settle.

However, in Tokyo, Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk signed a document committing themselves to the creation of a supreme national council and a voluntary end to hostilities by the end of July. That could be a step in the right direction, but it also illustrates the difficulty of trying to achieve a partial settlement which is not organically linked to all the other elements in a comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement.

Mr. Lester: The point that I wanted to make—as I said in my speech—is that I understand that Prince Sihanouk has now withdrawn from that agreement. This is the fourth time that he has reached an agreement with the Hun Sen Government, and the fourth time that he has withdrawn.

Mr. Sainsbury: I think that that reinforces what I have just said about the difficulties of reaching agreement with all the Cambodian parties. The Khmer Rouge disassociated itself from the document because it claimed that it was not treated as an equal partner. Without the agreement of all parties, there must be serious doubts about the effectiveness of any ceasefire, and without the other minimum indispensable elements that the five agreed in May, the United Nations is unlikely to become involved in such a settlement.

Where, then, does the way forward lie? We are approaching a turning point. By the end of this month, with or without the Khmer Rouge, a supreme national council may exist, opening the way to a new alignment of the Cambodian parties. Hun Sen embraced the idea with great enthusiasm—as well he might, for his own position is looking increasingly uncertain. As the countries of eastern and central Europe look to their own economic development, money is being progressively cut off. The same is happening to Hun Sen's foreign mainstay, Vietnam: not only the rug but the floor and foundations are being pulled out from beneath both regimes.

The Government in Phnom Penh are becoming demoralised, at the same time as military pressures from the resistance increase. Hun Sen should therefore have every incentive to reach a settlement as soon as possible. The resistance coalition should also be ready to negotiate. The Khmer Rouge must know that the international community would never accept its return to power alone in Cambodia by military force, and that under it Cambodia would be condemned to isolation, continuing misery and probably civil war. We call on all the Cambodian parties to compose their differences and begin the essential process of national reconciliation.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that there is greater urgency than ever to achieve an internationally acceptable comprehensive political settlement. The permanent five had intended to meet representatives of all four Cambodian parties at their next meeting in Paris. Failure of the Tokyo meeting to demonstrate unanimity among the Cambodian parties has caused the five to think again.

We agreed that, before meeting the Cambodians direct, the five must agree what they intend to say to them. The aim of the five's Paris meeting will therefore be to complete a detailed examination of a series of working papers to form the basis of a comprehensive political settlement. These would then serve as a mandate for a meeting with the Cambodian parties as soon as possible thereafter. If the Cambodians themselves are prepared to work within the five's framework, it may be possible to consider a date for reconvening the Paris international conference on Cambodia. I do not wish to raise hopes that this will happen in the near future, but we should like it to: it is our aim.

As my hon. Friend has already made clear, if no settlement is reached, another concern is the question of Cambodia's representation at the United Nations, and this year's debate on Cambodia at the General Assembly. As I stated in my answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 13 June—in column 283 of *Hansard*—we are reviewing our policy on this matter with our EC partners. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister repeated that in answer to questions on 3 July—in column 856.

Our friends and partners are all well aware of our reservations about allowing the status quo at the United Nations to continue, given the changes in the situation since last year's General Assembly. With this in mind, over the summer we shall be looking at the possibilities for change, taking into account the efforts of a range of countries—including those of the permanent five—to achieve a comprehensive political settlement.

The question of Cambodia's United Nations representation will first come up in the credentials committee in about mid-October. Much could happen before then. In the event of a comprehensive political settlement, the issue would resolve itself: in the period before free elections, the supreme national council would occupy the seat in place of the National Government of Cambodia. It would be defeatist to assume now that a challenge to the credentials of the national government of Cambodia—in the credentials committee or on the floor of the General Assembly—will be necessary by October. As for the General Assembly debate on the situation in Cambodia, we have yet to see a resolution, and would not expect to do so until the autumn. When we do, we shall take a view on how to respond.

Meanwhile, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, the humanitarian needs of the Cambodian people are as great as ever. Since my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary announced our intention of building up our humanitarian aid programme for the benefit of all Cambodians, we have made good progress, especially inside Cambodia. To date, we have already contributed £224,000 to British non-governmental organisations for projects inside Cambodia and have committed a further £230,000. A number of other proposals with a total value in excess of £500,000 are also under consideration.

My hon. Friend referred to the pledge of £1 million we made at the beginning of this year for the work of multilateral agencies inside Cambodia. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced in her written statement on 5 July, we shall be donating £500,000 to UNICEF, £300,000 to the world food programme, and £200,000 to the World Health Organisation. Each pledge is for a specific purpose to alleviate suffering and raise the standard of people's lives inside Cambodia. We also remain committed to providing humanitarian assistance for the civilian population of camps for displaced persons along the Thai-Cambodia border, administered by the non-communist resistance factions.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: No, I am afraid that there is not enough time.

No-one, however, could deny that the best way of bringing relief to all Cambodians is a return to peace and stability, with the opportunity to choose whom they wish to govern them. We are committed to working for this and will do our utmost with our friends and partners to achieve it. Unless the Cambodians themselves want peace, however, and are prepared to work constructively and co-operatively towards it, no settlement will be successful. We would urge all the Cambodian factions to take full advantage of the opportunities that the international community is making for them to reach a comprehensive political settlement. If they do, they can be sure of Britian's help and support in Cambodia's reconstruction and development.

The motion having being made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at nineteen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 10 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

RIVER TEES BARRAGE AND CROSSING BILL *[Lords]*
As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Assisted Places

1. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the assisted places scheme.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): The assisted places scheme continues to benefit children from lower-income families. At present, more than 27,000 children have assisted places and 17 more schools will join the scheme this September.

Mr. Evans: Will the Secretary of State confirm that his Department spends £3,400 per year on each assisted place compared with less than £2,000 on the education of each secondary school pupil in St. Helens? As St. Helens is about to be poll tax-capped and will have to adjust its expenditure on education, how can the Secretary of State justify spending so much money on the education of an elite at the expense of children in St. Helens and elsewhere?

Mr. MacGregor: The community charge capping in St. Helens is a judgment on the authority's budget by reference to criteria that apply to all authorities. What an authority decides to do as a result of charge capping is a matter for that authority in the light of its own spending priorities. Broadly speaking, the amount of money spent on assisted places nationally is roughly the same per pupil as is spent on a secondary school pupil. I am happy to elaborate on that. The assisted places scheme represents just under half of 1 per cent. of the estimated total expenditure on schools in 1989-90. It is money well spent because it is simply repaid by the excellent examination results that those pupils achieve and it considerably extends parental choice.

Mr. Ashby: I have a school in Leicestershire that has reopened after having been closed by the local authority. It is a school of great excellence, with 471 pupils. It is opening a preparatory school with 120 pupils and the headmaster would dearly like to provide assisted places to pupils who want to share in the excellence of his school. Will my right hon. Friend consider easing the conditions for the number of sixth form pupils so that such schools can join in the assisted places scheme at an early stage?

Mr. MacGregor: We have a fixed sum for assisted places. I am always prepared to consider additional applications, as was demonstrated by my announcement a moment ago that 17 more schools are coming into the scheme in September. However, it is necessary to look at each school to see whether it fits the conditions before one takes a decision. I should be happy to do that.

Student Grants

2. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about students' grants.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): My right hon. Friend periodically receives representations about a variety of aspects of the student grant system.

Mr. Bennett: Given the Minister's growing reputation as a joker, can he explain to the House the irony of the student loans scheme? Had the Prime Minister's target of nought per cent. inflation been achieved, the loans scheme would never have been phased in, but with an inflation rate of 9 or 10 per cent., it will be phased in very quickly. Does the Minister accept that the entire scheme has been a giant hoax, proving to the House of Commons that any crazy scheme can get through it if has the support of the Prime Minister and the Whips?

Mr. Jackson: I should like to find a witty response to the hon. Gentleman, but I shall simply tell him that with the addition of the loan to the grant, Britain now has the highest level of student support of the major European countries, and the proportion of students for whom student support is available is second only to that in the Netherlands, where the loan element is larger than ours. Not only have we won the votes, but we have won the argument.

Mr. Wells: Has my hon. Friend received representations, as I have, from students in high-rent cities such as Oxford and London who are finding it extremely difficult to know how to budget for the next academic year following the announcement of his scheme?

Mr. Jackson: We have had many discussions. I had a discussion with two Members of the House of Lords on that point only this morning. There will be a 25 per cent. increase in resources available to students this year, when the loan comes in, which, together with the access funds, will meet students' needs.

Teachers (Overseas Advertising)

3. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to issue guidelines to local education authorities regarding overseas advertising for teaching staff; and if he will make a statement.

10. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to issue

guidelines to local education authorities regarding overseas advertising for teaching staff; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The recruitment of teachers is the responsibility of local education authorities and the governors of schools. My right hon. Friend has no plans to issue guidelines to local authorities regarding the recruitment of overseas teachers.

Mr. Dunnachie: Will the Minister assure the House that no one who applies from overseas for a teaching post in Britain will get it unless he or she has been vetted according to the national standards?

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes. No teacher can teach in our schools until he or she meets the minimum criteria for qualified teacher status—a grade C GCSE or equivalent in maths and English, some two years in full-time higher education and at least a two-year probationary period in the school.

Dr. Reid: With respect, that is not what was asked. We are asking about the vetting procedures for those with criminal records who are teaching our children. Is the Minister aware that such vetting procedures can take up to 10 weeks and that, because of the Government-created chronic shortage of teachers, some of the applicants, even from the United Kingdom, are in post for a considerable period before the procedures are completed? Is she further aware that the situation is worse for overseas applicants? Why will not the Government issue guidelines to local education authorities informing them which overseas countries issue similar good conduct certificates or operate similar vetting procedures? Why must our children remain at risk because of the Government's lack of activity?

Mrs. Rumbold: If there is a lack of activity, I shall certainly instruct the Department to consider it.

Mr. Madel: Teachers from overseas and in this country often find housing costs a deterrent to teaching in certain areas. Will my hon. Friend ask English county councils to publish a list of the unoccupied property that they own and ask them what they are prepared to do about renting it to teachers?

Mrs. Rumbold: That is a helpful suggestion. Many of the home counties and London are finding it more difficult to accommodate teachers, and teachers are finding it more difficult to find accommodation because of the high price of housing. Local authorities are closely considering the problem, but my hon. Friend's suggestion is worth investigating.

Student Loans

4. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any recent representations regarding the implementation of the student loan scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Constructive discussions are taking place with the higher education institutions about their role in confirming their students' eligibility for a loan. Following Parliament's approval of the Education (Student Loans) Regulations 1990, the Government's objective remains to have the scheme in place for autumn 1990.

Mrs. Ewing: Why do not the regulations allow additional time for Scottish students to repay their loan, given that many undertake a four-year degree course? Is that a misunderstanding of the Scottish system, similar to that demonstrated on the law on the repayment of loans by minors, or is it deliberate?

Mr. Jackson: We thought long and hard about that. We provided special terms for those on five-year courses or longer. We do not believe that it is necessary to provide them for students on four-year courses. The expected repayment, which will be made only by graduates on incomes higher than £11,500 a year, will not be more than £400 a year, whether they are on a three, four or five-year course. That is a reasonable sum to expect graduates to repay.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Will the Minister confirm what I understand him to have said last night—that the Scottish Law Officers were not consulted on the student loan regulations? Does not that show extraordinary incompetence, equalled only by the evident contempt for Scotland and for Scottish law? Will the Minister explain simply to the House what the last-minute, hasty additions to the regulations in relation to Scotland mean?

Mr. Jackson: We discussed all this last night. I confirm that the Scottish Law Officers were not consulted because there was not a specific matter on which they could advise. Different legal opinions have been expressed, but the Government's firm view is that the loan is enforceable. The regulations bear on the issue of ratification at 18 and do not necessarily determine the question of enforceability. The hon. Gentleman is on to a loser on this point.

Grant-maintained Schools

5. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have applied for grant-maintained status.

Mr. MacGregor: The governing bodies of 66 schools have published proposals for grant-maintained status so far. I have approved 44 and rejected 12 of the proposals that have reached me for decision.

Mr. Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that grant-maintained status is an excellent way of improving choice and diversity in education? Does he share my surprise that, despite its honeyed words about freedom and choice for parents, the Labour party is pledged to abolish grant-maintained status if it is ever elected to government?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. What is more, our new policy for grant-maintained status is proving popular. The number of grant-maintained schools in operation this coming September will be double that of last September. It is clear that parents are opting for grant-maintained schools as applications for places are up by 40 per cent., so it is also clear that parents, governors, head teachers and teachers like grant-maintained schools. Only the Opposition reject that extended opportunity for parental choice. I suspect that, as with so many of their other policies, they will think again in due course.

Mr. Sedgemore: Can the Minister confirm that the Prime Minister was wrong when, in an interview in 1987,

she said, "I think that most schools will opt out"? Can he also confirm that she was wrong when she said subsequently that by schools opting out, the poll tax would be reduced?

Mr. MacGregor: It is quite clear that from an early —*[Interruption.]* It is quite clear that it takes some time to go through the process of becoming a grant-maintained school because there is an extended ballot procedure. The fact that the number of grant-maintained schools has doubled within a year, that there are more and more applications and that there is wider and greater interest shows that grant-maintained status is a popular approach. I should be delighted to see more schools adopting that approach.

Mr. Pawsey: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members widely welcome the concept of grant-maintained schools? Is he further aware that if we dropped the wholly artificial threshold of 300 pupils necessary for admission to grant-maintained status, we should achieve a far greater number of schools, especially village schools, applying for such status? I urge my right hon. Friend to take note of that suggestion.

Mr. MacGregor: We are already seeing an increasing number of schools applying for grant-maintained status and the reason is the success of the scheme for the schools that have applied so far. I shall keep the issue of the minimum figure, to which my hon. Friend referred, under review.

Mr. Straw: Was the Secretary of State consulted by the Prime Minister when she said, at the Conservative women's conference, that the poll tax could be reduced by schools opting out, and that there could be repeated and regular ballots for opting out?

Mr. MacGregor: I have discussed with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on many occasions the grant-maintained schools and the success of the scheme.

Mr. Straw: When?

Mr. MacGregor: I have just told the hon. Gentleman that I have discussed it on many occasions. He never wants to listen to the answers to his questions. We have also said that we shall monitor carefully the attitude of the local education authorities, which is one of the points that my right hon. Friend made at that conference. If there were evidence of a general problem, I should consider further legislation if necessary. On the wider question, if many schools obtained grant-maintained status, it might be necessary to review the funding methodology.

Higher Education Colleges

6. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria he is using to designate polytechnic status for colleges of higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have accepted the advice of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council on such criteria. The criteria specify minimum student numbers in an institution, both overall and within a range of academic programmes; the minimum proportion of students at degree level; and a requirement that the institution be accredited by the Council for National Academic Awards. I have recently accepted the PCFC's advice on institutions that fulfil the criteria and Humberside college of higher education and Dorset institute are to be designated for the coming academic year.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the high quality of further education in Bolton? Does he agree that there is far too much academic snobbery in this country, and surely, if Japan has more than 340 universities, we could have a few more polys?

Mr. MacGregor: Two more polytechnics are coming in this September. I am well aware of the excellent quality of many of our colleges of further education. I have said that I see the designation of new polytechnics as a continuing process and I shall be happy to receive the advice of the PCFC at any time that another institution has met the criteria.

Dr. Hampson: Will my right hon. Friend explain why he prevents polytechnics calling themselves "universities" when there is already such diversity in the university system that some polytechnics are certainly equivalent to some universities?

Mr. MacGregor: That matter has been debated in the House on many occasions. I believe that there are distinctive characteristics to universities and polytechnics. The most important task for the polytechnics is to continue to market their excellent advantages as well as they are currently doing. I see the polytechnics as one of the great success stories—among many—of recent years.

Pre-school Education

7. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to increase the number of pre-school education places.

Mrs. Rumbold: Total local authority expenditure on education, as allowed for in the most recent grant settlement, will permit continued increases in the numbers and proportion of under-fives in school. However, it is for authorities themselves to determine the scale of their provision in that discretionary area.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that that answer is absolute nonsense? Does she recognise that the financial controls that will result from poll tax capping and from further poll tax restrictions next year on local authorities, such as Lancashire, will mean a further reduction in the provision of education services for the under-fives? Does she agree that this country has an appalling record in the provision of services for the under-fives? Does she accept that the best 22 providers of those services are at present Labour authorities?

Mrs. Rumbold: No, I cannot accept any of those propositions. There has been a 25 per cent. increase in provision for the under-fives since 1980. Like many previous Administrations, this Administration has sensibly targeted resources towards the cities where there is a greater requirement for the provision of nursery education.

Mr. Rathbone: Does my hon. Friend accept, as many of her hon. Friends accept, and as the Prime Minister accepted when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science, that the single most potent contribution that

the Government could make to raise the standards of education throughout an educational lifetime, and to maintain the standards of the family, would be to make greater provision of nursery education? During the present review, will my hon. Friend bear that in mind and plan accordingly for the future?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. I know of his great interest in this subject and read his recent paper on nursery provision for the under-fives with great interest. He will be glad to know that this country has a good record in providing pre-school education, not simply by nursery education, but through the voluntary sector, with the provision of pre-school playgroups. I shall certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's views on the value of pre-school education, and those of my other hon. Friends.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Given the impact of pre-school education on the future education of the individual child —of which we are all aware—is not it time for the Minister to reconsider the discretion of local authorities and to make pre-school education part of the basic provision, for all parents and children who desire that opportunity?

Mrs. Rumbold: At present we have the earliest starting age for full-time education of any of our European colleagues, other than the Netherlands. All our children start compulsory education at five. At present we do not see any reason for reducing the starting age for compulsory education to below five.

Mr. Holt: In seeking additional resources for pre-school provision, will my hon. Friend ask the Government to reconsider the school-leaving age with a view to bringing it far more into line with Europe, to enable us to be more flexible; to improve training throughout our country and to bring us into line with Europe on that issue also; to reduce the incidence of crime and truancy among youngsters and to give us a greater impetus after 1992?

Mrs. Rumbold: I share my hon. Friend's interest and concern about the school-leaving age and about the importance of encouraging young people to stay on in sensible training and education—I believe that that is what my hon. Friend wants—because that will lead us to a more disciplined and better trained society in the future. As I said, I believe that it is important that children should have pre-school education, but of a nature and type that accords with their parents' wishes.

Ms. Armstrong: If the Government are concerned to offer choice to parents, why have not they fulfilled their commitment to enable every parent to have the opportunity to choose nursery education if they so wish? If, as we have read, the Minister's committee on education for the under-fives is to recommend a major expansion of nursery education, will she today guarantee that the Government will fund such an expansion?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Lady must give up her obsession with wanting every parent to have to send every child into some kind of nursery education within the state system. We have always believed in the principle of choice for parents, and it is that choice which we have supported. About 86 per cent. of our three and four-year-olds are currently in some form of pre-school education of the parents' choice. As for funding, the hon. Lady should know that we are at present looking at my right hon. Friend's announcement of last week that there is to be an education support grant of £2·5 million. That will go towards the improvement of planning pre-school education, and of caring by nursery nurses and by others involved in nursery education.

School Discipline

8. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources are being made available by his Department to help implement recommendations directed to central Government contained in the Elton report on school discipline.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): In the current financial year, central Government grant is supporting expenditure of some £6·1 million on projects arising from the recommendations of Lord Elton and his colleagues. We owe a debt of gratitude to Lord Elton and his colleagues for a thoughtful and thorough report.

Mr. Evans: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that the Elton report does not go far enough— *[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Evans: —in that corporal punishment should be reintroduced into schools? Does he further agree that Lord Elton should write another report that deals with the disgraceful behaviour of the Opposition, in particular of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), who perhaps should receive corporal——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This place is often likened to a school, but I do not think that the hon. Member's last remark is relevant.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: As always, my hon. Friend makes his points in highly effective style. He speaks with great force on an issue about which strong views and conflicting feelings are widely held. It was the Government's intention that the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 should give parents a right of choice on whether their children should be liable to corporal punishment in schools. But the House decided, on a free vote on these Benches, not to accept that policy. The Government accepted the will of the House and, in consequence, it is not legal to administer corporal punishment to pupils in maintained schools or to publicly funded pupils in independent schools.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Campbell-Savours.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Campbell-Savours first.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On the question of disciplining people in schools, may we have an assurance that Mr. Martin Turner of Croydon and all his colleagues who worked with him on the interesting document that was produced will be protected from any pressure that might be exerted by any education authority anywhere in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Howarth: It is no part of the values of the Conservative party to impose any sort of ideological tyranny. Mr. Turner is an employee of Croydon local education authority and I am sure that Mr. Turner's rights, and his freedom of thought and expression in that authority, will be guaranteed, as they should be.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that the tragedy of the abolition of corporal punishment is that children are brought before the courts for small offences for which a stroke of the cane would have been more effective and immediate and would be of lasting value throughout their lives? Will he persuade his right hon. Friends in the Government to think again about that simple, important measure and to reintroduce modern, reasonable corporal punishment in schools for gross indiscipline?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend speaks with all the authority of his background as a headmaster and the House listens to him with respect when he speaks on these issues. If we debated the matter further, I have no doubt that he would make an important contribution. It is perhaps worth stressing that the Elton report emphasised in its recommendations to schools the importance of establishing a clear set of rules backed up by a system of rewards and punishments which are clearly understood and accepted by teachers, parents and pupils. Where that applies, as it does in many schools, and where there is the right partnership between parents and teachers to help children to understand and respect the difference between right and wrong, the orderly atmosphere which is a precondition of effective teaching and learning is created.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Fatchett.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down. This is a serious matter.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The only point of order that the hon. Gentleman can have is his distress at not being called. What is the point of order?

Mr. Nellist: Is it not a fact that in your capacity as Speaker you have said several times from the Chair that if an hon. Member is named by another hon. Member it is normal practice to call the hon. Member who was named? Have you not said that in the past? If so, why——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not hear the hon. Member being named. [HON. MEMBERS: "He was."] All right. I will call Mr. Nellist. *[Interruption.]* Order. It takes up the time of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues. Come along.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called Mr. Nellist.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady knows better than that.

Mr. Nellist: If the Minister can tell his hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) that extra resources can be diverted to maintaining good order in schools, why will he not put resources into areas such as those that I mentioned last week so as to stop councils breaking health and safety regulations by teaching kids in toilets? Why will he not put extra resources into Tower Hamlets to stop the council breaking the terms of the Education Act 1944 by sending hundreds of children home every day because there are no teachers to teach them? Why——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I gave the hon. Member the chance to raise a question about corporal punishment in schools and nothing else.

Mr. Nellist: Why does the education team not take the beam out of its own eye before talking about motes in anyone else's?

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman tells the House that he is keen on good discipline and the observation of regulations and warns against hypocrisy, but what puzzles me is that he also encourages the citizens of Coventry not to pay their community charge. If they do not pay their community charge, how can Coventry education authority have the resources that it needs to equip and staff its schools properly?

When I was asked to take responsibility for the Coventry task force, I wrote to all Coventry Members suggesting that we meet to consider how we could work in the interests of Coventry. I was disappointed that I had no response whatever from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend says that the matter of corporal punishment was decided by a free vote in this House, but is that the whole story? Did not a decision by the European Court of Human Rights, which sought to impinge upon the sovereignty of this Parliament, direct us that corporal punishment could not be used in schools? And did not the Government, without any debate in the House, reaffirm the European convention on human rights?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend raises much wider constitutional issues, but the House has debated and freely took its decision.

Mr. Speaker: Now, Mr. Fatchett.

Mr. Fatchett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that you now understand and appreciate some of the problems of school discipline.

The Minister, in answer to his hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), referred to £6 million to ease the problems of discipline, but that is less than £230 per school, so there is little money available on that basis. Does the Minister recognise that we live in a society in which the Government have presided over record crime levels, shown ambivalence towards the problems of law and order in their activities, and encouraged individualism, and that that is bound to be reflected in discipline problems in schools? Instead of simply blaming the

teachers, is it not time that the Government gave them the necessary resources and recognised their responsibility for the lack of discipline in our schools?

Mr. Howarth: The Government make no apology for having encouraged individualism and enterprise. The hon. Gentleman's inability to recognise that those qualities assort perfectly well with self-discipline shows the narrowness of his conceptions. I am sad that the hon. Gentleman suggests that there is widespread disorderliness in our schools, as that is a gross disparagement of teachers and it is not the case. Beyond that, the House would be interested to know how much more money the Labour party would propose to spend.

Advanced-level Examinations

11. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for the development of advanced-level examinations.

Mr. MacGregor: I have asked the School Examinations and Assessment Council to recommend general principles for advanced-level syllabuses and examinations, with a view to having an improved system in place by 1994. I have also asked the council for advice on the scope for embodying a range of core skills in the programme of all advanced-level students, and on the scope for credit transfer between A and AS-levels and vocational qualifications. I shall consider in due course the implications of what the council proposes.

Mr. Boswell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is essential to increase the proportion of our pupils who stay on at school for A-levels and other qualifications beyond GCSE so that that proportion compares with our continental counterparts? Does he feel that he can reconcile that requirement with the equally important one of maintaining academic rigour?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am sure that he will be pleased to know that the number staying on after 16 is increasing. The reforms that the Government have introduced over the years have a good deal to do with that. I also agree with my hon. Friend that it is important to maintain the academic rigour, excellence and standards of A-levels. A number of other issues also need to be addressed in relation to the 16 to 19-year-old group.

Mr. Straw: While it is certainly important that the examination at 18 years should be rigorous and of a high standard, does the Secretary of State recognise the widespread concern of university vice-chancellors, head teachers and many others about the narrowness of A-levels and the fact that that restricts the proportion of youngsters who study science at 18? Will the assessment of the 18-plus school examinations by the School Examinations and Assessment Council include the recommendations of the Higginson report? If it so chose, could the SEAC recommend the Higginson report recommendations?

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously there are debates about those matters, but the Government have made their position clear on the Higginson recommendations. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important to have broader educational activities in sixth forms. That is the purpose of the AS courses which are increasingly being taken up by universities as a method of entry in conjunction with A-levels, and that is an important way to proceed.

Grant-maintained Schools

12. **Mr Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made with the establishment of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. MacGregor: I am pleased to say that considerable progress is being made. As I said earlier, the first 18 grant-maintained schools started last September, and 44 grant-maintained schools will be operating this September. There will then be more grant-maintained schools in total than there are secondary schools in two thirds of English local education authorities.

Mr. Coombs: I welcome the excellent progress being made in this area, but does my right hon. Friend agree that the more schools there are that have experience of local management, the more there are that want to go the step further to grant-maintained status? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that nothing more clearly illustrates the Labour party's obsession with levelling down and its antipathy towards high standards than its vindictive opposition to this excellent idea?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend on both points. It is likely that, as more and more schools see the advantages of local management, they will also see the additional advantages which grant-maintained status gives them, taking them further in the direction of complete control over their budgets, with additional budgets at their disposal as a result of the expenditure from central funds and the further advantages that grant-maintained status brings. I entirely agree with the charges that my hon. Friend makes against the Opposition's policy. On assisted places, grant-maintained schools and city technology colleges, the Opposition deny choice and greater variety in the system. Their policy on assisted places denies opportunities to those parents who are prepared to make a contribution to their children's education which many Opposition Members have themselves had.

Mr. Flannery: The Minister must be easily pleased, as that number of 40-odd so-called grant-maintained schools, which we would describe as having opted out, is well below what the Government planned. Is he aware that in cities such as my own—Sheffield—there has not been one application for grant-maintained status, and I believe the same is true of Leeds, Wakefield and other great cities because people are completely opposed to the centralisation of education and believe that education should be the responsibility of local education authorities?

Mr. MacGregor: Given that grant-maintained status has only recently been introduced, there has been excellent progress so far. The hon. Gentleman should talk to head teachers and teachers in the grant-maintained schools, not to mention parents and governors. He will then see how popular they are and what a difference grant-maintained status makes to schools. I have described the policy as the jewel in the crown for parent power and I believe that its success will grow and grow.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Like many of my colleagues in Nottinghamshire, I have received correspondence from

boards of governors in our schools complaining bitterly at their treatment by the county with regard to local management. Is my right hon. Friend saying that the Government's advice to those boards of governors is to apply immediately for grant-maintained status?

Mr. MacGregor: Certainly I think that that is an option which more and more schools will wish to consider, and I hope that it will be drawn to their attention.

Pre-school Education

13. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding pre-school education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State receives a good deal of correspondence on education for the under-fives. Most recently, more than 50 organisations and individuals have submitted evidence to my committee of inquiry on the quality of the educational experience of three and four-year-olds.

Mr. Haynes: Mr. Speaker, Sir, you have reached No. 13, so I think that you are wonderful.

Is the Minister aware that, irrespective of what Conservative Members have said today, Nottinghamshire county council provides a first-class service in the difficult conditions created by Government cuts? The Government, and particularly the Department of Education and Science, should be ashamed of Britain's pre-school education. We are struggling like hell to provide what is necessary and it is high time that the Minister cleared out all those responsible for that situation.

Mrs. Rumbold: The chairman of Nottinghamshire education committee, Councillor Fred Riddell, has assured me that he is proud of the education service that he provides. Apparently he provides it without much trouble.

Mr. Haselhurst: Notwithstanding the educational importance of getting under-fives into some organised system as quickly as possible, should not we also give some priority to ensuring that reception classes in primary schools are of manageable size? If we do not do that, the earlier work may be to no avail.

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is right. The quality of the education received by three and four-year-olds is of paramount importance. That is why my committee of inquiry is looking at the quality of the people who teach the reception classes and the number of youngsters entering those classes. If those factors are not right, early education comes to nought.

Teacher Vacancies

14. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current level of teacher vacancies throughout England; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science hopes to make available later this month the data for teacher vacancies as at January 1990.

Ms. Quin: Are not the worst and most serious teacher shortages in maths, science, technology and modern languages, which are an essential part of the national curriculum? What hope can the Minister offer that when schools reopen in September after the summer holidays there will be a great improvement in the situation so that children will find qualified teachers ready to teach them in all the necessary subjects?

Mrs. Rumbold: As the hon. Lady knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is looking urgently at this matter. There are bursaries to address teacher shortages in those subjects and to encourage postgraduate certificate of education students to go into teaching. In addition, we have mounted a good advertising campaign urging people to return to teaching, and especially to teach subjects for which there is a teacher shortage. The Government recognise that it is difficult to obtain enough teachers to teach certain subjects, but we are taking every opportunity to address the problem.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 July.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the economic summit in Houston.

Miss Hoey: I am sure that the Leader of the House would like to join us all in congratulating the England football team on winning the fair play award in the World cup. It is all very well for the Prime Minister to congratulate and take the credit for our sportsmen and women when things are going well and after the event, but does he agree that perhaps a little more fair play should be shown to voluntary sports clubs which are being crippled by the unified business rate? Is he proud of the fact that sport is more highly taxed in Britain than in any other European country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: British sport is doing very well in a number of voluntary and professional respects. I join the hon. Lady in congratulating the England team on winning the fair play award. The House will be pleased that English clubs are to be readmitted to European football contests. Now that they have secured that place in Europe, we must be anxious to see that they stay there. If that is to be achieved, all hon. Members will join me in hoping that British fans will behave to the same standards as the England team in winning the award to which the hon. Lady referred.

Q2. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave a moment ago.

Mr. Bennett: Will my right hon. and learned Friend refer to the Law Officers for consideration by the fraud squad the findings of the Lightman inquiry into the accounts of the National Union of Mineworkers? Is he

aware that that interminable inquiry, which did not receive evidence from key witnesses, found that 17 secret accounts were in operation and that £200,000 of Russian miners' money was used for personal reasons by Mr. Heathfield and Mr. Scargill? The report concluded that there had been a clear breach of the law with serious misapplications of funds and a breach of duty.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It would not be right for Ministers to comment directly on those gravely disquieting allegations. I am sure that the House hopes that all the appropriate authorities, and members of the National Union of Mineworkers, are studying the evidence most carefully.

It is also worth noting that the Government's trade union reforms have made unions and their leaders much more accountable to members. The role of the commissioner for the rights of trade union members should make such happenings much less likely in future. Meanwhile, all those who joined the Union of Democratic Mineworkers will be exceedingly glad that they did so.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Lord President give a categorical assurance that the Government's community care proposals are to be implemented as planned next April?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Those proposals will be getting under way in accordance with the statute in due course.

Mr. Hattersley: I understand why the Lord President is not so definite as he was when he last answered a question from me a fortnight ago. Is he aware that the Secretary of State for Health told the Select Committee last week, when asked if the plan would go ahead as scheduled, that the date of implementation was

"not as definite as it was."

What did that mean?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I repeat that the proposals and plans will be getting under way at the appointed date.

Mr. Hattersley: If the Lord President even attempts to answer the question, he may tell us whether he does not know the answer or whether he simply chooses not to give it. Is it not a fact that the plans are not going ahead as scheduled because (a) the Government will not devote enough central funds to financing them and (b) they are afraid that local authorities will have to make up the deficit by increasing already heavy poll tax burdens? Are not the Government simply saying that they do not care about the old and sick, and those who look after them, as long as they can avoid another exposure of the poll tax?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government will be maintaining the community charge subject to the reviews still taking place, the outcome of which will be announced in due course. The right hon. Gentleman must appreciate that the implementation, and its pace, of any plans passed by the House must depend on the scale of resources available. That is a message that his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) seeks to proclaim on behalf of the Labour party. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) should pay attention to what his right hon. and learned Friend says.

Mr. Sims: Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate that local authorities have put a good deal of work into preparations for the introduction of the community care proposals, which have been warmly welcomed in all parts of the House and the community? It will be a source of concern, confusion and disappointment, not only to local authorities but to potential beneficiaries, if the proposals are not implemented on the date that, for a long time, we have been given to understand that they would be.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I appreciate the natural interest and concern in the matter. The obligations are on the statute book. However, the pace at which such measures are introduced must inevitably depend on the feasibility of the scheme and the resources available.

Q3. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: While she is out of the country——

Hon. Members: Who?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Winnick: —and the Leader of the House does not have much to lose anyway, why does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not admit that the annual report of the community health councils shows only too well what is happening, with ward closures, cancelled operations, inadequate funding of the national health service and many people being discharged from hospital far too early? Does he agree that the Government's measures have made the national health service a poor relation of the private health sector? At the next election, who does he think will believe for one moment that the NHS has been safe in the hands of the Tory Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: All those who take account of the fact that last year the increase proposed for this year was no less than £2·9 billion, that the total increase in resources to the national health service has been 42 per cent. since the Government came to power in 1979, that there are 14,000 more doctors and dentists, 67,000 more nurses and midwives and a vast increase in the total services provided in the face of a rising population.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Is my right hon. and learned Friend concerned about the rapid rise in company liquidations in the past 12 months? Does he agree that it is time for the Government to consider ways of containing inflation other than the rather blunt instrument of interest rates? Is he aware that if there are company liquidations in all major sectors of our manufacturing economy, as there are, that will lead to unemployment, which will cost the Government a lot of money?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend would do well to take account of the fact that, notwitstanding what he has said, there continues to be a strong net growth in the number of new business formations. At the end of last year, they were running at about 1,500 per week. That is further testimony to the continuing strength of the economy.

Q4. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Meale: Is the Leader of the House aware that as we head towards the summer recess, homelessness in Britain is becoming considerably worse? Is he further aware that it is estimated that about 750,000 people in Britain are homeless, that 120,000 are living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and that 6,000 are living on the streets?

When the Prime Minister returns from Texas, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman show her a video of the excellent programme, "Cathy, Where are You Now?", which was broadcast last night? Then perhaps both sides of the House can get together to solve the problem of homelessness before we have another winter with people living on the streets.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be grateful for the fact that we recently announced an increase of £2 million in the resources available for advice and help for the homeless, an additional £15 million in resources for shelters, and an additional £250 million in resources for London and the south-east over the next two years. The hon. Gentleman should also remember that 100,000 dwellings, under the control of Labour councils, are standing empty. Indeed, the worst authorities in that respect are all Labour controlled.

Mr. Tracey: Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that in the current community charge review there will be an absolute rejection of any idea of a return to the domestic rating system—something that was so often condemned, especially by the Opposition?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has the assurance that we have given many times—that the current review, the results of which will be announced in due course, is a review of the operation and not a review of the structure of the community charge. There is a great deal more certainty about the position under this Government than there is about the position under the Opposition's plans.

Q5. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Ewing: Given that the leaders at the G7 summit have issued a communiqué suggesting that the 1990s should be known as the decade of democracy, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us his definition of democracy? If he believes that people's aspirations are best expressed through the ballot box and through elected representatives, what message has he for the people of Scotland, who have made it abundantly clear that they do not want either the siting of a nuclear waste dump in, or the transportation of nuclear waste through, their country? Does he accept that Nirex and the Secretary of State can override those people's aspirations?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Secretary of State's position was set out in the reasons that he gave for his modifications to the Highland regional council structure plan. His intention to modify it in that way has been advertised. Objections to his proposed modifications should be submitted in writing by 10 August.

Q7. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take this opportunity to commend the setting up by the Lord Chancellor of 94 new children's courts, with special judges who will have special training? Can we hope that procedures that formerly intimidated children, such as the dress of judges and the procedure of the courts, will be changed and that there will be more women judges in that important area?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to that important step forward in the implementation of the Children Act 1989, which will promote and safeguard the welfare of children as all hon. Members would wish. My hon. Friend can take some comfort from the fact that judges with proper training in tha field will be well aware of the need that she identified for sympathetic treatment. She will also be glad to know that the Lord Chancellor is anxious to see more women on the bench. As there are a growing number of women with experience as advocates, the number of women on the bench is likely to grow and that would be a good thing.

Mr. Martyn Jones: Will the Lord President find time to ask the Prime Minister when she comes back from Texas to talk to the junior Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, who is supposedly involved in consumer affairs but seems to be hell bent on killing my Consumer Guarantees Bill which gives consumers the right to have shoddy goods replaced, and tell him that if he is to continue in his job as consumer affairs Minister he should represent consumers and not manufacturers?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I understand the matter, the hon. Gentleman withdrew his Bill.

Q8. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the rejection of socialism all over eastern Europe has one main feature—that people throughout eastern Europe recognise that free enterprise and the free market culture are the best guarantees of democracy and freedom? Does he agree that that should be the case throughout Europe and that the only people who do not recognise that fact are the members of the Labour party?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the people of eastern Europe are turning their backs on socialism, having seen its catastrophic failure. I wish that we could say the same of the Opposition.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered.

That the draft Department of Trade and Industry (Fees) (Amendment) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. *—[Mr. Chapman.]*

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Amplification has been cut down yet again. Television audiences can hear very well, and hon. Members can hardly hear at all, but I suppose that it does not really matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It does really matter. If and when the House resolves to make the experiment of television permanent, I understand that the Committee will consider the quality of the microphones in the Chamber.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would you clarify for the assistance of the whole House the exact rules on points of order during Question Time? While I appreciate that you were in a difficult position during questions to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, it has always been understood that points of order are taken at the end of questions, not in the middle.

Mr. Speaker: For the edification of the hon. Member and of the whole House, I refer him to *Hansard* of 12 February 1987, when I spelt out that matter in great detail. If a point of order which needs my immediate attention is raised during a debate, I have to take it. Similarly, if a point of order is raised in Question Time needing my immediate attention, I have to hear it. But I do not take points of order on other matters until after private notice questions and statements on Standing Order No. 20 applications have been dealt with.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, which relates to Question 8, from the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). Is it not a fact that the Lord President of the Council and the Prime Minister, when she is here, are responsible for questions that relate directly to her, and that the question of the hon. Member for Harrow, West was not related to the responsibility of the Lord President of the Council, but was simply party political propaganda on behalf of the Conservative party?

Mr. Speaker: I have to make a judgment on that. This House is here to discuss policies. If a question has some relation to a calculation of the Government's costs, for instance, then it is entirely in order to ask it.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), Mr. Speaker. Not only was it difficult to hear his point of order but it was difficult to hear your response, too. Is it not appropriate, Sir, that the amplification in this place should be turned up before we hold the debate on whether television is to continue—so that Members can hear what is going on and the House can make the right decisions? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that I may be granted some tolerance to answer this question. If there were not so much noise from the Back Benches it would be perfectly possible to hear the answers. When the House resolves to make permanent the televising of the House, no doubt the quality of the microphones in the Chamber will be looked at; but I have had few complaints about that quality so far. The fact that Members cannot hear is directly related to the amount of noise on the Back Benches near the Member who is speaking.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may have noticed that in recent weeks, when the Prime Minister has been away, the deputy Leader of the Opposition has usually put a question to the deputy Prime Minister. Is that conventional? I had always thought that the Leader of the Opposition should put the question to my right hon. and learned Friend. Does the Leader of the Opposition think——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows better than that: it is perfectly in order.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As someone who uses a hearing aid in the House of Commons, may I ask that Members speak clearly so that the people of this country who are deaf can understand what they are saying? The House should understand that thousands of deaf people in this country rely on proper information being conveyed to them from the House so that they can enjoy their democratic rights as citizens.

Mr. Speaker: I am not certain whether there was a point of order in that for me. The present microphones have a wide range, so if Members create noise behind or in front of a Member who is on his feet, their voices are picked up also.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, on the same subject of audibility. On many previous occasions when something abusive or unparliamentary or even merely someone's name has been said in the House, you have said, "I did not hear it," and that was the end of the matter. But today you changed that: you did not hear the name of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) mentioned, but once there was an outcry from other Opposition Members, you accepted their word although you had not heard the name yourself. Was that in order

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am grateful to be monitored by the hon. Gentleman so regularly. I frequently say that I have not heard comments made from a sedentary position often by the hon. Gentleman himself. In this case, the hon. Member who raised the matter did so because he claimed that he had been named in the question asked by the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), and I was on my feet to prevent that question from going any further.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There was quite a bit of noise and the amplifiers may not be working properly, but I listened intently to the deputy Prime Minister answering the question from the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). May I take it that, when he was talking about money, he was referring to the plethora of frauds at Rover and Harrods and to all the other Government fiddles that have taken place? Did he say that? If so, I should like to join in——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are in grave danger of straying well out of order. Ten-minute rule motion—Mr. Harry Cohen.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Dear, oh dear, oh dear. Mr. Norman Tebbit.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): May I draw your attention, Sir, to the fact that—quite inadvertently, I am sure—you referred to the occasion "when" this House would take the decision to extend the televising of the House. You did not put in the word "if". You should emphasise that no decision has been taken to make the televising of our proceedings a permanent feature. That is a decision for the House. I am sure that that is what you meant to say.

Mr. Speaker: If the right hon. Member will kindly read *Hansard* tomorrow morning, I think he will see that, in answer to the first question from the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) I said, "if and when."

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Obviously hon. Members should be heard. They should also be seen. Could the lighting be increased? It is evident during supplementary questions that some hon. Members are called before others. We are all equal, but some are more equal than others. Something should be done about it. Could we have a league table showing who gets called and who does not?

Mr. Speaker: It is a good point. I have a league table. I have a computer, and I do my utmost to ensure that every hon. Member gets a fair share of time in the Chamber. The hon. Gentleman is not deprived in that respect.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Nor is this hon. Member.

Mr. Corbyn: Can you tell me, Mr. Speaker, what opportunities there will be for the House to contrast the treatment of those who sought to defend mining communities during the miners strike, with international working-class support, with the treatment of a number of former Cabinet Ministers who have lined their pockets by accepting directorships for which they get hundreds of thousands of pounds a year——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not the time to debate matters of that kind. There are other matters to be debated today. Ten-minute rule motion—Mr. Cohen.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I called the hon. Member last time, but I know the television cameras are still on. So I shall call him.

Mr. Davies: On the point of audibility, Sir, you said that you had received few complaints. I hope that it may assist you in attempting to assess the feeling of hon. Members, which I know you try to do fairly, if I add a complaint of my own. There seems to be a remarkable amount of ambiguity and a reluctance to concede explicitly that, as the television operators have demanded that our microphones should be turned down, we are suffering from the problems about which we complain. Can we have a clear explanation of whether televising the House has led to us suffering from this problem?

Mr. Speaker: This matter has often been raised before. The hon. Member should know that the microphones have not been turned either up or down. They are as they were before. The fact that hon. Members cannot hear what is said in the House is entirely due to the behaviour of other hon. Members in the House. Just so long as we have this kind of barracking from the Back Benches—and even, sometimes, from the Front Benches—we shall be unable to hear, even if we do replace the microphones.

Mr. Faulds: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hesitate to correct you, Sir, but the technical problem is nothing to do with the turning down of the mikes; it is the amplifiers that have been turned down, so that television audiences do not get a mumble in the background. That is the problem, and that is what we are suffering from.

Mr. Speaker: Let us see if we can now get on with the ten-minute Bill. Mr. Harry Cohen.

Mortgage Assistance

3.43 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I do not have to worry about the volume, because I have a very sound set of proposals.

I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill further to regulate the relationship between mortgagor and mortgagee; to make provision, in circumstances in which a mortgagor is unable to meet mortgage repayments, for shared ownership of a property between mortgagor and mortgagee; to permit local authorities and housing associations to assume the responsibilities and rights of mortgagees in certain circumstances; to require the Secretary of State to report to Parliament on the resources and requirements of local authorities and housing associations in respect of shared ownership of housing; to make provision for a mortgagee to rent a property to its mortgagor if he is in repayment arrears; to place a duty upon lending institutions to make arrangements for the management of a mortgagor's debt before seeking repossession of a property; to make the cost of shared-ownership purchases eligible for housing revenue account subsidy; and for connected purposes.

The Bill could just as easily have been called the Mortgage Rescue Scheme Bill, or the Mortgage Choice Bill. It is a radical measure that is both innovative and important. It is important because it addresses the serious problem of home repossessions because of mortgage arrears which are getting worse because of the Government's high interest rate policy. We now have the highest interest rate in the industrialised world. Interest rates are the Government's sole weapon to tackle the consumer credit boom that they unleashed to win the last general election. As United Kingdom production has not kept pace, we have a £20 billion per annum balance-of-payments crisis. By using interest rates, the Government are taking it out on recent home buyers.

Interest rates are reflected in mortgage rates, which have increased from 9·8 per cent. to 15·4 per cent. in just over a year. The average new mortgage holder in the United Kingdom is paying £144 a month more, and £250 a month more in London. The chief executive of the charitably owned estate agency, Andrews, said, "It is absurd to expect young people with expanding families to take on 25-year home loans, budget for repayments out of tightly controlled incomes and then have their monthly mortgage commitment soar within six months." That is what has happened, and many hundreds of thousands of households have been trapped because high mortgage rates have become an integral part of the Government's economic strategy.

It has led to an arrears time bomb. Recently, I asked a couple of parliamentary questions about the numbers of people who were six to 12 months in arrears. the Treasury Minister replied that, on 31 December last year, the figure was some 58,000 households. It is significant that he chose December: a more recent date would have revealed a much higher figure, as it has rocketed since then.

When I asked the Minister about those between one and six months in arrears, he refused to answer, saying that he had nothing more to add. The Council of Mortgage Lenders certainly had something to add, saying that more than 500,000 people are in that category and the numbers are soaring. In its July newsletter, the Council of Mortgage Lenders said that in 1989, there were some 47,093 repossession orders in England alone, and that there had been a marked increase in the south-east.

The Association of London Authorities reported that, in 1989, well over 600 households had been accepted as homeless in London as a result of repossession. Probably many more people have been rehoused by local authorities, but other reasons have been given. All the signs are that there will be a substantial increase in those numbers this year.

My Bill is timely and necessary. It would help a large number of hard-pressed mortgage payers who are currently suffering because of high mortgage rates and they are fearful of repossession. Let me outline the main proposals. First, a mortgage payer would be able to convert part-ownership, scaling down his ownership in the property, so that the repayments become manageable. Effective, it would buy people time over a five-year period.

Secondly, a mortgage payer could convert to shared ownership, so that a local authority or housing association could take over the mortgage with rights in the property. That local authority or housing association would then receive the revised mortgage payments, and the rent and its capital would be returned when the property was sold. The purpose of such a scheme would be for repayments to become manageable for the mortgage payer. My Bill contains a mechanism to prevent soaring house prices from causing such damage. If there were excessive lending by the building societies, the part-ownership period would be longer and the local authority could charge a transfer fee on the building society to take over that mortgage.

The third option would be for the mortgage payer to convert from ownership to rental with the local authority. That is Labour party policy, and it would avoid people being thrown out into the streets. That would enable a mortgage payer to get back on his feet; there would be nothing to stop him repurchasing the property, as the Bill does not interfere with right-to-buy provisions. If a mortgage payer, through no fault of his own, cannot maintain the repayments, even under a shared ownership scheme, he could enter a rental arrangement with the local authority so that he would not be evicted.

The fourth major provision in the Bill would place a duty on the lending institutions to seek contract with mortgage payers to sort out alternative arrangements prior to any court action for repossession. It is a scandal that a minute or two minutes in court without the mortgage payer knowing what is happening can cause someone to lose his home. That is happening at the moment, and my Bill would stop it.

The fifth major provision of the Bill is that the Secretary of State for the Environment will have to report regularly to the House on the special funds that he will provide to local authorities, such as the new borrowing arrangements to enable them to undertake shared ownership schemes and the special grants to housing associations.

The housing finance regime would have to be altered. Of course a cost would be involved, but it would be a capital cost, because it would increase local authorities' borrowing allocation. In the meantime, revenue repayments and part rents would be coming in. It would benefit local authorities' income generation and it would mean less, not more, on poll tax bills. It must be cheaper than the cost of homelessness and the wasteful cost of bed and breakfast.

My Bill would apply only to mortgage payers in genuine difficulties and not to those who are in wilful arrears. That would be easy to operate, because the criteria

for whether they were in wilful arrears would be the same as the definition of intentionally homeless in the homeless legislation.

The question must be asked: if I can provide some protection and choice for hard-pressed mortgage payers, why cannot the Government? There was nothing in the Budget or in the Finance Bill, which we shall consider next week, and they still have nothing to offer. They simply do not have the political will, because they do not care about struggling home buyers.

The Prime Minister recently spoke of a scheme to convert rents to mortgages, about which she gave no details, but that does nothing to stem the current flood of mortgage repossessions. I remind the Government that there is no choice if there is coercion, and high rents are coercion. Once ordinary people are on the Government's scheme, they lose all their rights of security because of the high mortgage rates that prevail.

My challenge to the Government is to accept my Bill and their scheme. Otherwise, they are only pretending to deal with this serious problem; they are only teasing about owner-occupation when they are prepared to snatch away home ownership.

The principal solution is low interest rates—that is the main part of Labour's policy—but there is a strong case for providing the protection and choice that I propose for mortgage payers. They certainly should not be made to bear the brunt of the national economic mismanagement. My Bill is a new way to defend and to extend home ownership, and I commend it to the House.

3.54 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay) *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Lady seeking to oppose the Bill?

Mrs. Gorman: I seek to oppose the Bill, not because I lack sympathy for the very small number of people who find themselves in difficulties with their mortgages, but because the solution of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr Cohen), which includes yet more regulations, this time to be imposed on the mortgage lending business, is likely to have an opposite effect to that which he intends because building societies will be even less likely to want to help people whose incomes are fairly low and who may be unable to maintain their payments at the original level.

Building societies have a liberal attitude and, contrary to the impression that the hon. Gentleman gave, many mortgage companies enter into dialogue with people who find themselves in difficulty. I urge him, using his capacity as a Member of Parliament, to approach building societies directly with such cases. I have done so on behalf of some of my constituents, with great success.

The main fault of the Bill is that it does not tackle the underlying problem in housing—that over the years the Labour party has constantly sought to regulate, to bully and to control the private-sector landlord, so that the only option open to people on low incomes is to buy or to seek housing from their local council.

When I was young—*[Interruption.]*—which was not all that long ago—working-class people like us had a choice in housing, a choice in rented housing in the private sector. The Labour party has destroyed that choice by its constant bullying of the private landlord. The Conservative party is trying to bring back the private landlord. If the hon. Gentleman is seriously concerned about the plight of these people, he should urge his own Front Bench to lay off attacking measures that will restore confidence to the private landlord. Every time our party suggests some liberalisation, the Labour party offers threats to any landlord who tries to rent out his property.

There is a great deal of empty property available, as all hon. Members are aware. Most of that does not come up for rent, because the owners are frightened that, if we ever suffered under Labour legislation again, their properties would be sequestrated because the Labour party does not believe in the private rented sector. In raising this proposal to help tenants, the hon. Gentleman is neglecting the role that his party has played in creating this problem. For that reason, I oppose the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: The question is, That the hon. Gentleman have leave to bring in the Bill. As many of that opinion say aye. [HON. MEMBERS: "Aye."] To the contrary, no. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."]

As the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) has spoken against the Bill, she must say "no".

Mrs. Gorman: No.

Question agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Don Dixon, Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Mr. Eddie Loyden, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Eric Martlew and Mrs. Audrey Wise.

MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE

Mr. Harry Cohen accordingly presented a Bill to regulate the relationship between mortgagor and mortgagee: to make provision, in circumstances in which a mortgagor is unable to meet mortgage repayments, for shared ownership of a property between mortgagor and mortgagee; to permit local authorities and housing associations to assume the responsibilities and rights of mortgagees in certain circumstances; to require the Secretary of State to report to Parliament on the resources and requirements of local authorities and housing associations in respect of shared ownership of housing; to make provision for a mortgagee to rent a property to its mortgagor if he is in repayment arrears; to place a duty upon lending institutions to make arrangements for the management of a mortgagor's debt before seeking repossession of a property; to make the cost of shared-ownership purchases eligible for housing revenue account subsidy; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 July and to be printed. [Bill 183.]

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have dealt with points of order. Is this connected with the ten-minute Bill?

Mr. Cryer: Yes. I noticed that you cautioned the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), who opposed the

[Mr. Cryer]

Bill. You said that it was customary—as it is—for any hon. Member who opposes a ten-minute Bill to follow that opposition by pressing the matter to a Division.

Am I to understand, Mr. Speaker, that you did not call a Division on the ten-minute Bill because the sole voice against this excellent Bill was that of the hon. Member for Billericay, who was mistaken, as she usually is? It is a poor reflection on the Conservative Benches that they cannot find one supporter for their misguided representative.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the position. If an hon. Member opposes a Bill, he or she must shout "No" on the first occasion. When I put the question again, if my saying, "The ayes have it" is not challenged, a Division is not called. None the less, if an hon. Member speaks against a Bill, but does not carry it to a Division, he or she takes up the time of the House. There may therefore be a case for considering the procedure in the light of the time taken from subsequent debates.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am still on my feet. This is an estimates day, which is a prized opportunity for Back-Bench Members—especially, in this case, Welsh Members and those from the south-west—to debate flooding. Points of order take up time, just as much as opposition to ten-minute Bills.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order if they are related to this matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether one way of trying to overcome this problem—if you had the authority; obviously you would tell the House—might be that, if information was given to your office that an hon. Member wanted to oppose a ten-minute Bill, which is the normal procedure, that hon. Member could state whether he or she intended to seek a vote. It is a mockery if an hon. Member has 10 minutes in which to propose a potential Bill, but then another hon. Member, from another party, argues against it but refuses to call for a vote. Surely that is a waste of time.

I believe that the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) refused to call for a vote because she knew full well that the Opposition would have won without hesitation. The hon. Lady therefore wasted the time of the House by putting forward a feeble case and then refusing to call for a vote. Surely that is a form of political cowardice.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one thing at a time.

I must, of course, operate the rules as they are at the moment. At the moment, I am required to give an hon. Member who wishes to oppose a Bill the opportunity to do so. What I was saying a moment ago was that, given the pressure of time on subsequent debates, perhaps the Select Committee on Procedure should now look at this matter again.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you share my boredom at bogus points of order being raised during television time. Would it not be a good idea if you were given a switch and could turn off the television cameras whenever an Opposition Member made a bogus point of order?

Mr. Speaker: I am somewhat of an expert in bogus points of order. The problem is that there seems to be a tendency to raise points of order during television time—I put it no higher than that, and I would not wish to make any accusations in the Chamber. We all know the television cameras transmit live until 3.50 pm and I have found from experience that, if there is no statement or private notice question, points of order tend to be raised and seem to cut off, almost automatically, at 3.50 pm. I sometimes wonder what the reason for that might be.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Tony Banks.

Mr. Corbyn: I rose before my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I waited until we were alone to raise this point of order. *[Laughter.]* I could be wrong on this—I usually am—but has it not been the case until fairly recently that, when an hon. Member rises to oppose a ten-minute rule application, there is a vote? That was the convention. However, that has changed at some stage and an hon. Member is now allowed simply to voice opposition. I wonder whether you can confirm that, Mr. Speaker, because your point about this matter being considered by the Select Committee on Procedure is most relevant.

Mr. Speaker: The rule has always been that an hon. Member may speak against a Bill, provided that the shout of "No" is heard. That is the objection. However, I repeat that that is not a good practice and that we should consider whether to allow what are almost free kicks to continue in view of the time that we need in this place to debate other important matters.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you for calling me, Mr. Speaker, at 4.2 pm. I welcome your suggestion that the Select Committee on Procedure should consider ten-minute Bills because, as you know, I take them seriously. A Bill is often introduced at this stage, carried without Division or, as in this case, carried with opposition but no Division, yet it can be killed off on a Friday afternoon by one of the Government Whips muttering, "Object."

When the Select Committee on Procedure considers this matter, perhaps it should also consider whether there might be some way by which, if an hon. Member goes to the effort of introducing a ten-minute Bill—a serious piece of legislation and a serious proposal—and it is carried at that stage, it cannot be objected to by the simple expediency of the Whips. We should ensure that it is properly dealt with and brought back to the House as a serious piece of legislation. It should not be dismissed as a mere 10-minute speech by one hon. Member.

Mr. Speaker: The danger is that the public could be misled by the procedure of the ten-minute rule. The Bill that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has asked leave to bring in today has not been passed. The hon. Gentleman has simply asked leave to introduce his Bill.

When the Select Committee on Procedure looks again at this matter, perhaps it might also reconsider the procedure whereby it is possible to introduce a ten-minute Bill after the last day on which there is an opportunity for its Second Reading on a Friday. In many ways, a ten-minute Bill is an empty gesture at this time of year.

Mr. Tony Banks: I have one next week.

Mrs. Gorman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have taken the opportunity to rebuke me for opposing a ten-minute rule Bill—which I did, but I also called "No"—and it was your choice to decide whether to call a Division. It ill behoves you, Mr. Speaker—*[Interuption.]*—to accept points of order which are critical from Opposition Members, who are not backward in opposing ten-minute rule Bills. There are few opportunities in the House for Back Benchers who feel strongly on subjects to make their views known. This has been one such occasion. I may be in a minority now but, to paraphrase Disraeli, there will come a time when the House will follow me on this subject.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady must not get upset. I was certainly not rebuking her. She was perfectly in order in doing what she did; she was following the procedure. I was questioning that procedure, not what the hon. Lady did.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are dealing with an important matter. The fact of causing a Division to take place is often a deterrent to hon. Members getting to their feet and speaking on an issue. The knowledge that one is about to cause a vote to take place by one's Opposition acts as a deterrent to speaking. Is a precedent now being created by which hon. Members will be able to air their views and then not have to do anything about it? If so, we shall be opening a whole can of worms, which could result in hon. Members airing their views, secure in the knowledge that they need not take the matter further.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is what we have been talking about.

Mr. Flannery: I hope that my hon. Friend will be quiet and heed what I am saying. I am making a sound point. Mr. Speaker and I fully appreciate the point I am making.

Mr. Winnick: Hear, hear—said by a former headmaster.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) is an old hand, and he must be aware that the point that he raises is precisely the issue that we have been discussing for the last 10 minutes or so. We have been agreeing that perhaps the procedure should be looked at, and I hope that it will be.

ESTIMATES DAY

[3RD ALLOTTED DAY]

ESTIMATES 1990-91

CLASS III, VOTE 3

[Relevant document: Third report from the Welsh Affairs Committee of Sesssion 1989-90 on the breach of the Sea Defences of 26th-27th February along the North Wales coast (House of Commons paper No. 426).]

Sea Defences and Flood Damage

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum, not exceedng £87,366,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges that will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on market support, grants and loans for capital and other improvements, support for agriculture in special areas and compensation for sheep producers, animal health, arterial drainage, flood and coast protection, and certain other services.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

4.8 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I am grateful for the opportunity to open this debate on the day when the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs has published its report relating to the breach of sea defences along the north Wales coast on 26 and 27 February this year.

The key point I wish to emphasise in relation to the Estimates is that secure sea defences are crucial. But if freak weather conditions occur and some defences are put at risk, it is vital to recognise that money is not well spent in financing the operations of the Neptune warning system in its present form if, as happened at Towyn, two conditions apply.

The first is that the maritime district authorities do not take seriously—or they even ignore completely—the Neptune warning that they receive from the National Rivers Authority via the police relating to high tide and tidal surge. That information is collected by the Meteorological Office in the form of a storm tide warning service at a cost to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, according to the estimates, of £339,000.

The second is that information on offshore wave heights supplied by the Meteorological Office to the National rivers Authority is not passed to the maritime district authorities, so the information that those authorities receive is incomplete. In other words, the maritime authorities receive only tide and predicted tidal surge levels and do not receive offshore wave levels, information that they require to enable them to determine what they must do under extreme weather conditions.

The extensive flooding along the north Wales coast which followed the severe weather conditions of 26 and 27 February resulted from the simultaneous incidence of three factors: first, a predicted high spring tide of between 4·87 m and 5·07 m above ordnance datum; secondly, a deep depression approaching from the west causing a tidal surge which increased the depth of water approaching the coastline by up to 1·42 m above the predicted level; thirdly, storm to violent storm force winds recorded as 10 to 11 on the Beaufort scale from the north and north-west causing waves up to 6 m high.

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

As the scale of the damage was greatest in the Colwyn borough council area, where about 5,000 people were evacuated from their homes, I shall direct my remarks largely to that area. It is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who is a senior Conservative member of the Select Committee that I chair.

On 14 May this year, the Select Committee visited the areas affected by the flooding along the north Wales coast and met local people in their homes and caravans. On 15 May, the Committee met at the community centre in Towyn to take oral evidence from the borough councils of Colwyn, Delyn and Rhuddlan. We also took evidence at the same venue from members of the British Railways Board, because the sea wall that was breached at Towyn at about midday on 26 February was owned by British Rail. We also received 26 written memoranda. We are grateful to the Ordnance Survey for supplying us with aerial photographs of the coastal belt, and to the Towyn citizens advice bureau for providing us with individual case studies of people who experienced difficulties with insurance companies in making their claims.

The most disturbing aspect of the inquiry must be the ignorance displayed by the most senior local government officers of Colwyn borough council about the Operation Neptune warning which the council received from the police at 08.53 hours on the morning of 26 February. Indeed, on six separate occasions during the oral evidence session in the Towyn community centre, the director of housing and technical services, without any contradiction from his chief executive, the borough treasurer or the assistance chief executive for legal and administrative affairs emphasised and re-emphasised that the council was not informed of the Neptune warning.

In paragraph 53 of the evidence, the director of housing and technical services said:

"I do have to say that the Neptune warning system was not received by us on that morning."

In paragraph 54, he said:

"We were not warned of the surge effect on the tide."

In paragraph 55, he said:

"We get the message relayed to us by the local police and we did not get it on that particular day."

In paragraph 57, he said:

"It did not happen on that morning, no."

In paragraph 62, he said:

"I have to report we did not receive our Neptune warning on that morning. It was only by the observation of officers that we saw conditions were of that nature and put everybody on warning."

In paragraph 67, he said:

"There is no record of having received a Neptune warning by our source, which is the North Wales police."

The council subsequently informed us in writing that Colwyn borough council received a Neptune warning on the morning of 26 February at 08.53 hours. It must be deeply disturbing to the people of Towyn and, indeed, to all who reside in maritime areas threatened by flooding from the sea, that senior officers of a Welsh local authority did not know six weeks after the dramatic events of 26 February that their local authority had received an Operation Neptune warning. I have little doubt that, had the Select Committee not pursued that line of questioning, Colwyn borough council might still have been under the mistaken impression that no warning was received.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): In fairness to those whom he has criticised, did the hon. Gentleman and his Committee receive any evidence that suggested a lack of reliability on the part of the Neptune system?

Mr. Wardell: No, we did not. As I said earlier, the Meteorological Office conveys to the National Rivers Authority two separate pieces of information. First, it conveys information about the height of the tide and the tidal surge. Secondly, it separately conveys to the NRA information about offshore wave height. One of our fundamental recommendations is that both those pieces of information should be conveyed to the maritime authorities—at the moment, only one piece of information is conveyed. None the less, the Operation Neptune warning was delivered at 08·53 to Colwyn borough council, but its senior officers knew nothing about it. That deplorable situation must not be permitted to recur.

We recommend that the NRA should be made responsible for conveying information on tidal surges and wave heights to the maritime district authorities. Engineers from those authorities and other bodies responsible for major sea defences should be on standby to receive that information. I am sure that that answers the Minister's question. When the hon. Gentleman responds to our recommendations, I hope that he can say that those steps will be taken to meet the problem.

Sir Wyn Roberts: May I clarify that I was seeking to elicit whether there is some doubt about the accuracy and reliability of Neptune warnings?

Mr. Wardell: I am grateful to the Minister for that information, because the evidence that we subsequently received from the Meteorological Office showed that the prediction made in the Neptune warning on the morning of 26 February was surprisingly accurate. I am sure that that fundamentally important point will help the Minister.

It is also disconcerting that the information on tide surges and offshore wave heights was available at 02.30 to the Meteorological Office. The Meteorological Office originally told us that it conveyed that information to the NRA at 02.30, but subsequently it changed its evidence and said that that information was passed on at 03.40—the office of the NRA was not open until 06.00 Because of those delays, as well as delay on the part of the north Wales police, the Operation Neptune warning did not arrive at Colwyn borough council until 08.53—six hours and 23 minutes after the computer prediction was available at the Meteorological Office.

Another vital recommendation of the Committee is that an evacuation standby warning should be given by local authorities in vulnerable areas when a Neptune warning of extremely severe conditions is given. To achieve that, it is obvious that the delays that occurred in the transmission of information to Colwyn borough council must be eliminated.

I have chosen to concentrate on the Operation Neptune warning system, but there are two other crucial recommendations. The first is that the Welsh Office should re-issue the advice to local authorities in circular 15/82 entitled "Development in Flood Risk Areas—Liaison between Planning Authorities and Water Authorities". Paragraph 7 of that circular needs particular emphasis:

"Land which is protected from inundation by the sea would be extremely vulnerable in the event of any

embankment or sea wall being breached. For example, tidal surges might involve the loss of life as well as the destruction of property. Planning authorities are therefore asked to bear this point particularly in mind when considering development for land protected in this way."

The Welsh Office will bear a heavy responsibility if it approves structure plans without satisfying itself that maritime local authorities' local plans satisfy the conditions of circular 15/82. I sincerely hope that the Minister will look again at that circular, re-issue it and bear in mind the responsibility that his Department bears when it approves county structure plans.

The second crucial recommendation concerns insurance. It is often the case that people on low incomes naturally neglect to update their insurance policies to ensure that they are completely covered for the impact of flooding on the contents or structure of their property. In that regard, the Select Committee recommends, in its report published today, that local authorities should warn residents in areas at risk from flooding of the need to be fully insured by writing to every resident. That policy should be backed up by regular newspaper advertisements. We also recommend that local searches show solicitors which areas are liable to flooding.

The Select Committee's inquiry into the events of 26 and 27 February left hon. Members in no doubt that, if the British Rail sea wall at Towyn had been breached around midnight on 26 February instead of around midday, lives would have been lost because of the vulnerability of the large numbers of elderly people living in that area. The Select Committee is conscious of the fact that, if present climatic trends continue, the likely problems and danger of flooding of the coast will become greater in future. That is the view of Hydraulic Research Ltd. contained in its memorandum to the Committee.

If the Select Committee's recommendations are accepted by the Government, I am sure that far greater protection will be available against inundation by the sea through the construction of hard and soft defences. We recommend that the current bias in the grant system towards hard defences should be remedied.

The Select Committee has excelled itself in its probing short inquiry. I must thank Professor O'Connor from Liverpool university for his expert advice, and it is my pleasure to acknowledge the work of the Clerk of the Committee, Mr. David Harrison, and his assistant, Mr. McShane, and Emma, who did the typing at the last minute under great stress. I also wish to pay tribute to the energetic and enthusiastic way in which fellow members of the Committee delved and probed into this difficult subject matter.

I hope that the result of our deliberations will comfort people who live in north Wales and in other coastal areas as they face the next winter. I pay a special tribute to the senior Conservative Member of the Committee, the hon. Member for Clwyd North-West, who, throughout a most difficult time, clearly demonstrated his deep care for his constituents. The hon. Gentleman clearly deserves his place in the House—unless, of course, a Labour candidate eases him gently out at the next election. I am grateful to him for his support on the Committee and for the work that he and all members of the Committee have carried out.

4.25 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): The tribute by the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) was quite the nicest kiss of death ever bestowed on me. Apart from the Select Committee's specific recommendations, to which I shall refer later, the debate will focus much needed light on the still woeful plight of nearly 1,000 of my constituents who, six months after the February floods, are unable to return to their badly damaged homes and are living in caravans in their small front gardens or on the road outside. It is no joke looking after small children, elderly infirm relatives or, in some cases, mentally handicapped relatives in a caravan for months on end. It may even be worse for those who are lodged in old people's homes, separated from friends, neighbours and memories.

The debate will serve to remind the nation and the media how tardy, patchy and short-lived has been their generosity to these unhappy people. They still need help and desperately need to feel that the rest of the country —not just the people of Wales, who have responded magnificently—are aware of and sympathetic to their plight. Here I record my special gratitude to the National Federation of Pensioners Associations, which at its conference passed a resolution expressing support for the people of Towyn and Kinmel bay.

The scope of the report is necessarily limited. We did not have time to cover anything other than sea defences and early-warning issues. We were not able to look into the severe problems faced by farmers, many of whom have lost much stock and whose land is taking a long time to recover from the effects of prolonged soaking by sea water.

I pay special tribute also to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), then Secretary of State for Wales, who responded swiftly with lavish supplies of gypsum. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office, who immediately visited the affected areas. Above all, I pay what may seem a slightly incestuous tribute to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, the hon. Member for Gower. It is a fairly open secret that he commands the confidence of every member who served on the Committee and those who previously served on it. He and all members of the Committee took endless trouble over the report. I thank them for that, and for meeting and listening to people while they were in north Wales seeing the problems for themselves. I know how affected they were by the continuing distress that surrounded them.

I hope that the report and the debate will restore confidence to my constituents and to all who may face a similar threat. The debate has implications for the whole of the United Kingdom, not just for west-facing coasts. The lessons of the tragedy have been drawn and everything possible will be done to ensure that residents are safe from flooding next winter and for the foreseeable future. If unforeseeable conditions should occur, residents will be given ample warning and there will be provision for escape from death or injury, in their own homes by way of access to an upper floor or, at the very least, roof space, in bungalows—and proper escape and access routes for rescue vehicles will be made available and kept clear.

I am particularly pleased with the recommendation that expenditure by local authorities on the maintenance of sea defences—including the vital and continuing replenishment of sloping beaches—should attract Government

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

grant in exactly the same way as, at present, only capital works such as concrete sea walls do. That lesson holds good for the rest of the United Kingdom.

The top priority must be the repair and strengthening of the sea wall. Those who live in the threatened areas must have a categorical assurance that, by next October, the wall and the beach will be able to absorb a storm as violent as that of last February. Such a storm may be a 1:200 year risk. However, as Dr. Robert Kay of the university of East Anglia said in a seminar staged by Clwyd county council, one can say that the odds against it are 1:200, but that is the same as saying that the odds are 200:1 against it happening again next year—horses have won the Grand National on odds only a little shorter than that.

Despite the urgent need to rebuild and strengthen the sea wall, I do not understand why British Rail needs to close off the entire beach along the Towyn area for the whole period of the work. I accept that access to the beach will have to be severely restricted, but it must be possible for British Rail to schedule the work so that some parts can remain open to the public at certain times. Otherwise, it will inflict a crippling blow on the area's hard-hit and struggling tourist industry.

In the course of giving evidence, I asked British Rail about access to the beach. In answer to question 202, Mr. Elliott replied:

"We would need to liaise with the local authority in providing some form of access."

I asked:

"It will be your responsibility?"

Mr. Rayner replied:

"Let me say, Sir, if it is not it will be."

If British Rail does not ensure that there is, at least at times, access to the beach for the holiday makers of Towyn, it will cause severe injury to an industry on which a great deal of British Rail's prosperity depends. I ask Mr. Robert Reid to think again about that.

The report has rightly exposed shortcomings, especially in relation to warnings. The Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Gower, was severe in his criticism of officials at Colwyn council. I do not want to say too much about Colwyn's failure to react to the Neptune warning. It is unfortunate that the council changed its story, and clearly there was a muddle, but I have not had time to hold the sort of informal discussion that I would normally have had with the Chairman before this debate. It has been an incredible rush, and it is amazing that the report has come out on time.

In fairness to Colwyn, I would not have been quite so specific as the hon. Member for Gower in picking out Mr. Gough for so much blame. It is arguable that the six-hour delay of the National Rivers Authority was as much a contributory factor as Colwyn's slip-up. That begs the question whether, even if the early warning had been received and acted upon throughout, it would have done that much to avert the tragedy, which was caused not by the over-topping but by the collapse of the wall. We may argue about whether that collapse could have been foreseen, but in my heart I do not believe that it could.

It occured at a point a long way away from where there had been a previous crack, but perhaps I am being unduly complacent. I hope that the media will not fasten exclusively or excessively on that aspect, or indulge in a hunt for scapegoats. Above all, the people of the area need to recover their self-confidence and to rebuild their shattered lives. That means that we must all work together.

I am aware that there have been cowboy builders, but some of the builders whom I have met have been working all the hours that God sends, at nominal levels of profit, out of a sense of commitment to the community in which they live. I cannot find sufficiently high words of praise for the activities of some of the housing associations in the area, which have provided a rescue and advice service for people whose homes were badly affected.

I know that there have been complaints about some of the insurance companies and, perhaps more pertinently, the activities of certain loss adjusters who have been less than prompt in meeting claims. I pay tribute to the Association of British Insurers, which responded instantly to the Select Committee's suggestion that it should provide a once-a-week presence at the community centre in Towyn, where the voluntary and statutory relief agencies provide a devoted service all day every day and where the Select Committee held its hearings.

I know that there are some hard and bitter feelings about the distribution of the pitifully small appeal fund among those who have lost so much. I only wish that it were possible to compensate, in some measure, everyone who has suffered, but a fund as small as that must be used for the relief of those who have lost most and who have the least chance of recovery from statutory agencies or insurance companies. Those who seek to stir up grievances render poor service to the community in which they live.

Knowing my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales as well as I do, I know that he will respond positively and generously, as far as he can, to the recommendations of the Select Committee. He has already shown his concern by his two lengthy visits to the affected areas—one of which took place even before he became Secretary of State—and by his manifest sympathy for all those he met. I am sure that he will give the most careful consideration to our recommendations. In particular, I hope that he will urge the Treasury to think again about the whole system of grant for repair and maintenance work. I hope that, in consultation with his colleagues in the Department of the Environment, he will reconsider both the planning guidelines and the building regulations in areas liable to flooding by sea or from land.

I thank my fellow members of the Select Committee, especially the Chairman, for the immense trouble that they have taken over this matter, which is of such desperate importance to my constituency.

4.37 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who made a typically gracious speech. He had his priorities right, and it was shrewd of him to put the pressure on British Rail.

The report of my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) and his Select Committee has done a public service. It is probably the most important report published by the Select Committee. It is about life and about death. Its findings relate not only to all of Wales, but to all of Britain. It is both a wise and a practical report. The Welsh Office should now go to action stations and respond speedily to it. It is a blueprint for a responsible response from the Government.

I cannot forget that we are discussing a disaster. We all want to ensure that no other part of Wales suffers the same. The Committee was right to concentrate on the warnings about high sea levels, the condition of the sea defences, the responsibility for the sea defences and the planning policy for areas liable to flooding. It is an agenda for the Government, and I urge them to respond as speedily and as seriously as possible.

As regards aims, I hope that we can build on a consensual response to the disaster, and agree upon a policy that can limit risks and protect our people.

Paragraph 15 of the report contains the following chilling sentence:

"Once the breach occurred then the speed of incursion into the Towyn area was such that very little warning could be given in advance to residents."

Another chilling sentence, in paragraph 8, states:

"However, residents were at risk and children, especially, suffered psychological trauma. People struggled to escape from their bungalows by the window as the water levels rose."

That, perhaps unintentionally, hints at a drama by Hitchcock.

Having been to the scene of the disaster, I found the report very accurate. My quotations from it sum up the fear and trauma experienced by those who suffered.

I pay tribute to the police, firemen, council workmen, ambulance men and women and volunteers who did a huge amount of work on the day of the disaster to help and comfort people who were frightened.

To put our debate into context, it is good that the Select Committee made such a practical response, based upon its visit to the scene of the disaster. It was shrewd of the Secretary of State for Wales to visit the area as soon as he could, as it was shrewd of the previous Secretary of State to visit the scene of the disaster. Thanks have been given to the Minister of State for going as soon as any Minister might have done.

I acknowledge the importance of the fact that the Government have improved the Bellwin rules threshold and their cash contribution to the disaster fund. I do not leave out of my tribute the mayors, voluntary organisations in Clwyd and show business stars who have made great efforts to help the people stricken by the disaster.

Sir Anthony Meyer: The hon. Gentleman mentioned show business people. Perhaps he will support my plea to the national media that they should have given nationwide coverage to the appeals instead of broadcasting them in Wales only. The people of Wales have given generously, but the appeals have never been nationally networked.

Mr. Jones: I take my cue from the hon. Gentleman. It was sad that the appeal was not broadcast outside Wales, as I am sure that hearts would have been touched and that the response would have been generous. Indeed, one of the reasons for this debate is to prompt the conscience of the nation. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition went to the scene without a political mission, aiming to help in the way that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West, has instanced. The hon. Gentleman's work as a Member of Parliament has been exemplary throughout the disaster. He has approached a difficult problem with compassion and consientiousness, he has been consistent and his constituents would wish to thank him.

When my right hon. Friend, Mrs. Kinnock and I visited the scene of the flooding, we were greatly moved. My right hon. Friend instantly resolved to meet the Secretary of State for Wales at the Welsh Office, as he was so appalled at the remaining evidence of the disaster and its cruel impact on local people. He admired their courage and humour.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, like the Secretary of State, received a deputation of people affected by the disaster, when they came to lobby Parliament. Hon. Members who visited the north Wales coast saw the strain and worry, which was all too evident, on the faces of the people whom we met—but I also acknowledge their endurance and dignity.

I have made several visits to the scene of the disaster. I, too, recollect the report by the foster parents of two handicapped children, which was given to me, with my right hon. Friend and Mrs. Kinnock, in a caravan adjacent to a home ruined by the flooding. It had been lovingly enlarged and furnished to care for handicapped children, which is what that humane man and his wife have dedicated their lives to.

Other people told us about the speed of the inundation and of their terror at seeing the sea advance to their homes in broad daylight. Incredibly, the sea swept far inland, blighting local farmers' pasture. The farming community now has a major problem.

I visited a school where youngsters had to stand on their desks on the day of the disaster, and a small council estate far inland that had been flooded to a height of more than 4 ft. It had only recently been built, but was inundated by the cruel sea and partially ruined.

On a later visit, I saw a superb seafront leisure centre, part of which had been smashed to pieces. The ballroom was unrecognisable as the room that I had visited in November last year.

The impact of global warming is difficult to predict, as nobody will deny, but some of the beauty spots along the Welsh coast may fall victim to rising sea levels during the next few decades. Storms and thunderstorms could become more frequent and the hazard of flooding will increase in the valleys of the Rivers Dyfi, Dee, Clwyd, Towy and Wye. What about Borth and Newborough in Anglesey? What assessments have the Ministers made?

In a written answer on 24 April, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), told my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells):

"All coastal regions that lie below the highest sea level in their vicinity are at some risk of being inundated by sea water in the event of breaches of sea defences. The most significant such areas in Wales are parts of the north Wales coast, the Caldicot and Wentlooge levels and lands bordering the major estuaries, for example, Afon Glaslyn, Afon Mawddach, Afon Dyfi and Lougher inlet."—[*Official Report*, 24 April 1990; Vol. 171, c. *142*.]

One cannot be franker than that, and it was a fair response to a serious question.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It might be helpful to the hon. Gentleman if I assured him that the National Rivers Authority has already embarked upon a full survey of coastal defences in Wales.

Mr. Jones: I look foward to an expanded reply on that matter from the Minister of State—he knows that it is his duty.

We know that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is increasing its expenditure over the next three years. The east coast must be a priority. I expect to hear

[Mr. Jones]

the Minister of State tell us that his Department has obtained a large enough budget to meet Wales's need for sea defences.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) asked a question, because on the same day of the terrible floods at Towyn there was serious flooding in his constituency at Peterstone and St. Bride's, where the sea overtopped the sea wall, and at Caerleon and Newport. He asked the Minister:

"In view of the certainty of global warming raising sea levels, and because the area has many fine homes and new high technology enterprises, will he guarantee that in the future the area will be fully protected by new flood defences?" —[*Official Report*, 18 June 1990: Vol. 174, c. 671.]

I mention that question because sea defences concern the whole of Wales; the problem is not confined to the coast of Clwyd, which received such a fearful battering in February.

What research will the Welsh office sponsor to assess the implications of global warming on storm frequency and flood risk along the Welsh coast? What will be the impact on Liverpool bay of global warming and an increase in sea level? The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West touched on housing, and I shall mention it briefly too. The *Daily Post*—once the *Liverpool Daily Post*—reported on 7 July that between 800 and 1,300 flood victims were still unable to return to their homes six months after the disaster. The report estimated that more than 200 people are living in caravans and mobile homes next to their properties. Others are living in guest houses and hotels.

Will the Minister of State study the decision of the DSS not to give community care grants to pensioners and families with children who do not get income support? That means test, in a unique disaster, penalises those who have been thrifty; I say without too much venom that it penalises the very people whom the Government say they want to encourage. The needs of the victims are still immense, and loans will not help them.

Will the Minister of State provide one-off central Government funding for a social work team? The professionals believe that such a team will be needed for a long time. There are people with mental health problems over and above the typical strain and stress. It is a truism to say of this disaster that families are under stress. These families have children in their midst, and the social workers of Clwyd county are doing a good job in the wake of disaster, but they have been taken away from other important work in the county.

I also want the Government to extend the time limit on the Bellwin rules, perhaps even into next year, as has been urged by Clwyd county. The Government's rejection of central Government funding for a social work team has caused great anxiety.

I want to take up the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Gower about the storm tidal warning service. The estimates include an allowance of £339,000 for that service in the financial year 1990-91. The estimates also mention the costs of tide gauges for the east and west coasts. They mention capital expenditure on them of £42,500. In paragraph 24, the Select Committee recommends an additional tide gauge for the coast of north Wales. Does the £42,500 cover the cost of an additional tide gauge, or how much would one cost? There is no tide gauge between Holyhead and Hilbre on the estuary of the River Dee. We need one urgently, and we await an outright commitment—today—from the Minister that a gauge will be provided and installed as soon as possible. The lack of a gauge between Holyhead and the mouth of the Dee is a glaring omission, a weakness that must be rectified, and I call on the Minister of State to guarantee——

Sir Wyn Roberts: May I relieve the hon. Gentleman by assuring him that we are giving active consideration to the provision of a tide gauge for the north Wales coast?

Mr. Jones: I shall take that as an absolute guarantee that a gauge will be put in at the earliest opportunity. I also take it that the money will be provided; before the end of the debate. I want the Minister of State to tell me precisely how much such a gauge costs and whether the figure relates to the £42,500 in the estimates. If it does not, the Government have been lazy since February.

It is now the Government's duty to proclaim a strategy, backed by research, expertise and funding, on sea defences. Wales has a major interest in the Government tackling that growing problem. The Government must be determined and imaginative. How great is the danger? What decisions will be taken to defend and protect our people and our shoreline? How soon will those decisions be implemented? The Minister owes us an outline of his policy, especially on the north Wales floods.

It would appear in the end that even these Ministers did not acknowledge soon enough that a disaster of serious proportions had taken place. All of us thank God that it happened in broad daylight, but after six months much remains to be done and the pace must be quickened. Ministers must get a grip on matters and show more leadership. They must reassure public opinion. If they do not show leadership and determination I am sorry to tell the Minister of State that the suffering and fear of those who were flooded will have been in vain.

4.58 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): It is sad that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) concluded with party political points, which were too petty for a debate such as this on a serious disaster. I hope to make points which are above the party political level, like the admirable speeches made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell)—I may call him that in this context, since he is the Chairman of the Select Committee—and by my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer).

I am delighted that we are holding this debate on the breach of the sea defences on 26 and 27 February along the north Wales coast. As I said in yesterday's debate, initiated by Plaid Cymru, we hold far too few debates on Welsh affairs on the Floor of the House. */Interruption./* I had the courtesy to listen in silence to the speech of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). As he is so concerned about this disaster—his concern came through in his speech—I hope that he will be courteous enough to listen to my speech without trying to interrupt me or causing distractions by muttering from a sedentary position.

Far too few debates are held on the Floor of the House on Welsh affairs. The Government's responses to the Welsh Select Committee's reports are seldom debated.

That is sad. I agree with the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman), the Chairman of the Welsh Grand Committee, that, as a matter of form, the Welsh Grand Committee should debate regularly the reports produced by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. That would save us having to go round the same old circuit discussing the same old issues—the Government choosing the subject on one occasion, the Opposition choosing it the next—with nobody showing any imagination about what to debate.

There is a backlog of reports prepared by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs that the Welsh Grand Committee could debate and discuss. I hope that both the Minister of State and the usual channels will take that point on board. I have been accused, even by members of my own party, of being too much of a Welsh Member of Parliament. I regard that not as a criticism but as a label which I wear with pride. I hope that all of us together, above party politics, will press for more debates on Welsh issues—on the Floor of the House and in the Welsh Grand Committee.

The question that dominated the inquiry by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs and that is dominating this debate was posed to us, as Members of the Select Committee, by the people of Towyn and Ffynnongroyw when we visited those places before taking evidence at Towyn: "How can our communities return to normal life until we are sure, until we are certain that we are safe and secure behind our sea walls?" I hope that the House will bear with me if I make a few points that relate directly to my constituency before I deal with the Select Committee's report.

I am delighted by the assurance that I received today from British Rail that, contrary to rumour, it is to replace the sea wall at Mostyn West, otherwise known as Ffynnongroyw, before the onset of winter. The contract has been let. Work is to start next week and will be completed by the end of September. That will greatly assure the 45 or so families in Ffynnongroyw who were so severely affected by the floods of 26 and 27 February.

I ask the Welsh Office, through its consultant, Hydraulics Research Ltd., to look closely at the design of the new sea wall that British Rail has produced. It is important that the people of Ffynnongroyw should be given every possible assurance. We should therefore have a second opinion on the design.

I also ask the Welsh Office and its consultant, Hydraulics Research Ltd., to look at the Holywell embankment. It was reinstated promptly—I pay tribute to British Rail for that—after the February floods with 25,000 tonnes of demolition material of rock and armour stone, which raised the height of the embankment by about 1 m.

However, as our specialist adviser pointed out to me and to the other Members of the Select Committee when we visited the embankment, there is a danger of the sea entering the gaps between the loose rock and sucking out sand and shingle, which could result in subsidence. Therefore, he suggested—as I did, when we took evidence from British Rail at Towyn—that there should be a filter layer under the wall. British Rail has said in a letter that it is still reviewing the need for a filter layer. Therefore, it would be helpful once again to have a second opinion from Hydraulics Research Ltd.

Under the Coast Protection Act 1949, certain bodies, including British Rail, are exempt from having to obtain consent for sea defence works. All exemptions should come to an end; I see no reason for them. It is important that British Rail should have to obtain consent for its sea defence works from the coastal protection authority.

The contrast between British Rail's approach and that of the coastal protection authorities is starkly highlighted in my constituency. In the borough of Delyn, the Ffynnongroyw embankment, otherwise known as Mostyn West, is owned by British Rail. It was constructed in 1830 and modified in 1845 and 1920. The Mostyn dock wall was constructed in 1830. The Mostyn embankment was constructed in 1840 and modified in 1920. The Holywell embankment was constructed in 1830. All these sea walls and embankments are also owned by British Rail.

In Rhuddlan, where the local district council is the owner of and therefore responsible for, all sea defences, a totally different situation prevails. Since 1983, £4·5 million has been spent on coast protection. There have been three schemes—phases 1 and 2 at Ffrith beach and phase 3 at central beach. During the next three years, a further £5·6 million will be spent. That illustrates the marked contrast between a maritime district authority—a coastal protection authority—that is directly responsible for its own sea defences—and British Rail, which is a step removed from sea defences, with its headquarters in the south. It is not so fully aware at first hand of the need for sea defences to be modified and renewed regularly.

The Welsh Office has made Rhuddlan borough council's expenditure possible by means of a generous special capital allocation. I pay tribute to the Welsh Office. As Mr. Andrew Rhodes, the former borough surveyor of Rhuddlan, pointed out when he gave evidence to us at Towyn, at one stage a third of all the special capital allocation to Welsh district councils was going to Rhuddlan borough council for its sea defence work. The remaining work needs to be accelerated and completed as soon as possible, thus ensuring that the people of Prestatyn are safe and secure behind their sea defences.

I hope that the Welsh Office will allow the remaining three-year programme to be compressed into two years. Andrew Rhodes, who has just moved from Rhuddlan to the Wirral, believes it to be practicable. I hope that the Minister of State will respond to that point—if not in his reply to the debate then in a letter to me.

I also press the Welsh Office for help in the reconstruction of the Nova complex in Prestatyn. It was devastated by the storms. Rhuddlan borough council is not asking for cash but for permission to spend. It is asking for a capital allocation for excess costs over insurance coverage. The Minister of State will be only too well aware that the Nova complex is central to Prestatyn's economy and its principal industry, tourism. Rhuddlan borough council is in a catch-22 situation. For the complex to be reinsured, it must be redesigned on the seaward side. Insurance will cover only rebuilding, like for like. It will cover replacement, not betterment. Essential design changes will cost at least £200,000 if the external walls are to be rebuilt in reinforced concrete rather than brick.

The council cannot and should not be asked to accommodate that expenditure within its existing capital programme. That would require a reordering of its priorities. I hope that the Minister of State and the Secretary of State for Wales will look again sympathetically at that matter. I was slightly disappointed by the letter that I received from the Secretary of State on this issue. I realise that, at £200,000, the cost of betterment works would fall well below the cost threshold for special projects

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and would therefore not be eligible for support through the top slice arrangements. I hope that the Welsh Office will make an exemption in this case, so that the council does not have to reorder its priorities, which would result in the people of Rhuddlan and Prestatyn losing out on their capital programme.

Now turning to the Select Committee's report, I urge the Government to introduce in the next Session of Parliament a sea defences Bill. That is what we need. As they approach general elections, I know that Governments like to look for non-contentious issues that will command support on all sides of the House so that those who are interested in a particular issue can come to the House, while those who are not can nurse their constituencies and campaign in them.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): And lose.

Mr. Raffan: I hope that the Plaid Cymru Members will help me once again, as they did in the previous two general elections, by putting up a candidate in my constituency, so ensuring my victory. But I can assure them that, if a sea defences Bill is brought before the House, I shall be regular in my attendance and would hope to be on the Standing Committee examining it clause by clause and line by line. The Government should seriously consider introducing a sea defences Bill. It should have three objectives.

First, it should consolidate in one piece of legislation the multiplicity of Acts concerning coastal protection and coastal defences. It should consolidate and rationalise the Coast Protection Act 1949, the Land Drainage Act 1976, the Water Act 1989 and nine other minor Acts which relate to sea defences. Secondly, it should designate a single authority, which our report suggests should be the National Rivers Authority, to co-ordinate and, if necessary, enforce responsibilities relating to coastal protection and flood prevention. It was quite clear during the February floods that co-ordination was not satisfactory. There is an overwhelming need for one authority to assume overall control and responsibility for our sea defences.

I am sorry that Andrew Rhodes, the former borough surveyor of Rhuddlan, has departed to the Wirral, as he is an extremely good borough surveyor and is also extremely quotable. He said in his evidence to us at Towyn:

> "The forces of nature do not recognise individual borough boundaries."

I accept that the maritime district authorities as the coastal protection authorities have the essential local knowledge and that improvements may have to be funded in part locally. I do not want to deprive them of their powers but to ensure that they use them. I am advocating not centralisation, but effective supervision.

The Select Committee considers the National Rivers Authority to be the natural co-ordinating enforcement body. The Water Act 1989 requires the NRA

> "to exercise a general supervision over all matters relating to flood defence."

The NRA has already declared its intention to exercise those powers with regard to all sea defences. It has already approached some maritime district authorities and British Rail. If it took on that role, the NRA would have a massive task and it must be adequately funded. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will take that on board.

The Coastal Engineering Research Advisory Committee reckons that there are more than 240 separate authorities in the United Kingdom responsible for coast protection, sea defences and port and harbour works. In Wales alone, there are 22 maritime district authorities or coast protection authorities with the power to serve notice on the owners of sea defences to maintain and repair sea defence works.

I see the NRA as a co-ordinating enforcement authority with the following responsibilities: first, drawing up and ensuring the implementation of national strategies; secondly, overall supervision of the Operation Neptune warning system; thirdly, co-ordination and dissemination of coastal engineering research; fourthly, laying down standards of design for sea defences, as CERAC says, to

> "minimise the adverse effects so evident today as a result of the hotch-potch of design and protection methods along the coast."

Fifthly, the NRA should ensure that coastal protection authority inspections of sea defences are carried out regularly and effectively.

During the evidence session at Towyn, I asked British Rail how regularly its sea defences were monitored by the CPAs and whether monitoring varied from one CPA to another, British Rail responded that it was not aware of monitoring. When I asked whether British Rail regularly met individual coastal protection authorities, the representative of British Rail responded, "Not to my understanding." That is totally unsatisfactory. There must be regular and effective liaison between CPAs and British Rail and other owners of sea defences, and that must be enforced by the NRA as the co-ordinating and enforcement body. Finally, the NRA should have the authority to ensure that CPAs used their powers where necessary to direct the owners of sea defences to upgrade and repair them.

Let me summarise the second important point, that one authority must assume overall control and responsibility for our sea defences. The current Welsh Office approach is far too laid back. It is not enough for the Welsh Office to say:

> "There is nothing in the present arrangements to prevent local interests grouping together to ensure that the wider interests of their coast are taken into account".

That is too lackadaisical.

Dr. Thomas: I support the hon. Gentleman and suggest that he might like to ask the Minister of State a direct question about the Government's likely response to the NRA survey. It is one thing to talk about the NRA survey, but, as the hon. Gentleman has said so eloquently, those of us who have visited Towyn are aware of the residual fears about the future. We must be assured that the survey on sea defences will result in action and funding to ensure that all areas that might be susceptible to the inundation that occurred at Towyn will be defended.

Mr. Raffan: My hon. Friend the Minister of State will have heard the hon. Gentleman, and I am sure that he will respond to that point.

I reiterate that the present arrangements are far too informal. The informal gatherings of officers and agencies on a coastal cell basis are quite inadequate. We understand from their evidence to us at Towyn that they meet informally only twice a year. Co-ordination must be

formalised, and we look to the Welsh Office to do that now. There should be no more delay. If there are further storms and inundations of our sea defences and ineffective co-ordination, we shall hold the Welsh Office responsible. It must act promptly and effectively.

I know that it is rather late in the session to start talking about a new Bill in the next one, but if the Government do not introduce a sea defences Bill, we expect them to act by order and to provide guidance circulars through the Welsh Office.

The third part of a sea defences Bill should involve a revision of the grant system. Currently, grant aid is available for capital work, but not for maintenance renewal and replenishment works. The system now in operation militates in favour of hard defences, which require little maintenance or renewal, and against the extension of soft defences, which require constant maintenance and renewal. For example, when the sea has washed shingle and sand to one end of the beach, lorries have to be brought in to truck that sand and shingle back to the other end of the beach, but that is not eligible for grant aid.

To a large extent, hard defences have been discredited. In Prestatyn in my constituency, millions of pounds were spent in the 1930s and 1940s on replacing sand dunes, nature's defences, with hard concrete walls. Unlike the dunes, the hard defences reflect waves; they do not absorb them. As a result, the beach level dropped dramatically and the waves took the beach away with them and undermined the walls. Now, in the 1980s and 1990s, millions of pounds are being spent on replacing the hard defences with soft defences. It would have been better had we never tampered with nature. Those soft defences will absorb waves rather than reflect them, so we hope that the beach levels will rise and be restored.

The Chairman of the Select Committee opened the evidence session at Towyn with a Chinese proverb, and if he will allow me, I shall quote it today:

> "Nothing under heaven is softer or more yielding than water, but when it attacks things hard and resistant not one of them can prevail."

We cannot master nature and we cannot master the sea with concrete and stone. We can defeat it only by emulating nature and mirroring the effect of sand dunes.

Britain has been much slower than other maritime countries to construct soft defences and to employ nature's methods to keep the sea at bay. The Dutch regularly create sand dunes 200 m deep in front of clay-earth embankments. We must change our financing rules so as not to discourage soft defences. That would also—this will appeal to the Treasury Bench—make the Government's money go further.

The cost of sea defences is considerable. In capital terms, hard defences are much more expensive than soft defences. Prestatyn has spent £4·5 million and will spend a further £5·6 million in the next three years on soft defences; restoring existing hard defences would have cost infinitely more. The inquiry was told that British Rail will spend £6 million on replacing sea walls at Mostyn and Towyn.

The cost of sea defences will rise quite dramatically in forthcoming years and the Government must allow for that. The initial capital outlay on soft defences will be less than for hard defences, and I believe that it is a far better investment to protect our coastline.

My constituency was not so severely affected as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West. I worked out that 2,800 properties were flooded to some extent in and around Towyn, and a further 98 in Rhyl. A total of about 80 properties were affected in Ffynnongroyw, Prestatyn and Bagillt in my constituency.

It is not however, a question of the quantity of properties that were invaded by the sea, because the human suffering to each family, and the scale of it, is the same. I visited Ffynnongroyw, Bagillt and Prestatyn in the immediate aftermath of the floods and could see the damage that the sea had wreaked, not just to property but to people's morale and mental state. There is a responsibility on people to ensure that their properties and their contents are insured, but equally there is a responsibility on Government and their agencies to ensure that these events are not repeated.

We look to the Welsh Office for a positive and prompt response to the report. We do not want weeks and months to pass. The Select Committee worked very hard to publish the report today, and we want a response from the Government quickly and promptly—not after the summer recess but before it. I accept that the Minister of State will have had little time to read the report before today's debate, but I hope that he will press on our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who has shown his deep concern and caring, which is shared in all parts of the House, the fact that we look to him, if at all possible, for a statement before the House rises for the summer recess so that we can further cross-examine the Government on the positive, constructive measures that they propose in response to this very good report that the Chairman of the Select Committee and its other members have produced.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I intend to comment on the report that was published today, but I do not think that my hon. Friend will necessarily regard that as a definitive Government response; he will have to wait at least some days for that.

Mr. Raffan: My hon. Friend took the words out of my mouth. In my usual generous way, I said that we do not expect a definitive response today, but it is not too much for us to ask at least for a partial statement on the Government's proposals before the House rises for the summer recess.

I know that the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West are concerned. My constituents in Ffynnongroyw are concerned and are holding a further meeting next week because of unfounded rumours that British Rail are not to carry out work to replace the sea wall at Ffynnongroyw by September. Their concern is evident and we look to Ministers to respond directly.

I join other hon. Members in paying tribute to all those involved in ensuring that this disaster did not become a tragedy with loss of life. All the emergency services—the ambulance, fire and police services—deserve our thanks and gratitude for all that they did.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West in paying tribute to the hon. Member for Gower, who has done a service not just to the House and to its reputation in this constructive debate but to our constituents by allowing the Select Committee to proceed with the suggestion that my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West and I made for an inquiry into sea

[Mr. Raffan]

defences in North Wales to be carried out promptly, efficiently and effectively. That was, as he quite rightly said, made possible by the eminent specialist adviser whom we were able to engage to help us—Professor O'Connor —and by the Clerk and his assistants, David Harrison and Frank McShane. It has been an example of Parliament and the House at its best. I only wish the work of the Select Committee and its Chairman were emulated more frequently by fellow hon. Members.

5.24 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I congratulate the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) on an objective speech and the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), whose constituents suffered much as a result of what happened last February at Towyn.

The Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell), gave a tremendous account of the Committee's work. The Committee was fortunate to have a geographer as its Chairman, because he was able to deal with many of the relevant points.

Events at Towyn on 26 February were not easy to predict. They were caused by environmental changes such as global warming and changes in weather patterns, particularly those related to the greenhouse effect. We cannot predict exactly what will happen in the future, but the events of 26 February took many by surprise. We all remember the gales, which, alarmingly, occurred almost every week last February, in Wales and the rest of Britain. They blew down trees around my house that had been standing for many years.

It is easy, with hindsight, to be critical about measures that should have been taken at that time but were not. Although such events cannot be prevented, their effects can at least be alleviated by proper use of the emergency procedures.

The reason for the debate is the flooding of land, much of which was below sea level, in Towyn, Kinmel Bay, Rhyl and Ffynnongroyw on 26 February 1990. The devastation that occurred made a deep impression on me. I paid two visits to the area, and on my first visit in March I saw people who had been made homeless and pathetic skips of ruined possessions piled high in their backyards. Eight hundred people are still not back in their own homes, some of which were gutted to the brickwork, with floors removed as a result of damage to woodwork. It was a pathetic sight indeed.

The fact that many of those people were not properly insured—it is estimated that 40 per cent. were not insured for personal possessions—is a commentary on the fact that they were pensioners who had little capital and could not insure adequately. That is covered in the report.

The state of readiness of the emergency services is rightly addressed by the report. We need to remind ourselves that it was not only individuals and their properties that were affected. I came across one business that had lost £1 million-worth of assets in the flooding, which has had a serious effect on small businesses in the area, as well as on farms and farmland. The state of readiness could have been better. I am puzzled that references have been made time and again to the fact that this was a one-in-200-years occurrence. However, when we look at the detail, we find that there were storms and flooding in 1975, again in 1983 and finally, the catastrophic floods in 1990. That suggests that there is a seven-year cycle. Weather changes and environmental changes must be having an effect.

The role of the local authorities, of the National Rivers Authority, of the police and of other emergency services, such as the fire and ambulance services, should be tremendously praised. We may be critical about what happened, but there is no doubt that the fact that not one person lost his life at the time is a great credit to the emergency services. Sadly, as a result of trauma and shock, some infirm people passed away later.

Clearly, the emergency procedures broke down in this case. The Chairman of the Select Committee has put his finger on some of the issues that need to be examined. I noted in the report—indeed, there was evidence of this —that at some point in the middle of the night, a fax machine in one of the police headquarters broke down. If that was the only line of communication, communications were inadequate. There should have been a double-check, fail-safe system in which there were dual warnings. The fact remains that it took six hours and 23 minutes for the information to get through to Colwyn borough council. As we know, matters that should have been dealt with were not dealt with at that time. In mitigation, we must say that these circumstances were exceptional and had not been experienced before. We can learn from them.

The delays that occurred were dual. They occurred first, in the chain of command of the Neptune system and secondly through the Meteorological Office, the NRA, the police and in the local authorities themselves. Both aspects need to be put right.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. It is vital to emphasise that the North Wales police fax machine—to which he referred —which broke down should have relayed a message to the Delyn borough council area. It was not the same message that was being relayed to the Colwyn borough council area, which was received at 8.53 am on 26 February.

Mr. Livsey: I accept, as the Chairman has said, that there may be a different system. That points to the need for consistency in communications.

Can such a disaster happen again? That is the great fear of everyone in the area. The fact that high tides are due in October was on the lips of almost everyone whom I met in the area.

This was a major disaster, but because people did not lose their lives, it has not been sufficiently acknowledged as such. The morale of the people is poor as a result of the past six months' delay in putting their houses right— much, but not all, of which is understandable. It is strange that the Prime Minister has not visited the victims of the disaster. I do not know the reasons for that as she has visited most other disaster organisations. Not long ago, I was handed a card that said, "Please do not visit me, Prime Minister, if I am involved in a disaster." I do not necessarily accept that, but it seems strange that she did not visit the site and the people involved.

I am glad that British Rail has decided to spend £6 million on the repair to the sea wall. That is a good response and needs to be acknowledged.

It is especially important to note that the report stresses that there should be only one co-ordinating body. The

report is right in its conclusion that the NRA should be that body. That single authority must have a clear duty to inform everyone in the emergency services that trouble is on the way. The only problem is that the NRA has only about £6 million a year for sea defences throughout the United Kingdom. That is an inadequate sum in view of the damage on this one occasion.

Another important point in the report is the softer defences, which have been mentioned by several hon. Members. We need defences that run in with the environment and that will absorb the impact of the sea, which, as all hon. Members know, is a powerful force. The sting needs to be taken out the sea and hard defences are not necessarily the best devices for that.

The maintenance grants recommended in the report are especially important. The problem is that vast sums are needed for maintenance. What will the Minister do about prioritising that money? What are the priority points in Wales where money should first be spent? Where are the problems greatest?

If strategic plans allow houses to be built below sea level, planning must be carefully monitored. I spoke to the daughter of a former councillor in the Colwyn area. Her father had been a councillor in the 1950s and 1960s. She told me that at that time, planning permission was solidly refused in the area where houses have now been built. It is because of the overturn of a Welsh Office appeal that some of those houses have been allowed to be built. On visiting Towyn, I was also told that it was strange that it had taken until the middle of the 20th century for houses to be built in that area when the medieval Welsh had not built on those low-level sites. There are lessons to be learned there. The report contains the seeds of reform that will put people who are vulnerable to sea flooding in a far better position.

The cost of the disaster has had an impact on local authorities. The Government have assisted local authorities by upping the Bellwin formula from 75 per cent. to 85 per cent. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), the leader of my party, received a letter from the Prime Minister. My right hon. Friend visited the site about three weeks ago and saw the position for himself. He wrote to the Prime Minister on his return and she replied:

"On current estimates 'Bellwin' is expected to produce a Government contribution to the costs incurred by local authorities of almost £1½m".

Towards the end of the letter, the Prime Minister said:

"In total it is expected that the Government contribution to the cost of alleviating the problems caused by the flooding will be in the order of £4m and could well exceed that figure."

My information, from discussions with the local authorities up there, and especially with Colwyn district council, is that the total cost might be £6 million. It looks as though there will be a shortfall of about £2 million in the costs incurred. It is implicit that local authorities will have to find 15 per cent. of the funding, given the 85 per cent. revised Bellwin formula. A lot of money is at stake for the local authorities, and it might result in increased poll tax charges——

Sir Wyn Roberts: May I correct the hon. Gentleman by assuring him that the amount that will be met under the Bellwin formula is 95 per cent.?

Mr. Livsey: I am pleased to hear that. I acknowledge that information.

Finally, despite what the Minister has just said, there is a considerable shortfall of funding in many senses. I hope that the Welsh Office will take it upon itself completely to make good any shortfall that the maritime local authorities in north Wales might face. They should not have to pick up the bill for these exceptional circumstances. I commend to the House the report of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. I urge the Government to accept it rapidly and to act on it quickly.

5.40 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Although the debate has been billed and trailed as concerned primarily with Wales, and especially with north Wales—that is quite right and proper—the documents on which it is based include the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food estimates on coastal protection, which cover England. I am grateful for this opportunity to participate in the debate and wish first to express sympathy to the residents of Towyn from fellow sufferers from flooding and sea damage in Cornwall. We were all moved by their dreadful experiences during that storm.

It is sad that it requires a tragedy on that scale—one can think back 37 years to the tragedy that occurred in East Anglia—to remind us that the sea is always capable of causing damage, and to focus the attention of all of us on what needs to be done in such circumstances. I emphasise "all of us" because, like other hon. Members, I wish to refer later to the multiplicity of agencies and services, from the Government downwards, that are involved in coping with that problem when it occurs and—perhaps more importantly—in trying to prevent it.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) was absolutely right to point out that the rest of the country can learn from what happened in north Wales. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) referred to the dangers of global warming. Frankly, I do not know whether global warming will present a serious problem. I suspect that it will, but I do not know, and, if we are honest, not one of us can say that we know. However, what I do know is that, at this very moment, cliffs are being eroded in my own constituency. Only last Friday, I visited a lady who had lost 12 ft of her front garden into the sea. She is desperately worried that, before too long, perhaps over a period of years—she does not know, I do not know, nobody knows—her bungalow could end up in the sea. That is the awfulness of this situation.

Although the winter storms are now over, the fear that they caused remains. It remains for the lady I visited. Whenever the wind gets up and the sea rises, especially if the wind is blowing in a particular direction and there is a spring tide, she will be worried stiff. Exactly the same goes for people who happen to live near the sea in north Wales, East Anglia or elsewhere in Cornwall, part of which I represent. My constituency juts out into the Atlantic. There is sea on both sides. It takes the brunt of all the bad weather coming in from the Atlantic. So many parts of it are at risk right now.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that the House, the Government and all the agencies involved should turn their attention to this problem. I am glad that they are doing so. Since the storm last winter, I have been involved in talks with a number of agencies. Only last Friday, Baroness Trumpington, the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in another place, visited my constituency and saw things there for herself. She

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could not believe what she saw or the damage that had been caused by the sea towering up to swamp houses. She visited Porthleven, pictures of which went around the world just before Christmas, showing the immense seas. I was there on the Sunday, and had never seen such seas before in my life. As I have said, people like the villagers and townspeople of Porthleven always feel that fear when the wind blows and the sea rises. That is the problem we face.

My part-time hobby is walking the coastal path in my constituency. At place after place, I have seen areas of cliff —and communities—exposed. The village at Coverack was in danger of being cut in two. Thank goodness, steps have been taken in recent months to avoid that happening. All around the Lizard, areas are exposed. I have already mentioned Porthleven which took the brunt of the pre-Christmas storms. Again, at Praa Sands, whole areas have been undermined by the sea. It is the same story at Marazion, and Newlyn is also at risk. Floods poured in just before Christmas. At Mousehole, the harbour defences were badly battered and part of the car park disappeared. Around the other coast at Sennen, a road could now well be in danger. A whole area is exposed and would have suffered serious problems if the tide had been in a different direction.

The scale of the problem is enormous. I have spoken only about my constituency, which is perhaps dramatically affected, but other constituencies in Cornwall face similar problems. As we have heard, parts of Wales, East Anglia and other areas of our coast line are at risk.

What can be done about it? I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). I shall not embarrass my boss, the Leader of the House and Lord President of the Council, by saying that I think a sea defences Bill should be introduced in the next Session. As his parliamentary private secretary, it would not be for me to suggest such timing. However, I believe that the introduction of legislation to bring together all the miscellaneous bits of legislation is long overdue. We also need to try to clear up the hotch-potch of agencies and organisations involved in this matter. Perhaps we cannot do so entirely, but I echo what has already been said, that the National Rivers Authority is the right organisation to take the lead in this matter.

At the moment, district councils have the prime responsibility for promoting coast protection schemes. I wonder how long that will continue, given the pressure on district councils, especially those that are hard-pressed because of the extent of the problem to which I have referred. The Government must reconsider the organisation and financing of coastal protection.

Financing such protection is complex and complicated. I attended a seminar for councillors on this subject by the NRA and MAFF. One had to listen with great care to try to understand all the different layers of grants that might apply in different circumstances. As far as possible, we should simplify this whole procedure—the organisation, legislation and finance. It will not be easy, but I urge the Government to take an urgent look at the matter.

I am delighted that our former colleague in the House, Lord Crickhowell, the chairman of the NRA, has taken a lead on this issue. Speaking in Exeter in March this year, following the winter storms, he announced the start of a major NRA survey of the sea defences around the coastline of England and Wales.

That is a good start, but we must go further. In Cornwall, the NRA has taken a lead—I pay the authority tribute for its efforts—by calling the councils together. As a result of a meeting at county hall a few weeks ago, an advisory or co-ordinating committee will be established to bring the various organisations together. But we must go even further and introduce the type of legislation to which reference has been made.

We had an excellent debate late at night last March initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) on the whole question of coastal defences. In concluding his remarks, he pressed on the Government the acronym "CRAC" which, he said, stood for co-ordination, research, action and cash. I echo those sentiments.

I applaud those who have taken part in today's debate for their constructive remarks. I pay tribute to the work of the Select Committee. Like other hon. Members, I urge the Government—I am sure that they are seized of the importance of the matter—to implement CRAC and to crack on with it.

5.51 pm

Mr Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I represent an island constituency that has 125 miles of coastline. My constituents are well aware of the dangers and power of the sea. Hon. Members in all parts of the House will be aware that many in my constituency have suffered as a result of the power of the sea over the generations, and they will sympathise with the plight of the people of Towyn and Abergele following the storms last February. Indeed, one of my forebears was drowned at sea. That family tragedy came back to me forcibly when I visited the area with the Welsh Select Committee in May.

The memory of that visit will stay with me for ever. I was struck by the desperate plight of the people, for it is a human tragedy when people are inundated with water, must leave their homes, and for weeks, perhaps months, are unable to return to them. Ask our constituents on a scale of values what they value most, and I imagine that they will say first their homes and communities. Those homes and communities were destroyed in the floods at Towyn, where I saw the tragedy on a vast scale.

Another abiding memory is the desolation I saw at Towyn, with vast areas of land without any growth whatever. We saw a few tufts of grass, but for the most part the land was bare and totally desolate. We visited many streets of empty properties. I am talking of properties that were stripped of everything. They were no longer homes, just buildings with bricks stripped bare. There were no floorboards—nothing—just twisted pipes and desolation.

We spoke to people who were suffering tremendous psychological problems as a result of the disaster. We spoke to counsellors who had expertise in providing assistance to people suffering that form of distress. I was impressed with the quality of the advice they gave under such difficult conditions. They had been trained in stress counselling, but I was disappointed that many of them had had to qualify as stress counsellors at their own expense.

No resources were available publicly to train stress counsellors in areas such as Towyn. We must look into that situation.

During our visit I took the opportunity to walk about with a local councillor. I spoke to a number of people in their homes and they graphically described the events of the storm. I asked, "When did you first realise that the water was about to engulf you?" They replied, "We first saw it coming over the garden wall. Within six seconds we were up to our waists in water. Seconds later we saw our fridges, washing machines and tables and chairs floating by our heads. We were washed out of our homes. We had no opportunity to collect our belongings or even our thoughts." That was a graphic description of the power of the sea, and it left a deep impression on every member of the Select Committee who visited Towyn.

I could not believe that there was not some system to warn them about the effect of the sea—that technology had not advanced to the stage when people could be warned that they would be inundated with water—and that is why I followed a certain line of questioning of officials of Colwyn borough council and other local authority officials at the community centre in Towyn. I felt that it was our duty as a Select Committee to find out why the people were not warned.

I recall walking in Towyn along the wall that had been repaired by British Rail. I asked one of the locals, "Describe what happened when that wall breached." He replied, "I looked from my window, and it was almost as though somebody was drawing a curtain open when the wall collapsed, it happened so quickly."

The people of Towyn – the residents and local authority officials – did not realise that a disaster was occurring until the water had come over the wall. When we asked the officials, "When did you realise that you had a disaster on your hands?" their answer was, "When we saw the water coming over the wall."

It is not for us to apportion blame to individual council officials, but it is our duty to ascertain the facts. Having ascertained them, without apportioning blame, we must do our best to rectify an unsatisfactory situation. That is why we say in our report that there must be a better system of providing, and communicating, information to ensure that such a tragedy does not recur. In other words, if there is a similar occurrence, as might be the case late at night, it must be possible to move people from the area in time to avoid loss of life.

If the Welsh Select Committee has been able to achieve anything, it has examined the situation in such a way that it can tell the Welsh Office and other responsible authorities, "Should such flooding happen again, we are now in a position to make recommendations to ensure that proper information is made available quickly so that people can be moved from their homes before the water engulfs them." If we do that, we shall have done our duty in part.

When we took evidence, I also questioned British Rail officials on how they could respond to the need for repair work on the wall. I was glad that the Committee was given an assurance that British Rail intended to spend £6 million to restore the wall, improve it and ensure that we have proper sea defences in the area. Like the hon. Member for Delyn I hope that the Welsh Office will also respond. We cannot leave the entire responsibility for repair work on the sea defences to British Rail, which is a public utility. We have a wider duty as Members of Parliament. We must tell the Welsh Office that it must make public money available to British Rail to assist it in that work. British Rail told us that it was prepared to spend £6 million. We ask the Government to match that commitment.

Two further small points are important to the debate. The first is planning and land use in the area. Is it right for us immediately to consider a moratorium on further development in the area? If the recommendations of the Select Committee are accepted, it will mean de facto that there will be no further development. If local searches disclose that the area is susceptible to flooding, prospective purchasers will be put on warning. However, I do not believe that that should happen. There should be a moratorium on further planning consents until there has been an adequate response to the problem of sea defence.

We saw the desolation of the land around Towyn. That means that the agricultural community also suffered from the flooding. The Government should make a commitment to make funds available to compensate farmers who suffered badly in such disasters, whether at Towyn, Abergele, Kinmel bay or any other part of Wales.

I congratulate the Chair of the Committee on the way in which he organised us during our visit to Towyn and conducted the work of the Committee. I also congratulate him on the speed with which the report was made available to us. The officials of the Committee are also to be complimented. We await the response of the Welsh Office, which we hope and believe will be equally quick.

6.3 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I welcome any money in the estimates for coast protection and sea defences. In the light of the debate on global warming and rising sea levels, one could always argue that the sums are not enough. However, today's debate shows the taxpayer's commitment to sea defences. That is important. It also shows that the Government recognise that sea defences are a national, not a local issue. For that reason I am delighted to see sea defences mentioned on the Order Paper today.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), I took the precaution of clarifying with Mr. Speaker before the debate that we could stretch your well-known tolerance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by widening the debate to areas beyond the Welsh coast.

I raised sea defence coast protection on the motion for the Easter Adjournment. In that debate I spoke after my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and expressed my sympathy for the plight of his constituents, adding the rider that it was only by the grace of God and the direction of the wind that we on the east coast were spared a similar fate. Little has changed since then, other than the fact that next winter is a few months closer.

I wish to raise several points which are not new but as we are that much closer to winter, perhaps they need to be made as forcefully as possible over and over again. We have gone over much of the old ground today, but one newish issue is the importance that we attach to the environmental debate when considering sea defences and how much weight it should carry in the balance of spending.

In reply to a parliamentary question that I tabled yesterday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), told me:

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"In deciding whether or not to give such consent our policy is to require a proposal to be technically sound, most effective and environmentally sympathetic and we have no plans to change that policy."

That is fair enough. It appears that the Government give equal weight to all three elements. My hon. Friend continued:

"We are not aware of any case in which a coast protection authority has decided not to seek our approval for works because environmental considerations were judged to override protection of homes. No proposal submitted to us has been denied our consent solely by reason of environmental considerations".

Will my hon. Friend the Minister of State issue a circular to all local authorities clarifying that?

The last point leads directly to my next, which is about a cluster of homes on the sand cliffs at Easton Baveants near Southwold, where a strengthening scheme is planned. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food cannot give a verdict until all the statutory procedures are met. Ministers have assured me that it will be processed rapidly but that environmental and statutory objections must be taken into account. Suffolk county council, wearing its Suffolk heritage coast hat, will be raising objections. Again, a balance must be struck between environmentally gentle decay of the sand cliff and a scheme to save the houses in the immediate term and in the long run perhaps half Southwold, half Reydon, marshes, farmland and houses. It is not unreasonable to suggest that if those or any other houses are to be allowed to drop into the sea, compensation should be paid to the people caught in that balance and caught in the machine.

The Coast Protection Act 1949 makes no provision for compensation and the Government have no plans to amend the Act to introduce such compensation. I plead that they should urgently reconsider their position. Compensation could be cheaper than sea defence schemes and it could certainly allow the natural erosion line much more scope.

It is too much to expect one council, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with its wide brief, or any individual to determine the relative value of houses, land and the environment. No one person can evaluate whether sand and gravel, for example dredged from Sizewell B, should be piled on the beach to strengthen it or whether artificial reefs should be created off shore to soft-engineer a changing coast line. No one person can evaluate replacing hard engineering walls and groynes. No one person can do that, and nor can the more than 200 separate authorities to which my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) and other hon. Members have referred. Each authority has some measure of responsibility for coast protection. It can make only an ad hoc, piecemeal attempt. Surely one lesson from Towyn, from the 1953 floods in East Anglia and from any other erosion is that if we meddle with one part of the coast and strengthen one area, we weaken and make more vulnerable another. Everything that we do has an impact.

It is a pity that it has taken the tragedy of Towyn to give us the Select Committee report, which has put one body on the agenda. For that reason, I welcome the report. The National Rivers Authority is the obvious body. Why on earth is it not beefed up now, without further delay? We should ask it to undertake a nationwide review of responsibility for the coast. Of course, we should allow and, indeed, welcome any input from local authorities and experts, but let us have one buck, one body, one stop. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn, who suggested that there should be a Bill on the matter, but we could do a great deal straight away simply by giving the NRA the necessary authority. Let us do so now before East Anglia is swamped.

6.9 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I agree with the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) about the responsibilities of the National Rivers Authority. If it is to be given more responsibility, we must, for goodness' sake, ensure that it has the resources necessary to undertake it. It would be invidious to put extra responsibilities on the NRA without providing it with the adequate resources. I sympathise with the people of East Anglia and appreciate their fears, but the Welsh office must ensure that there is direct Welsh Office funding of the NRA's activities in Wales otherwise there is a danger that all the money will, understandably, be attracted to East Anglia.

I thank the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs for the work it has done. I am not a member of that Committee, although I enjoyed being one in the past. It held a session in Wales when it took evidence, which was a great success. When a local problem occurs, a public session in that area, which takes evidence, goes down well with the people. They feel that the needs of the area are being properly taken into account and that Parliament is working more directly for them.

I regret that this debate is taking place within a few hours of the publication of the report because, unlike other hon. Members, I have not had an opportunity to study it. That has put me in a difficult position, but no doubt the Minister and his hon. Friends are in the same one. None the less, I am delighted that it is possible to have prompt debates in the House on Select Committee reports. I agree with the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) that Welsh Grand Committee sessions should be used to debate such reports—that would be much more useful than some of the stereotype debates presently held.

I extend my sympathy to the people of Towyn who have suffered so much—what happened was a tragedy. I live a few miles along the coast from Towyn and, having driven backwards and forwards along that coast, I have seen the problems for myself. We have all heard devastating stories, some of which my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) quoted effectively. The tragedy has hit everyone. I only wish that the response from private citizens had been better to the appeal that was launched. I am glad that the Government came forward when they did with the cash.

The tragedy has affected everyone, including young people. A crowd of young teenagers in my constituency organised a rock concert—I have been told that I am supposed to refer to it as a "gig"—to raise money for the sufferers in Towyn. I am delighted that in one night that concert raised £550 and that my daughter Eluned and my son Hywel participated, along with dozens of others. Some 400 youngsters went to the concert, which was supported by everyone in the locality. That demonstrates the feeling in the area towards those who have suffered in Towyn. I also join other hon. Members in paying tribute to the

emergency workers for the part they played. I have heard nothing but glowing praise from all directions for their work.

Obviously, this debate concentrates on Towyn because of the report just published and the experiences in February. There are, however, many other areas that suffered floods in the winter which are in danger of suffering from further floods if we are witnessing long-term changes in our climatic pattern. East Anglia is one such area under threat, but the coastline of my constituency covers some 100 miles, and hon. Members will appreciate that there are many vulnerable spots along it. Houses and communities risk being flooded, but there is the even greater danger of the loss, sometimes permanent, of valuable agricultural land.

The floods of Towyn have highlighted the need for preventive work. I am not convinced that we have anything like the resource commitment necessary to undertake that work. Under the Bellwin formula, a large proportion of the costs of such disasters are met by central Government. Such money is welcome in the area in which it can be applied, but it is worth noting that the terms of the Bellwin scheme are designed to

"provide special financial assistance to local authorities who, as a consequence of an emergency, would otherwise have an undue financial burden in providing relief and carrying out immediate works to safeguard life and property or prevent suffering or severe inconvenience to affected communities."

The Bellwin formula applies to immediate work only and the money given is consequent on a tragedy—in other words, that money is not available for preventive work. We need the resources for such work.

One of the two district councils in my area, the Dwyfor district council, has approached the Welsh Office because of flooding in Nefyn and Morfa Bychan. It needs permission from the Welsh Office to undertake additional capital expenditure to prevent future flooding. I know that there are many other areas along the coast of Wales that have similar problems.

Two areas close to my home, Dinas Dinlle and Llandwrog, have experienced severe flooding of which the Minister will be aware. It has been estimated that the work necessary to put things right in Dinas Dinlle would cost £1 million, but that money is not available. Does responsibility for that work rest with Arfon borough council or the NRA? I understand that the NRA can fund up to 75 per cent. of such work, but we must ensure that it has the resources for such work. I know that in Clwyd the NRA has had almost all its money wiped out because of the action it took during the Towyn floods—it was involved from the early stages and helped to put down sandbags and the like. The NRA should receive central funding. At present, much of its work is locally funded, but we must reconsider its funding, especially if it is to meet the responsibilities placed on it.

It is also important to consider the way in which cost-benefit analysis is used to determine whether capital work should be undertaken. Although such analysis is perfectly acceptable, a wider definition of the benefits of such work should be given rather than short-term, quantifiable ones. In Dinas Dinlle, the loss of land through flooding will have a major effect on tourism and amenities as well as on agriculture. The way in which the cost-benefit analysis is drawn up does not, however, adequately allow for such elements to be taken into consideration.

Close to the village of Llandwrog, four farms—Bodfan, Caer Loda, Ty Mawr and Maes Mawr—have been badly affected by floods. About 150 acres of agricultural land have been badly damaged because of sea breaking through the coast defences. The cost-benefit analysis undertaken showed that work to put matters right—building 1·8 km of new embankment to safeguard that land—would cost £440,000. The benefit of such work was quantified at £106,000.

I find it difficult to accept that such a cost-benefit analysis can be applied properly. Those four farms lost important parts of their land from the ravages of the sea. A lot of low land along the Welsh coast could be equally vulnerable, but a cost-benefit analysis in each case would yield the same result. Investment would therefore not be made, and the pattern of Welsh farming would be disrupted. In Wales, we follow the old Hafod and Hendre pattern of farming, whereby the sheep are brought down from the mountains to graze on the lowlands in the winter. If those lands have lost their nutritional value, the sheep cannot be kept there, and the entire balance of Welsh agriculture will be thrown out.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to a crucial difficulty, as the cost-benefit analysis creates a catch-22 problem. The Welsh Office has recently issued new strategic planning guidelines and, if one permits further developments along the coastal belt, greater sea defence strengthening can take place, when judged on a formula similar to the Waverley committee recommendations. If there is a moratorium on further developments along the coastal belt, the sea defences permitted under the cost-benefit formula will be far smaller and less expensive than the defences required if those further developments are permitted along the coast.

Mr. Wigley: Yes, that is a great irony. It is catch-22. That is apposite to the case of Dinas Dinlle. Some of the sites there that might otherwise have been developed should now at least have the benefit of a moratorium because of the danger of allowing development in areas that are vulnerable to the sea. As the hon. Gentleman said, the only way of upping cost benefit may be by granting some planning permissions and that is a silly situation to be in. I realise that the impact of such developments is fairly recent, but there does need to be some new thinking in the Welsh Office.

As the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A Meyer) said in his excellent speech, about a thousand acres of agriculture land in the vicinity of Towyn have been flooded. The Welsh Office has been willing to assist those farmers who have been affected and has given help in the form of gypsum, but it is a pity that such help cannot be extended to other areas. On 25 April, the then Secretary of State for Wales wrote to me saying that the gypsum being provided for the Towyn area should not be taken as a precedent for other agricultural areas. That is a problem, because many farms need such assistance.

The National Farmers Union has highlighted three areas for action. First, if gypsum is not effective in the Towyn area, alternatives should be investigated and followed up. Secondly, there should be a detailed review of sea defences around the Welsh coast with the financial resources to make that meaningful. Thirdly—an important point to which I draw the Minister's attention—there should be a register setting out who is responsible for each

[Mr. Wigley]

individual sea defence, and that should be made available. That is a good suggestion which would ensure that any necessary action is taken.

The Minister may be aware that Meirionnydd district council has taken the initiative and undertaken a coastal zone management study of the Cambrian coast area and it is hoping that the whole Cambrian coast will be considered. The district council says:

"The plan is to carry out the work over a three year period and to produce an inventory of existing coastal works; the definition of coastal processes and design criteria to apply across identified sections of shoreline and the recommended approach to future coastal works."

That will be an excellent study. It has the support of the Welsh Office, and I hope that it will give resources where necessary.

There are lessons to be learned from the experience of Towyn. I welcome this debate and the Select Committee's recommendations. I realise that the Minister cannot respond in detail to all of them tonight, but I support the plea by Conservative Back Benchers for a statement before we adjourn for the summer recess on the response of the Welsh Office. I am grateful to the Select Committee for its work.

6.23 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): As a Clwyd Member, my constituency has no coastline, but I have a great concern for the people affected in Towyn. As has been said, if the flooding had occurred during the night there would have been deaths and, sadly, if there had been deaths, more concern would have been expressed nationally. Thankfully, no one died, but the disaster has been brushed under the carpet and has not received the publicity that it should have done. It should have been publicised more widely. With global warming, world temperatures and sea levels will rise and we need a national co-ordinating authority if we are to tackle properly the problems that we shall face.

I heard on the radio the other day about the East Anglian floods in 1953. I was only six at the time, so I do not remember them, but I am sure that some hon. Members do. Sadly, deaths did occur then, but apparently there was a much more co-ordinated response. I am told that that disaster captured the nation's imagination. The flooding at Towyn was second only to the East Anglian flooding in terms of damage done and the number of people affected, but it does not seem to have aroused the same national concern, as it should have done.

We need to examine ways forward and to decide whether to maintain the status quo, to group together under existing legislation to form a coast protection board, to concentrate responsibility on the National Rivers Authority, or to establish a new national authority with appropriate powers to deal with sea defence and coastal protection.

Since its establishment in September 1989, the NRA seems to have had problems dealing with emergencies on the scale of that at Towyn. It has also had to deal with the Mersey pollution and the Tewkesbury flooding. Its powers appear to be somewhat limited when it comes to dealing with the sort of problems that we faced in Towyn. The NRA's staffing levels are not adequate and there needs to be more co-ordination between the various bodies, particularly in respect of the long-term planning of developments in areas such as Towyn.

The local councils have called on the Welsh Office for an investigative analysis of the conditions in Liverpool bay relating to climatic changes, the consequences of raised sea levels and the increased frequency of storms. They have requested an investigation of alternatives for improved co-ordination within existing legislation and have called on the county and district councils, with the NRA, to prepare reports on the preparation of a flood hazard map for the Clwyd coastal area.

Clwyd county council put in an enormous amount of effort, and credit should be given to it for that. Not being a member of the Select Committee, I have not read the report, but I am sure that credit will be given to the councils involved. The difference between the district council and the county council is that the district has immediate responsibility and, seemingly, some immediate financial help, whereas the county appears to have done rather more and received rather less help.

In terms of social services and community services, the county provided local advice and information centres at Kinmel bay and Towyn community centres. Contact was made with residents for the purpose of a basic assessment of need and that work was carried out largely with the support of social work staff seconded to the department from other local authorities, significantly those in Wales and the north-west of England. That work was completed by the end of March, but it was decided that further problems needed to be examined. As of 2 April 1990, therefore, a community social work team was established in Towyn to serve the needs of Pensarn, Towyn and Kinmel bay. Staff were seconded from social work teams in Clwyd and from Cheshire and Knowsley.

Social work was being carried out and initiatives were being taken to prevent problems such as family breakdown. We have heard some graphic accounts of the kind of problem that arose at the time. It is perhaps rather more difficult to arouse public interest in the horrendous long-term problem. A statement by a resident whose house was not fully insured illustrates the long-term problems faced by the county council:

"I just feel rootless. Your house is ripped apart, your contents not covered. I know that it's my fault, in fact I feel homeless even though I know I have a home. We don't feel well and healthy; it's a miserable existence. I am working as a professional and can identify my own feelings and somehow can't act on them. I feel resentment and guilt although I don't know why. I know why I feel resentment, but not why I feel guilt. For the first time in my life I feel inadequate, I feel things are out of hand. I can't cope with the children the same, my patience is not as it was, I want to blame someone. It sounds crazy but I don't think I am different to anyone else and many are worse off than us."

Such problems must be acknowledged as requiring a social response of at least medium-term duration, and there must be a recognition that they are likely to have a long-term impact on resources. There is a need for continuity in staffing, and that can be achieved by at least being able to specify a minimum period of dedication of full-time work. When a team is adequately established it will need to provide the usual range of services and will also need to assess, monitor and define the task.

In addition to the social work teams, the county council funded real community agencies and set up a community development project to help in the aftermath of the floods and to deal with the problems that I have outlined. Some

of the funding comes from an urban aid submission. Urban aid comes from a fund set up to deal with all the other problems facing Clwyd, and if there are no additional funds, the whole Clwyd area will suffer.

In the last couple of years, the county has had to deal with unforeseen emergencies. It has had an outbreak of anthrax, heather and grass fires have been caused by the drought, there was a landslip at Trevor in my constituency, and now there has been flooding on the north Wales coast. The total cost of those emergencies was estimated at £4·4 million. The county council as not seen a penny of the much vaunted Bellwin money, so the increase from 75 to 95 per cent. does not mean a thing, because 95 per cent. of nothing is still nothing. The county council threshold is £861,000, but it incurred about £450,000 of eligible expenditure and therefore receives nothing.

Perhaps the Minister will deal with the Bellwin scheme in his winding-up speech. He should consider changing not the percentage but the eligible expenditure. He could consider a lower threshold to allow aggregation of the emergency expenditure on the anthrax outbreak at Singret farm and on the other problems that I have mentioned. He could extend the deadline and allow normal wage costs and not just overtime costs. He should allow normally insurable expenditure, permit additional credit approval, and fully reimburse the cost of the police and armed forces. Such measures would genuinely reimburse the county in dealing with its problems.

Westminster city council was given £6 million for flood defences and used about £200,000 of it. The rest was used to reduce poll tax bills. However, when there were floods in Towyn, no money was given to the county council.

6.34 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): All hon. Members will agree that the debate has been valuable. Naturally, we have concentrated on the north Wales coast, but we welcomed the contributions from our English colleagues—especially my hon. Friends the Members for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and for Waveney (Mr. Porter), who clearly have problems in their constituencies. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives on securing a visit by our noble Friend the Baroness Trumpington, who I am sure put heart into many of his constituents. Both he and my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney will know that questions about floods and coastal defences in England are primarily for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Where the problems relate to revenue support grant payments, they are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I shall certainly draw to their attention what my hon. Friends the Members for St. Ives and for Waveney have said.

We all fully appreciate and understand the continuing problems still faced by many of the residents of Towyn and the surrounding area so long after the dreadful floods of February and March. As many hon. Members have said, mercifully, no lives were lost. The Government are determined to ensure that as much as possible is done to help the people who suffered and to set matters right in that area.

From the start, Welsh Office Ministers have taken a close interest in the situation. I flew to the area at the height of the disaster on Tuesday 27 February, and that in itself was a hair-raising experience. The traumatic scenes and the experiences endured by the people were unforgettable. The former Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) also visited the area. My right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State has visited Towyn again to see for himself the problems that remain to be overcome.

A primary task must be to restore confidence in the area both for residents and visitors, and to build a situation in which a repetition of those dreadful events can be avoided. We are working towards that. I hope that we can create an effective partnership with the local authorities to tackle what must be done.

I take this opportunity, as others have done, to give credit to those who have worked so hard in the area to alleviate the worst of the immediate problems. I have in mind staff at the district and county councils who worked long and hard to provide temporary accommodation for those who were evacuated, to provide counselling services and to meet many other needs of the flood victims.

I must also mention the invaluable work not only of the emergency services and the armed forces but also of the voluntary bodies which are, among others, the citizens advice bureau, the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, the girl guides and the housing associations, which were rightly praised by my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). Without them, many of the needs of the area could not have been met. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West, who has stoically borne this disaster along with his constituents, that our main concern throughout has been to ensure that, as soon as possible everyone has a permanent roof over his head, preferably in his own home.

Many residents had inadequate or no insurance cover on their homes and that placed many people in difficulty about meeting the cost of repairs. The new renovation grants scheme, which came into effect on 1 July, will be of great value in helping such people.

The new, more objective, standard of fitness for habitation that we introduced on 1 April should ensure that all properties have the basic amenities and do not suffer from major physical or structural problems that would render them unfit. That is very much the case with many homes in the Towyn area of north Wales. Mandatory grant is now available for unfit houses to be brought up to the new standard. The new minor works grant, introduced on 1 April, will be of particular help to elderly people, whose homes may need only a small amount of work. Provided that those people are in receipt of income-related benefit, they will receive assistance with the full cost of essential repairs, up to a maximum of £1,000.

We are anxious that our new grant system should target resources on those who are least able to afford to repair or improve their homes. Subject to the test of resources, those on limited means could receive assistance up to the full cost of the works with up to 100 per cent. grant. We are anxious that the new system should have maximum impact in Wales generally, and that any assistance is not frustrated by a lack of resources. Therefore, we shall ensure that additional capital resources are made available, if necessary, in this financial year.

With regard to the disaster, a report was commissioned by the Welsh Office from Hydraulics Research Ltd. to examine the design standards required for coastal

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defences, a version of which was made available to the Select Committee. The report is being published in its entirety this week.

The hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell), to whom we are all indebted as Chairman of the Select Committee, referred to that report and, obliquely, to its conclusion. The report states that, although the wave height, surge and astronomical tide levels were each high, they were not exceptional in their own right. The damage was due to a freak combination of all three factors at the same time.

The calculations and conclusions have been drawn together to give recommended values of water level and offshore wave conditions for use in the design of coastal defences on the north Wales coast. The results of the study are already in use by Hydraulics Research Ltd., which is undertaking testing on behalf of British Rail of the proposed upgraded sea defences for Towyn.

Extensive reference has been made to the Select Committee's report that was published only today. As I implied earlier, the Government will need time to consider the report's recommendations and will need to consider the comments of other organisations, such as local authorities and the National Rivers Authority, to which recommendations are also addressed. Therefore, I cannot give a definitive response to the recommendations—the Government's full response must come later—but I can make some comments.

Two of the Committee's recommendations—paragraph 28 on evacuation procedures and paragraph 61 on advice on insurance—are primarily for local authorities to consider, and we must await their views. The recommendation in paragraph 24—on the provision of a tidal gauge in north Wales—is already under active consideration, as my Department stated in paragraph 15 of its second memorandum of evidence. I am sure that those involved will take note of the Committee's views.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) asked me about the estimate of costs. The estimated cost of selecting a suitable site, and designing and installing a tide gauge, would be about £40,000 to £45,000.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the Minister of State give an absolute commitment that such a gauge will be installed?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have said that it is under active consideration. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would wish me to go further than that, and I cannot possibly do so.

Mr. Jones *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The recommendation in paragraph 39 about provision of design standards will need careful consideration. As the Committee was told in paragraphs 10 and 11 of my Department's second memorandum, advice is already disseminated to those with responsibility for sea defence works. We shall need to consider whether any changes in the present arrangements are necessary or practicable. The recommendation in paragraph 42 that certain maintenance work be eligible for grant is also under consideration by my Department, as paragraph 20 of our second memorandum of evidence stated. I assure the House that we shall take careful note of the Committee's views in coming to a decision.

The recommendation in paragraph 59, which has arisen during this debate, relates to planning advice. The issue of where new development is permitted in the aftermath of the floods is one which, in the first instance, the local planning authorities must address. Advice to planning authorities on liaison with those authorities responsible for land drainage is contained in Welsh Office circular 15/82, which asks planning authorities to bear in mind the vulnerability of any development in an area that is protected from the danger of flooding, should that protection be breached. In the light of the floods in north Wales and elsewhere, we are, as the Committee knows, considering whether it is desirable to re-issue the advice in the circular. We shall take the Committee's recommendation into account.

An alteration, reviewing the Clwyd structure plan, was submitted to the Welsh Office earlier this year. In considering that alteration for approval, officials will consider, with council officers, the need for any modifications to the submitted plan and will also discuss the issue of an early review.

Mr. Raffan: While I appreciate that my hon. Friend cannot possibly give a definitive Welsh Office response to the Select Committee report today, will he say when he expects the Welsh Office to be able to do so? Other Select Committee members present in the Chamber will agree that we have had unfortunate experiences with Government responses in the past. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) nodding in agreement with that. There have been far too long delays, and we need a full response promptly.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I appreciate the urgency of the response, but I have already said that there are other organisations involved with which we must consult. We shall produce our response as soon as possible, but I am sure that the House will agree that hon. Members require a proper response from the Government. That is why today, within hours of the document's publication, I can give only limited responses.

The issue of a moratorium on development in the district is primarily a matter for the local planning authority.

Mr. Barry Jones: As the Minister of State knows that hon. Members from both sides are asking for speedy decisions from him and the Government, would he like to debate the report at greater length in the Welsh Grand Committee before the House rises?

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have already had a fairly extensive debate on the report today. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion is a matter for further consideration, possibly through the usual channels. Obviously, that idea has just occurred to the hon. Gentleman. Two debates on this subject within one month would be excessive. The House might wish to consider whether it would prefer to await the Government's response, which we shall produce as soon as possible, when there might be a better opportunity for debate. We are all talking off the top of our heads in relation to any future debates. The timing of such debates is not exactly a matter for decision across these Benches.

The recommendation in paragraph 60 proposes changes in the building regulations for properties in districts liable to flooding. All I can say at present is that we shall consider that recommendation.

The first recommendation in paragraph 50 of the Committee's report is that the various Acts relating to coastal defence and coast protection be consolidated into a single Act. That was strongly endorsed by my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). Again, all I can say is that we shall consider the Committee's recommendations, but I am sure that the House will appreciate what is involved.

The four recommendations in paragraphs 23, 26, 27 and the second part of paragraph 50 are all related, in that their aim is to improve the standard and co-ordination of flood warnings both in north Wales and elsewhere. They raise a number of issues and will involve Government, local authorities, the NRA and others in consideration of them. In the aftermath of the disaster, it is important that we all try to learn lessons for the future. The Committee's analysis and recommendations have highlighted some important points that we need to consider carefully.

There are two interrelated warning systems operating on the west coast of England and Wales—the Meteorological Office met flood warning and the Neptune warning, which is operated by the NRA north western region. As I implied during an intervention, the problem with the Neptune system is that the accuracy of prediction cannot yet be relied upon and authorities are loathe to issue public warnings on the basis of it as there would be too many false alarms. Although the prediction of the surge in Liverpool bay on 26 February was, in the words of the Proudman oceanographic laboratory, "surprisingly accurate", the same cannot be said for many of the other predictions or, indeed, for that in the Severn estuary on the same day.

However—this is good news for the Committee and for advocates of the Neptune system—it is anticipated that, with the installation this year of a new computer at the Meterological Office giving greater resolution of weather conditions, and the establishment of additional tide gauges on the Welsh coast, sea flood warnings can be improved. I assure the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside that that tide gauge is very much on the cards.

Although at this stage I cannot be precise on the final level of Government assistance to local authorities and others in the flood-affected areas of north Wales, I estimate that it is likely to total almost £4 million, and it could exceed that figure. That is a substantial contribution to the needs of the area, which will not only help greatly in getting things back to normal, but will also relieve the burden on Colwyn borough council, which bore the brunt of the floods, and its community charge payers.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Can my hon. Friend give a rough estimate of the additional burden that next year might fall on the community charge payers of Colwyn borough council?

Sir Wyn Roberts: It would be premature to make any such estimate.

At the outset, the Government made a contribution of £150,000 to the appeal funds set up by the mayors of Colwyn, Rhuddlan and Delyn. It is the first time that such a contribution has been made when there has been no loss of life. It shows the seriousness with which the Government viewed the position. The European Community also made a contribution of £111,500 to the funds. The appeal funds were not intended to be the main source of assistance to the flood-affected areas, and have never been thought of as such. The funds, and the use to which they are put, are the responsibility of the trustees.

The Department of Social Security has made payments of some £300,000 in community care grants to flood victims. Ministers at the Department of Social Security have already given careful consideration to whether to extend the criteria for the payment of community care grants. However, to relax the existing criteria would be to go against the basic principle of targeting resources on those most in need.

The Government's contribution has not ended there—grants totalling at least a further £1·5 million are likely to be paid out under the Bellwin scheme of special financial assistance to local authorities. In the exceptional circumstances of the north Wales floods, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced that an enhanced rate of grant will be paid towards eligible expenditure above a threshold on costs borne by authorities in responding to the emergency.

The grant rate will be 95 per cent. on eligible expenditure incurred after 1 April, and the scheme will apply to expenditure incurred up to 31 July—three months longer than would usually be the case. He remains prepared to give sympathetic consideration to any case which is put to him to extend the time scale still further. That will be of some consolation to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley).

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister comment on the cost-benefit analysis? Is he prepared to consider the way in which benefit is computed to try to maximise the possibility of preventing future problems?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I shall carefully consider what the hon. Gentleman has said.

The Government will thus be paying for most of the cost of emergency repairs to the sea defences and, even more significantly in this context, the costs of housing the homeless and restoring the position in the devastated area as quickly as possible. That demonstrates the flexibility of the Government's response to such disasters.

I know that Clwyd county council is concerned that, to date, it has received no assistance under the Bellwin arrangements, because eligible expenditure has not yet reached the threshold. I understand that it is currently preparing a submission that looks for the relaxation of the Bellwin rules to cover its particular problems. When that submission is received, it will be carefully and sympathetically considered.

Colwyn borough council, which bore the brunt of the disaster, has estimated that its expenditure will eventually total about £1·25 million. Of that, more than £1 million will be met by Bellwin grant. Substantial costs have also been incurred by other coastal authorities, and they too will receive Bellwin grant where the conditions of the scheme are met.

My right hon. Friend has already presented cheques totalling over £600,000 to Colwyn and Rhuddlan borough councils on the basis of interim claims, and we have asked all councils to let us have estimates of their total expenditure incurred in dealing with the emergency. Several have now done so.

[Sir Wyn Roberts]

As my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn said, British Rail has confirmed that it will be taking responsibility for the upgrading of sea defences at Towyn and Pensarn at a cost of £8 million to £10 million. The works will take until autumn 1992 to complete. To protect the area over the two winters until the permanent works are completed, interim works are proposed, to be completed by October this year. The rock used for the interim works will be eventually incorporated into the permanent works, and the costs of the interim works are therefore included in the cost of the permanent works.

The cost to British Rail of the emergency sealing of the breach at Towyn is understood to have been about £1 million, and the cost of other works to protect their lines in Wales is estimated at a further £4 million.

With regard to coast protection works, about £18 million has been spent in the past ten years, attracting grant of over £12·5 million. Notable schemes within that programme are the offshore breakwater at Rhos on Sea, the breakwaters at nearby Penrhyn bay in my constituency, and the extensive works at Prestatyn, which are about half completed. Those works undoubtedly saved the north Wales coastline from a much more extensive disaster than the one we suffered.

I gave full details of annual expenditure and schemes assisted in Wales in response to a question by the hon. Member for Caernarfon published in *Hansard* of 24 January 1990. The rate of grant can be as much as 70 per cent. of eligible costs. Grant provisions for this financial year are in the region of £3·5 million, which is considerably more than at any time previously. I hope that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside has heard that answer to one of the points that he raised. Provision for grant is already secured for the next three years at an equivalent level to this year. That provision will cover a major project recently commenced at Colwyn Bay promenade, and completion of works at Prestatyn. Major schemes are also anticipated at Llandudno and Llanelli, in addition to many smaller schemes.

Mr. Raffan: As regards coast protection work at Prestatyn, will my hon. Friend consider compressing the three-year programme into two years, as I suggested? Also, will he address my point about the Nova complex, as it will be a heavy burden on Rhuddlan borough council if it has to find £200,000 without permission to spend above its capital allocation?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I shall carefully consider both the issues that the hon. Member mentioned. We have considerable sympathy with Rhuddlan because of the devastation of the Nova complex. Obviously, we would wish to hasten coastal protection work if at all possible.

During the past ten years, nearly £3·5 million has been spent by the National Rivers Authority and its predecessors on new and improved sea defence works in Wales to protect against flooding, and more than £2 million has been paid in Government grants. I understand that the National Rivers Authority and other relevant authorities propose significant work in the coming years. With this in mind, the NRA has just embarked on a full survey of sea defences in Wales, as I mentioned earlier.

A number of hon. Members have advocated a national body to play a supervisory role, but I can assure them that the proposal was considered in 1985, and again in 1989 and local authorities, whose knowledge is vital, were totally opposed to setting up such a body. Nevertheless, the National Rivers Authority already has a general supervisory role over all matters relating to flood defence, and it undertakes sea defence works in its own right. It is also consulted on all coast protection schemes and any objections that it, or any other body, has are referred to the Secretary of State. So there is a mechanism whereby the NRA can positively influence coastal defence strategy. The Government's view is that the present system can work well, if it is sensibly applied, and therefore no major changes are envisaged.

7.3 pm

Mr. Wardell: In the three minutes that I have left to me, I must say that I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to congratulate the Minister on his birthday today. We meet for the second time today, as earlier we were both in Committee on the Caldey Island Bill. The Minister's assurances that there would be no retrospective payment of community charge for the good people of Caldey was equalled by the comments that he just made and by his optimistic tone when he described what we expect the Government to do in response to the report.

I do not mind too much if the Government spend a little time responding to our report, provided that they implement most of our recommendations in that period so that they will be able to say in their report that they have already accomplished our recommendations.

I do not mind if the Government claim the credit. The important thing is that the many lessons of the experience be learned. I shall not list the lessons now, but, as the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) said, the way forward is to ensure that legislation is introduced to tidy up existing laws, to give the NRA a leading role in promoting coastal protection schemes and to make financing simpler. I am sure that the hon. Member for St. Ives sums up our concerns, and I hope that the Government will consider them.

It being three hours after the commencement of the proceedings, the debate was concluded, and the Questions necessary to dispose of the proceedings were deferred pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates).

CLASS VIII, VOTE 4

[Relevant document: Third Report from the Environment Committee of Session 1989-90 on the Department of the Environment's Main Estimates 1990-91 (House of Commons Paper No. 373).]

Gipsy Sites

Motion made, and Question proposed.

That a further sum, not exceeding £30,785,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on road infrastructure required for the development of new towns, gypsy sites, smoke control, planning redevelopment and other environmental services, on other water supply, conservation and sewerage services, and on town and country planning (including compensation) *[Mr. Chope]*

7.6 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I have the honour to present the third report of the Select Committee on the Environment on the Department of the Environment's main estimates for 1990-1991, with special reference to vote 4, B1. It would be appropriate to record our thanks to Mr. Richard Dudding and Mr. John Adams at the Department of the Environment for their helpful co-operation, enabling the Committee to reach the conclusions of its report, and for their full anwers to the sometimes forceful questions that were put to them during our deliberations. I should also like to record my appreciation of the leadership of our Select Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), who brings us great experience and considerable enthusiasm and who helps us do an important job.

I am a great believer in the work that Select Committees do and in bringing their reports to the House. We appreciate the opportunity to debate a report hot off the press.

Select Committee do an enormous variety of work and cover detailed as well as broad subjects. I cannot help contrasting our previous debate with this one. A few moments ago we were debating the consequences of what my insurance people would call an act of God earlier this year. Now we are considering the consequences of an Act of Parliament passed more than 20 years ago. The consequences are still with us: that is the nub of the Select Committee's report and recommendations.

We recognise the difficult problems posed by itinerants. There are different points of view. I am sure that the viewpoint of Lord Avebury, who, as Eric Lubbock, steered the legislation through Parliament, would be different from my own. As a constituency Member of Parliament who, in common with some of my hon. Friends, has had problems with itinerants, I have received many representations from constituents about a variety of related issues.

Above all there is the problem of visual pollution. To some people gipsies may be historic Romany folk with brightly painted caravans towed by horses but those of us who have experienced the problem in recent years know that it has more to do with tumbledown caravans and beaten-up vehicles and piles of scrap and rubbish, and that those people often occupy inappropriate sites that are extremely visible to the general public.

There is also a problem associated with the vandalism of large areas of woodland to provide fuel for fires. Theft often occurs as well. A farmer in my constituency found after gipsies had camped on land adjacent to his farm that the water supply for his cattle was regularly used by the itinerants. He had to pay a huge bill and he could not reclaim the money from anyone.

My personal interest in the matter goes back a long way. I served on Chiltern district council in Buckinghamshire until I became a Member of the House. We spent long hours debating the location of official sites before we received designations. The galling aspect was that no sooner had the official sites been built and opened than they were vandalised by the very people who were supposed to benefit from them. At that time a pitch cost about £10,000; no doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will bring us up to date on how much one would cost now.

The Select Committee has considered the matter on several occasions. The first time I remember it doing so was in 1984-85, soon after I joined the Committee, and the problem has recurred almost every year since then. This time we have come up with some specific recommendations, which I shall attempt to summarise.

It is time to set a realistic timetable for site provision, with the threat of much more vigorous use of the Secretary of State's powers of direction against laggard authorities. Foremost among the reasons for his recommendation was the slow provision of official pitches. Hon. Members may be interested to hear some statistics. There were 211 more caravans on authorised sites in July 1989 than in July 1988, and 171 new pitches became available on local authority sites during the financial year 1989-90. That represents a decline from the 250 new pitches in the calendar year 1987 and no improvement on the 200 to 300 annual increases reported by the Department of the Environment for 1982 to 1987. The Committee estimates that, at the present rate of new provision, it would take 25 years to solve the problem.

The Secretary of State has only twice used his powers of direction under section 9 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. In November 1988 he directed Hertfordshire county council to make provision for sites for 110 caravans. It is no coincidence that I am the Member for Hertfordshire, West, because I had to bully successive Ministers at the Department over that matter before any action was forthcoming. In June 1989, Surrey county council was directed to provide for 180 caravans. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Committee recommended much more vigorous use of that power. The numbers involved are immense and there seems to be little progress.

The number of caravans on unauthorised sites continues to grow. Figures supplied by the Department in 1985 showed a decline in numbers from 4,245 in January 1980 to an estimated 3,472 in January 1985. In answer to a parliamentary question on 6 February 1987—at column 856 in *Hansard*—my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) identified about 3,000; but last year the DOE reported the proportion of caravans on unauthorised sites as virtually unchanged at about 34 per cent., despite the creation of about 250 new pitches, as more gipsies than usual were being recorded. Most worrying of all, this year's public expenditure White Paper reports the proportion on unauthorised sites at 35 per cent., which is an increase. That makes a total of 4,500 caravans, so the solution to the problem seems to be receding.

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

The Committee first expressed its worry about the legislation in its report of the 1984-85 Session, when we recommended that the Department should conduct a review of policy on gipsy sites. It was carried out by Professor Wibberley, professor of countryside planning in the university of London. He made several recommendations, the first of which a more specific definition of gipsies for the purpose of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, based on employment and life style, with the intention of excluding social drop-outs.

In response, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury said that he defined gipsies in terms of a nomadic habit of life—which seems a rather circular argument. In recent years not just itinerants, as they were called in the past, but many of what my constituents call diddikois seem to have joined this group; they are people from all sorts of background. There has certainly been an influx of peace people from various camps around the country. That is why the problem is growing.

The difficulty is not confined to unauthorised sites on land. As a member of the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, I am conscious of the fact that exactly the same phenomenon is occurring on the water, in the shape of illegal moorings. The problem has more to do with the break-up of some parts of society and with general problems of homelessness than with genuine Romany folk. Professor Wibberley's recommendation is still relevant and I hope that the Department will again consider tightening the legislation's definition.

The professor also recommended a review of designated areas to ensure that the designation procedure works more fairly and efficiently. He recommended better and more frequent counts of gipsy families and measures to reduce resident hostility towards gipsies' sites, including speeding up planning decisions and facilitating discussions between gipsies and residents. Finally, he recommended encouraging gipsy groups to act as site operators, and quicker and more generous provision of capital grants for sites. Incidentally, I must commend the Department's improvement of the grant regime. I hope that that will encourage more local authorities to provide sites. As Mr. Dudding explained when giving evidence:

"there are other authorities which would . . . even if they had the £5 notes put in front of their eyes, be reluctant".

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green will touch on that aspect if he catches the Chair's eye—it is a problem that has been especially apparent in Haringey.

The real difficulty is that the goalposts are continually moving. Even local authorities that are motivated to try to achieve designation find that they run into increasing difficulties of litigation. As soon as a local authority applies for designation on the basis of the number of itinerants who are, in the terms of the Act, resorting to the area, there is another influx of people. That means that the designation order falls because there is no relation between the number of official pitches and the number of the gipsies in the area.

It is little wonder that some local authorities, faced with all the political problems of trying to set up sites against the will of local residents, give up, especially when confronted by vociferous gipsy support groups with access to legal assistance.

How does one define who resorts to an area? Is it someone who has come to an area for many years, or is it someone who has come to the area only recently? There seems to be no way to define it. I have always taken the view that we do not need more direction from the Department of the Environment, or a different grant regime. We need a reframing of the legislation so that, with fairer definitions, local authorities can get on with the job of providing sites for the genuine traveller and ensuring that the police move on those who are not genuine travellers.

I am encouraged by the Department's response to a question that I put to it. Mr. Dudding said:

"I think the Secretary of State's words in reply to the Committee last year were open to change; they were not ruling them out. And I think that is something that we shall continue to think about and I am sure that Ministers will be interested to read the views of the Committee in their Report because that is a source of advice to them by which, as you know, they have been influenced in the past."

There is plenty of material for reconsideration.

I hope that the Minister will be able to provide more up-to-date information. The Department has commissioned a study to identify good practice among local authorities in achieving site provision. It has also commissioned another study to establish the accuracy of the half-yearly counts of gipsies. I understand that the results would be made available in June 1990. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister has them with him and that he will be able to enlighten the House.

It has taken virtually the whole time that I have been a Member of Parliament for my local authority to be granted designation after its initial application. During that period, local residents, particularly in the parishes of Wigginton and Tring Rural, but also in Tring, became increasingly frustrated by what they believed to be the Department of the Environment's inability to act in such a way as to protect them from all the environmental problems that I described earlier. I had to explain to them many times that I believed that the cause of the problem was the imprecise nature of the legislation that had been piloted through the House. That is not surprising, since it was a Liberal measure. Nevertheless, a Conservative Government ought to do something about it.

I hope that the Minister will respond sympathetically to the pressing needs of communities throughout the country who wish to be rid of those problems. Genuine travellers ought to be provided with a decent life style and somewhere to live so that education can be provided for their children, but the law needs to be reformed to deal with the remainder.

7.22 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I thank the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) for introducing the debate. I also thank the Select Committee on the Environment for its third report. I intend to confine my remarks to that part of the report which deals with gipsy sites and travellers. As the area represented by the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West has been designated, I was interested in what he had to say about the problem. He drew attention to the many difficulties that flow from designation. Bradford was designated by the Minister earlier this year.

Many of those who support designation give the public the impression that it is a magic wand solution to all the difficulties caused by travellers. There is therefore

considerable public resentment and cynicism when the problems continue after designation. The Government will continue to face difficulties if they grant designation, but the problems remain unsolved.

The report states that 112 authorities have been designated under section 12 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. They include Doncaster and Bradford. Another 11 applications for designation are being considered by the Department. Bradford continues to face problems. Designation was granted by the Minister days before the local elections, but I should be the last to suggest any connection between his decision and the elections looming on 3 May. His letter provided background information to the granting of designation, stating that the grounds for designation were that it would not be expedient for the then Conservative-controlled Bradford council to make additional permanent provision in Bradford.

Like many other people in Bradford, I thought that that was an extraordinary decision. We have tussled with this problem for many years. We met a Minister from the Department of the Environment two or three years ago, when it was made clear to us that, unless Bradford provided a third permanent site for travellers, designation would not be granted. A third permanent site has not been provided and the two permanent sites in Bradford have not been improved. Nevertheless, the Minister granted designation.

The new Labour administration in Bradford has stated that it will not instruct its officers to implement designation. The new administration wants to monitor the position before taking action. It is anxious to find out whether neighbouring authorities, including Calderdale, Kirklees and Craven, have provided any permanent sites before it decides to implement the designation orders.

The traveller merry-go-round that we have witnessed in Bradford for many years continues. Travellers have resorted—to use the official jargon of the Act—to Bradford for well over a century. Environment Ministers have accepted for many years that two permanent sites offer totally insufficient permanent provision for the caravans of travellers who come regularly to Bradford. They accept that a third site is needed, but it has not been provided. My local newspaper, *The Telegraph and Argus*, reported recently on the eviction of travellers from unofficial sites and on their moving to other unofficial sites. Council officers are considering applying for yet more eviction orders. A council official is quoted as saying that "it was a problem finding sites that met the needs of the travellers. Shortage of sites for gipsies was a problem because the inner city Mary street site was full."

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is in the Chamber. He and I visited the Mary street site last summer. At the same time we visited the official site at Esholt. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees with me that we were very dissatisfied with the standard of the facilities that are provided there. The Esholt street site is adjacent to a rifle range. We were shown bullet cartridges that had ricocheted over an earth embankment behind the rifle range. The drainage and the washing facilities at the site are totally unsatisfactory. It is no wonder that the travellers are extremely reluctant to use that remote site, which is well away from the shops and schools. The Mary street site was also in a shocking condition. The showers and washing facilities had been vandalised and many of the travellers we met complained about the standard of facilities there.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the vandalism that he mentioned had not been carried out by the travellers and that one of the difficulties was that on occasions there was a degree of hostility and youths would stone the caravans and vandalise the toilet blocks at the site? The toilet blocks had been in need of repairs for many months and the travellers were making the best of what was patently a bad job.

Mr. Madden: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. When the Minister granted designation, he said in his background note that Bradford council was to spend money on improving the Mary street and Esholt street sites. I have made inquiries but I cannot ascertain whether there have been any improvements at those sites. I was amazed that the Minister stated in his note and in correspondence with me that his officials had found the facilities and the general conditions at both sites reasonable. He and his officials seem alone in that view. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South and others who are interested and concerned are extremely disassatisfied with the standard of the facilities at both sites. We also remain firmly of the view that a third permanent site must be provided in Bradford.

The views of the gipsy spokesperson, Ann Purcell, were reported in the *Telegraph and Argus*:

"she expected her family would be moved on again from New Lane by the council. But she believed it would be cheaper for the council to provide them with a proper site instead of chasing them around the city. Council officials offered the family space at official site at Esholt but Mrs. Purcell said: 'It's miles away from anywhere, especially the school and there are no shops within walking distance.' . . . She said there is not enough room to accommodate travellers at two official sites in the Bradford district and condemned the scrapping of a plan three years ago to turn some derelict land at Listerhills into another gipsy site."

The Minister should know that the previous Conservative administration came to power partly due to the hysteria that had been whipped up deliberately by the Conservative party in Bradford over travellers and gipsies. During that campaign, leading Conservatives sought to gain cheap party political support on the back of a promise that designation would resolve all the problems and that the traveller problem could be wholly removed only if designation were granted. Designation has been granted and the problems continue.

I hope that the Minister will say how much money that previous Tory administration told him it had committed to spending on improving the Esholt street and Mary street sites. When he granted designation, his background note suggested that the Conservative administration in Bradford was also committed to providing further private sites in Bradford. I have been unable to get any information about the location of those private sites. As the Minister must have been given some information by the previous Conservative administration in Bradford about where those private sites were likely to be situated, I should like to know where they are and what progress is being made.

Mr. Cryer: I should be interested to know what encouragement the Minister is giving neighbouring authorities to provide sites. I understand that Craven, Kirklees and Calderdale local authorities do not provide one alternative site. No doubt the Government are

[Mr. Cryer]

anxiously providing all possible assistance in the way of advice and grant aid to encourage those authorities to play their part.

Mr. Madden: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. What information has the Minister received from Calderdale, Kirklees and Craven about their current efforts to identify suitable permanent sites? It would be idle and politically dishonest for the Minister to pretend that designation without neighbouring authorities offering permanent sites, improvements to the existing two sites, the provision of a third permanent site, more private sites, and a general overall improvement in Bradford, would provide any long-term satisfactory solution to the difficulties which have arisen for many years and which will continue unless the Government take decisive action.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West made the case for my last point. The parent legislation is more than 20 years old and needs to be reformed to meet current circumstances and the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman highlighted. The Committee says that, at the current rate of progress, it will take 25 years to accommodate those known travellers who desire proper permanent sites with proper facilities. I hope that the Minister will not be satisfied with that rate of progress.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West made the case for regional planning. It is quite wrong to leave individual district authorities to reach piecemeal solutions on the back of a variety of local circumstances. Surely the only way in which we can make progress and meet the demands of travellers and the requirements of settled residents is through a national gipsy traveller programme and regional programmes to ensure that in West Yorkshire, for example, Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield and other authorities make planned and systematic provision to alleviate the problems caused to travellers and local residents.

If the Minister rejects that suggestion, in Bradford and other places, either the merry-go-round will continue and designation will prove wholly unsuitable to deal with the problems, or police and council officials will become involved in potentially dangerous confrontations between travellers and groups of local residents, with caravans being towed to the borders of authority districts and travellers seeking unofficial sites in places such as Calderdale and Kirklees where there is no official provision or returning to Bradford to occupy unofficial and illegal sites.

The Minister can easily achieve a recipe for anarchy and dangerous community unrest and conflict by presiding over the shambolic mess that this policy has caused, but I hope that he will be able to announce to the House—I sense that there is concern among hon. Members on both sides because this is not a party-political issue but one of good local government and community relations—new policy initiatives to satisfy our constituents and travellers about the future.

It is interesting to note the views of traveller children. A report in the *Telegraph and Argus*, headlined

"We want to learn, plead the gipsy children",

states:

"The youngsters say that they want to be taught and are fed up of being moved off one site after another. 'We were born in Bradford and we want to have an education here,' said 12-year-old Mary Doran. 'It's not fair that we have to keep on moving. We would like a permanent site so we can stay in one place and go to school. The way we are going we won't even get half an education.' Margaret Purcell, 12, said 'We want to be taught but we don't even know if we'll be in school on Monday.' Mary and Margaret and their sisters, 11-year-olds Eilleen and Kathleen, have been going to St. William's Roman Catholic First School, in Young Street, Bradford, for the past five months. 'We really enjoy it there, but some days we have to miss school because of all this moving,' said Mary. Before that, the children went to St. Patrick's RC First School in Wood Street, Manningham. The gipsies were served with an eviction order by Bradford Council to leave the land at Lower Rushton Road, in Thornbury. About eight caravans are now parked on an area of grassland between blocks of council flats on New Lane. Residents have complained to the council about the noise of the generators being used by the gipsy families. Richard Hoyle, 24 of Oban House said: 'My wife's complained to the council to get the generators turned down. We've got two young children and the noise at 4 am doesn't help.' Bradford Council has said shortage of sites for gipsies was a problem because the inner city Mary Street site was full. A spokesman said the council would be seeking another court order to move the gipsies on again."

So the merry-go-round goes on. The Minister told me and the people of Bradford in April when he granted designation that these problems would be resolved. They are not resolved and are unlikely to be, but I hope very much that when he replies to the debate he will be able to announce new policy initiatives that will give some hope to my constituents and to travellers that the merry-go-round in Bradford will end, that there will be a third permanent site, that improvements will be made to the Mary street and Esholt street sites, that there will be further private sites and that he will issue directions to Kirklees, Calderdale and Craven about making satisfactory progress towards permanent site provision in their local authority areas.

I hope that the Minister will begin to recognise that a national policy is necessary and a regional strategy vital if we are to reduce the problems that I am sure other hon. Members will rehearse today.

7.43 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on the way in which he introduced the Environment Select Committee's report. The moderate and balanced way in which he did so was in the best of the traditions of the Committee. I am afraid that I cannot be as moderate or follow the traditions of my Committee.

My constituency has been subject to a plague of gipsies for about seven years. I call them gipsies, but they are not true Romanies. Possibly some of them are tinkers. They may be itinerant scrap metal merchants, but mostly they seem to be motorised squatters. That is probably the best term that I can use.

When officials of the Department of the Environment were giving evidence to my Committee, we asked them to give the definition of a gipsy under the terms of the legislation. Some years ago, in his report, Professor Wibberley criticised the fact that there was no hard and fast definition by which gipsies and people who were subject to the legislation could be readily identified. The officials' reply was, "People who live a nomadic way of life." I asked, "Does a nomadic way of life involve moving from one illegal site within the London borough of Haringey to another?" There was a shrug of the shoulders

and the answer, "Perhaps that is nomadic." That is not an adequate answer and is not a proper way for a Department to address its mind to a very serious social problem.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) mentioned the tensions when ordinary residents are faced with such a sudden visitation. In conscience, we cannot allow that to continue, for the sake of either the families who willingly accept or are forced into that way of life or the local communities who suddenly find them in their midst.

I have experienced the problem for several years. I have brought with me several files on the problems that I have had since the most recent general election. Since 1987, I have had within my constituency illegal squatting and trespassing by so-called gipsies at Alexandra palace, Wood Green common, Carlton lodge in Hornsey, Durnsford road lido, King's road car park in Wood Green, Pelham road in Wood Green, Lymington avenue in Wood Green, Russell avenue in Wood Green and Middle lane and Lightfoot road, Hornsey.

They may be the same gipsies who move from site to site or others who come and go. Nobody has been able to identify them except perhaps the travellers liaison officer, appointed by the London borough of Haringey, who directs them from site to site when the heat gets too hot on a site. It is of some interest that the council, which is reluctant to use its powers to remove trespassers from its property, seems to anticipate travellers moving from one site to another, because overnight a water stand pipe and portaloos suddenly appear, and lo and behold they remain there for several months.

As time is short, I do not want to go through the files for each site to show the problems that these visitations create. There is a pattern of filth, of danger to public health and hygiene, of rubble, of litter, of disorder, of children running wild, of a spate of housebreaking and of excrement where one would not expect to find it. One cannot wonder that, as a consequence, the local residents, who are ordinary, decent people, despair because nobody seems to be ready to help them to deal with the problem.

When these people first appear on a site, reference is made to the local police, who are asked whether they will exercise their powers under section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986. The police will not do so and they say that the Act is irrelevant to the problem. They say in their defence, "The Act gives us power of arrest where there is a trespass and those convicted are dealt with by the magistrates, but we have no power under the Act to remove the caravans. If we arrest somebody, we leave behind his wife and children, and who looks after them? When the man in released by the magistrates and returns to the site, what do we do? Do we arrest him for a continuing offence if he refuses to go?" The only answer to that problem must be for the police to have the power—and the willingness to use that power—to remove caravans when they are trespassing on other people's or public property, although that may seem somewhat draconian.

I said that I would not read through all my files and that I would merely give the House an idea of the problems. However, I want to read one letter to the House, which was written to me in March last year. The letter says:

"My mother and father are both retired. They live in a very pleasant council flat in Carlton Lodge, Lancaster Road, N4. They have been honest, hardworking people all their lives. Now, at a time when they should be enjoying themselves, their lives are being made miserable.

My father suffers from a bad heart and severe arthritis and his health is getting worse. The reason for this is outside his window. There are ten to twelve gipsy caravans and a number of trucks that have been picking up builders' rubbish and dumping it in the street. The gipsies have been living there for over three months now. The local milkman has stopped delivering milk and supplies to the residents in the flats as goods were being stolen from his van.

I went to visit my parents today because it was my mother's birthday and I just could not believe my eyes. The situation has become a lot worse since the last time I was there. It's obviously making life totally unpleasant for my parents and their neighbours. Apart from the obvious health hazard there must also be a potential fire hazard to the area. I believe that certain steps are being taken to remove the gipsies but if you could speed up the process I am sure it would benefit my father's health."

That seemed to be the end of the letter, but when I turned the page, I found something else written. This is what got me. The letter continued:

"The enclosed letter was drafted on Tuesday evening. On Wednesday morning my father had a stroke, followed by a heart attack. He died the following Sunday, Easter Day, at 3.10 am. My mother does not want the funeral procession to start from her own home as she is so ashamed of the state of the place and worried about what might happen to her relatives' cars while they are parked outside."

I cannot say that that letter is typical. Happily, not every constituent has suffered a bereavement as a result of gipsies. However, I have heard of cases of housebreaking and of pensioners who have suddenly found their front doors broken down and youngsters rampaging through the house. The police can do nothing because the old people cannot identify the particular individual, but the community knows where those people have come from even if there is not enough evidence to point the finger at any individual. The neighbours get to know such incidents as the bereavement and when old-age pensioners have had their front doors battered in or others have had their windows broken by half bricks. Some have had excrement deposited in their back garden and others live next door to an empty house that has become a general urinal and toilet for the encampment.

What effect does my hon. Friend the Minister think that all that must have on local residents? Is that a socially desirable situation? Does he think that people will sit down under this year in year out without, at some time or other, a fuse blowing? We shall then have a far more serious problem on our hands. The police say that they cannot act because the Public Order Act is not strong enough. The local authority refuses to act and seems to be encouraging the problem.

I have asked my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to take further powers to do something either when the local authority does not apply for designation—which would give it immediate powers to act—or so that a local authority can be taken to court if it does not exercise those powers once it has obtained designated status. That might answer the problems raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, West. The local authority may be failing in its legal duty to its residents if it does not exercise the power, which designated status has given it, to have caravans removed.

I know from conversations with my hon. Friend the Minister that if Haringey were to apply tomorrow for designated status, it would find that it fulfilled all the criteria and that it would be granted such status. However, time after time, the borough refuses to apply for

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

designated status, so it does not have the powers to take action. It then shuffles off the responsibility to the local police.

Mr. Madden: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I shall not give way as we want to end this debate fairly quickly.

Yesterday, I received a telephone call from a constituent who said that, at 6 pm the day before, gipsies had settled

"on the field behind Tetherdown Primary School in Woodside Avenue. The field is used by the children from the school but is owned by a charity called The Central Foundation."

That night, two caravans appeared, after the padlock had been cut. The police asked the people to leave, but they refused to do so. By the morning, there were 20 caravans and by the evening, there were 30. I have ascertained that that remains the position. A house nearby had been broken into so that water could be obtained. Children from the site are breaking into the school. The children in the primary school are terrified. Several large dogs are roaming in the field where the gipsies are now encamped. What will my hon. Friend do about that, and what advice does he ask me to give my constituents who face that problem?

7.59 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): This is an important debate because it is no good shying away from the fact that there is a real problem. The guitar-strumming romany of popular myth and romantic illustration does not often appear in our towns and cities—instead, problems of sanitation and noise arise. Generators are sometimes used late at night when neighbouring lorry drivers or early-morning shift workers have to get up early. Children have to go to school after being disturbed at night. Those are the problems that arise when gipsies or travellers—however one describes them, they are people—camp close to houses. Many of them make their living from scrapping metal. Some burn the covering of copper wires to extract the copper, which produces stench and smoke, and there are other intrusions.

We must face the fact that this is a difficult problem and a real source of complaint for many people. However, it is not possible to solve that problem simply by moving groups of people in their caravans from one illegal site to another, like a continuing yo-yo around an area.

Another permanent site is needed in Bradford although several smaller sites, dispersed throughout the whole of the Bradford metropolitan district would be preferable. I see no reason why areas such as Ilkley, Bingley rural district or Rombalds ward, which have large open areas, could not be used. Some of the houses in Ilkley are out of sight of the road because the drive to the front door is so long. I am sure that the people in those areas would be anxious to play their part in a community contribution to solving the problem. People in Bradford would feel that there was fairness if the problem were dispersed throughout the whole of the Bradford metropolitan district, and not simply concentrated on two or three wards in the centre of the city.

I became involved in this matter when, about four years ago, the Labour-controlled Bradford council had a perfectly proper policy which, unfortunately, was not implemented. Bradford's policy on travellers involved entering into consultation with and gaining the consent of people living in the vicinity of the land to be allocated for a site. About 30 families were virtually tipped on to a site called Staithgate lane at Low Moor in my constituency. I believe that that was a deliberate manoeuvre by council officials—perhaps one or two councillors were involved, but that is not absolutely clear—to try to secure that land for industrial development instead of for the transport museum for which it had been allocated. I suspect that it was planned to produce in the residents the response, "Get rid of the gipsies. We don't mind what the land is used for, as long as the gipsies are not on the site."

However, that did not work. The local people held a number of angry meetings and impressed upon the local authority the fact that it was unfair that that land should be used for a gipsy site when it was designated for a transport museum. As the area already contained two potentially high-risk chemical works, the people felt that they had burdens enough. However, to demonstrate their support for the use of the land for the purpose for which it was originally designated, the local people have held three successful annual transport galas to show that they have a community spirit, that they are not prepared to wash their hands of the whole affair, and that they want the land to be used for a commercial transport museum. I should declare an interest because I am the part-owner of a Bristol Lowdekka double-deck bus which I hope at some stage will be exhibited on that site when it is a museum.

Therefore, something positive emerged from the uproar. None the less, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has pointed out, the two sites in Bradford are not in good condition. Some modernisation was started on the Mary street site, but that was halted. Virtual cliff edges were left where excavators had been used and where rubble had been piled 2 or 3 ft high. It would be very easy for children running around to break an arm or a leg or seriously injure themselves. Where it was possible—it is not easily possible in the middle of a pile of rubble—the travellers were houseproud and tidy and clearly took care of the site. There were some difficulties, which a small amount of money spent by the local authority could and should have eradicated, but that work was never done.

I hope that the Government will state that they are prepared to give additional grant aid for such work and that they will not leave it to hard-pressed local authorities such as Bradford, which have many competing priorities, to provide that money. As I have said, Bradford needs an additional site or preferably several small sites spread throughout the district. However, it should be noted that if Bradford is a designated area and the travellers cannot move on, they cannot go to Calderdale, Kirklees or Craven to find a site because there is none. During the last general election, the Conservative candidate was a Calderdale Conservative councillor. When taxed with this problem at a meeting, he said, "There is insufficient land—there is no flat land anywhere in Calderdale that is suitable for a gipsy site." That was not believed and it is not true.

Perhaps the Minister will explain today how he intends to encourage local authorities to take responsibility. Under the existing legislation, he has powers to issue a direction. I do not ask him to do so because I do not see why the bureaucratic powers of central Government should be imposed on local authorities, but my guess is

that, if central Government gave additional grant aid, over and above the grant aid to the actual sites, and held consultation meetings and gave financial encouragement, they would find more zeal forthcoming than has hitherto been shown by some local authorities, some of which are Labour-controlled and some Conservative.

Because of all the problems and strains, and because people do not want the travellers next to them—they do not mind where they go so long as it is somewhere else—it is easy to forget that these problems can be eradicated, as has happened in Leeds, which, after a great argument, now has a limited number of pitches. All local authorities need to play their part. I see no reason why the city of Bradford, virtually alone in our part of West Yorkshire, should carry the burden of providing sites for travellers.

It is easy to criticise the travellers, and people produce various reasons for doing so. People say that they have worked hard to buy their house—encouraged by the Government—that they have decorated and painted it, but they suddenly find a pile of rubble outside, noisy children running around and a great deal of confusion, dirt and doubt. Obviously, they feel concerned and, in many cases, very angry. That is why we need a number of permanent sites.

Permanent sites would also address the argument that travellers are not making any contribution to the community because they have illegal sites and do not pay any poll tax. The poll tax burden is falling heavily on people and makes them feel that disparity even more keenly. As travellers who use local authority sites have to pay rent, they contribute in that way to the community, and people feel that things are fairer, which in turn makes for better community relations.

There is a problem with their children. We must provide means for educating the children, and if they are moving about, great difficulties are bound to arise. In Sheffield, for example, there is a gipsy children's bus and a team of people going round providing education, but that represents only an attempt to solve the problem. I understand that Sheffield has about the same number, perhaps fewer, permanent caravan sites than Bradford. In other words, although that area is doing well in respect of education, in terms of sites it is making only average provision.

The children have a right to education. The fact that they are born into a nomadic way of life, however much one might criticise that, should not prevent them from being educated. They exist, and wishing the problem away will not solve it. Nor will it provide education for those youngsters. We must encourage the establishment of permanent sites so that links can be established between the schools and the children, so that the children can feel part of society rather than feeling, as many of them do—and as many of the general public feel—part of a continuing battle. If that is the attitude of the children, it will be their attitude as teenagers and will continue into adult life, which will mean more running battles between residents and travellers, the police and travellers, and local authorities and travellers, with scarcely a sympathetic spark anywhere to be seen.

In encouraging the children, we must provide nursery education and first, middle and senior schools so that such talent and ability as exists among the families may be garnered and used for the benefit of the community as a whole. As other hon. Members have said, that cannot be achieved if there is a continuing shift from one school to another, so that teachers never build up a relationship with the children.

A teacher recently said to me, referring to travellers' children and the children of families in difficulties, "You can see them coming down the drive, you can help them, but you know that within a day or two they will be off and you are unlikely ever to see them again." As a result, alienation and separation from society is established. We must do something about that.

Although there is antagonism between travellers and the community at large, for the reasons that I have outlined, I believe that people generally have a measure of compassion and recognise that we must provide for the education of the children as part of our general responsibilities. Another permanent site is needed in Bradford, as well as sites in the surrounding local authorities that I have mentioned.

I wrote to a neighbouring local authority urging its leader to investigate, and start work on, the provision of a site, and I released the letter to the press. The local evening newspaper used the headline, "MP urges gipsy site." The hon. Member who represents the area, whom I had not been able to contact with the good news that I was urging the local authority to provide a gipsy site, was inundated with calls asking, "Why are you claiming that additional gipsy sites must be provided?" The hon. Member was able to point out that it was not that hon. Member who had made the comment. Even so, the hon. Member agreed with me that the local authority should be making provision for gipsies, for the reasons that I have given.

There is a genuine altruism in all of this. We do not get many votes from gipsies, because they are unlikely to be on electoral registers, although some of them are, and we are criticised if we do not take action on behalf of permanent residents confronted with illegal gipsy sites. The fact that Parliament is discussing this issue is creditable, however, because in talking about it we are bringing pressure to bear on the Government to provide more assistance so that local authorities can tackle the problem. Let us face the fact that the problem will not go away. Let us also have a mutual respect for differing ways of life as between the permanent population, who want to live in houses, who like their cities and areas and who do not wish to move, and the tiny fraction of the population who live a nomadic life. Somehow, somewhere, we must find accommodation for all concerned, for the sake of everybody.

8.14 pm

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): I wish to pay a warm and generous tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) for the way in which he introduced the Select Committee report.

One could not but be moved by the dramatic content of the speech, which was well received, of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). His remarks will be long remembered in the House.

My contribution is on behalf of the west midlands. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) correctly said that this is not a Bradford but a national matter, as has been reflected in the debate. We are discussing a national problem and we are looking forward, with differing degrees of confidence, to the Minister's response.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) is here because I know that he shares

[Dr. John G. Blackburn]

my view that this social problem—this plague, as it has been called—is as relevant in the west midlands as it is anywhere else. I should be the first to support the concept of special officers able to deal with the problems of the itinerants in that, in the long term, they may come into society, particularly from the point of view of helping the children.

Having said that, I must add that in the Himley and Kingswinford areas of my constituency I am continually, along with local councillors, involved in the problem of itinerants. Although the local authority, at considerable expense, often takes action, I have known of many cases where itinerants have been moved and then, tragedy of tragedies, have gone on to private land. Some small farmers in the area have been confronted with the problem. It is an expensive exercise to arrange through the private sector to have itinerants removed from private property.

Against that background, I hope that something positive and constructive can come out of this debate for the people involved. The Minister has a solemn responsibility. I urge him to review the situation, particularly in relation to the growing problem in the west midlands of itinerants going on to private land and the local authorities, understandably, being reluctant to become involved in evictions.

I support designated sites. They are dotted around the west midlands, particularly in the Wolverhampton and Dudley areas.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to listen to the voice of the entire House of Commons speaking in unison on this important problem, which is a social problem now but which could easily become more devastating.

8.19 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I have been involved in the matter of gipsies for a considerable time. In the community that I represented as a local councillor, there was a gipsy population. I agree with the hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) that dealing with gipsies is a social problem that should be addressed nationally rather than locally.

My hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) enlightened the House on the position in Bradford. Before the Government abolished West Yorkshire county council, it was responsible for providing gipsy sites, but with the demise of that county council, proposals to provide more sites were put back for a considerable time. The local authorities had to pick up the problem, in addition to all the other problems created by the demise of the county council.

I thought that Ministers responsible for abolishing the county councils would address the serious problem of providing gipsy sites before doing so. That did not take place, so the problem was aggravated. In West Yorkshire we are now witnessing the problems that have been picked up by the district councils. We must consider provision of gipsy sites seriously and in depth because it is a social problem.

The hon. Member for Dudley, West asked the House to speak in unison, but I do not support all the comments made by the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). Not all travellers fit the description that he gave. Some people come into that category, but it would be misleading and wrong to persuade the House that all travellers fit the description.

In my early days, some genuine gipsies bought old property in the town where I lived. They wanted to settle as members of the community. The menfolk worked for the local authority refuse collection department. They were some of the best workers that the department had. They turned out in all weathers, they were always on time, and they were regular attenders. The children attended the local schools. The conditions that those people lived in were appalling, so the local authority decided to house them in council houses. A third and fourth generation of those families is now settled in the community.

If people want to take part in a society and settle in it, local authorities should be in a position to help them. However, under this Government that help is constantly withdrawn or reduced because local authorities are denied the opportunity to provide accommodation for gipsies. No private landlord will help them. I hope that the Minister will explain how local authorities can provide sites and make sure that they are maintained.

In my constituency there is an official site for gipsies, but because of constraints on local authority expenditure it was transferred to a private operator who promised to improve the site and provide facilities for several caravans if he could include some spaces for permanent caravans. That was agreed, but there was a gross deterioration in the maintenance of the site. It changed hands on more then one occasion. We must not only provide sites, but see that they are maintained, that facilities are provided and that the people appreciate the facilities. Without that support and cover, there will always be problems, no matter how many sites local authorities provide. Unless there are adequate resources to maintain sites and to provide back-up and advice for travellers, there will be constant arguments and rancour among groups of people in the community.

I doubt that provision for creating and maintaining gipsy sites is included in the formula for arriving at the standard spending assessments of local authorities. I doubt that the Minister and his colleagues consider the resources needed for gipsy sites when they assess the expenditure that local authorities can attain. I hope that the Minister will tell me that I am wrong. I fear that I am correct because the formula for assessing local government expenditure does not refer to gipsy sites.

We must also consider illegal camping. The site to which I referred is on the edge of some common land. We are trying to ensure that the common land remains available to local people and is protected. I am waiting for the Government to introduce the necessary legislation to protect the common land. People park on the common land, which creates problems in the community. We need legislation to protect the common land. During the past three of four years, the Government have promised to introduce legislation, but we are still waiting for it. We wish to debate any such legislation and the protection of common land.

The gipsy problem throws up many issues. Another part of my constituency that was affected is in the Leeds city area. Motor travellers settled on land that was previously arable. The whole area was covered by caravans. The people who settled collected old tyres. They were paid for the disposal of those tyres, but all they did

was to dispose of them on the land around the caravans. There was a vast area of disused tyres and genuine concern that someone would set those tyres ablaze, which would have caused a tremendous problem. Leeds city council cleared the site of the caravans and the tyres, which cost its ratepayers a great deal of money.

Local authorities should be given the opportunity to provide legal, proper sites with all the facilities and necessary back-up services to address the problem in a proper manner.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that, with the advent of the poll tax and the strain on local authority expenditure, it will be difficult for local authorities to meet the provision he advocates? Those authorities will be hard pressed to maintain existing services without venturing to provide more sites and paying for their maintenance. Does my hon. Friend agree that the solution lies with central Government, who should provide better grant assistance for the maintenance, development and improvement of gipsy sites, rather than leaving it in the hands of local authorities?

Mr. O'Brien: My hon. Friend has pre-empted some of my argument.

If we do not address local government finance, we cannot solve the problem. The introduction of the poll tax is significant. The Select Committee report refers to Doncaster, which has provided an additional gipsy sites. That authority is poll tax-capped and, despite the fact that it has provided a site for gipsies—I am sure that it wanted to provide such a site—with all the necessary facilities and back-up services, the Secretary of State for the Environment has decided that £10 million must be taken out of its budget. How can Ministers or any other Conservative Member say that Doncaster district council has an obligation and a right to provide such sites, if the first thing the Secretary of State does is to cut the amount of money necessary to sustain those sites? If that is not hypocritical, I do not know what is.

If we accept the report and agree that local authorities have a responsibility to provide sites for gipsies as well as meeting their educational and other requirements, it is wrong for the Minister to say that authorities that are providing those sites must cut their expenditure just because he considers that that expenditure is too great.

If the House is sincere and if we want unity across the Chamber, we must tell the Secretary of State and his lieutenants that it is wrong to tell local authorities that have provided in their budget for gipsies to limit the amount of money that they can spend on such facilities.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): I am extremely concerned about adequate facilities for gipsies and travellers, but surely there is a defect in the logic of the hon. Gentleman's case. He appears to be saying that, if a local authority is making good, proper provision for gipsies and travellers, it is impossible that it could be grossly overspending in other ways. He has argued that Ministers should not cap such authorities for gross over-expenditure in other matters when, within proper expenditure, they have provided for gipsies and traveller families. The hon. Gentleman must accept that that cannot be logically consistent.

Mr. O'Brien: How anyone in this Chamber or in Marsham street can say what Doncaster district council should provide for gipsy caravan sites, education or any other services, I do not know. The people who should make such decisions are the people of Doncaster. The quicker we realise that, the better it will be for the provision of the necessary services for gipsies or any other person in that area.

Mr. Cryer: The truth is that the cap covers all expenditure. Although a local authority is given an opportunity to cut its expenditure, that local authority will be under pressure to cut every service. There will be strong local pressure not to cut the provision for education or housing if there are other suitable areas in which cuts can be made. Inevitably the provision for gipsies will be subject to greater pressure than any other once an authority is faced with forced cuts imposed by the Government.

Mr. O'Brien: My hon. Friend has spelt out admirably the dilemma faced by authorities that are poll tax-capped, particularly Doncaster.

I am conscious that, before May this year, when the Tories were in control, a constant stream of Ministers visited Bradford.

Mr. Cryer: It did the railway service a power of good.

Mr. O'Brien: How much time did Ministers from the Department of the Environment or from any other Department spend talking about gipsy sites in Bradford? Did Ministers tell the Tories of Bradford that they should provide sites for those people?

Mr. Madden: My hon. Friend has asked some pertinent questions. The Conservatives came to power in Bradford in September 1988 on the back of hysteria whipped up against gipsies and travellers and against the backdrop of a controversy motivated purely for party political reasons. The designation came in April 1990, but there is no evidence of any action by the Tory council or by Ministers who weekly visited Bradford. That is why I was forced to ask the Minister certain questions. I hope that I shall receive some answers.

Mr. O'Brien: My hon. Friend has explained how things were when the Tories were in control of Bradford. Promises were made in Bradford, but perhaps it was one of those times when someone said, "Read my lips," and everything changed. Fortunately, the constitution of the council in Bradford has changed and I am sure that progress will be made on the social problems to which hon. Members have referred.

How often does the Minister, his colleagues or any of the civil servants in the Department of the Environment discuss the plight of gipsies with the Gypsy Council or its representatives? If such consultation could be established, the point made by the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green could be put on the agenda. The problems that have been raised and the concern that has been expressed could be put to the council and debated with the fervour shown by the hon. Gentleman. Without such dialogue, the issues will not be solved. I accept that there is a social problem, and the sooner we have some form of consultation with the people who need help and assistance, the better it will be.

The Select Committee's report refers to evidence of differing views between police forces and local authorities on the appropriate circumstances in which section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 should be used in cases of

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gipsies' trespass. Differing views between police forces and local authorities make it difficult to resolve the problem. The report says that the Home Secretary is expected to report towards the end of 1990. If we are to solve the social problem that has been outlined tonight, the House should have a further opportunity to debate the issue when that report is published and when we know what the Home Secretary intends to do to try to reconcile the different views of the local authorities and the various police forces.

I hope that we shall not walk away from tonight's debate saying that the Home Secretary will report and leaving it at that. There is a lot that can be done. The responsibility is with the Minister and the Secretary of State and I hope that they will not walk away from that. If they do, that would be the biggest sin that could be committed against the very people who need help. When I refer to the people who need help, I do not mean just the gipsies but our constituents as well who are affected by the problems created by gipsies parking in their areas.

I appeal to the Minister to take this issue seriously and to give some assistance to local authorities.

8.43 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): The quality of tonight's debate has been high. Let me stir a few memories. The House is often reminded of the appalling massacre of Jews in what they termed the holocaust in Germany. The House is less often reminded that Nazi Germany also took into the concentration camps and murdered the gipsies.

I was elected to the House in 1960, but only once have I heard a Member stand up in the House and speak with pride of his gipsy ancestry. That was Sir John Arbuthnot who, in a debate in this House in the 1960s, speaking from the Conservative Benches, said: "I am a diddikoi." I respected him for that.

The legislation is inadequate for those in need and for those who are suddenly afflicted by the arrival of people whom the public term gipsies but who are not Romanies. The Romany race—its people call themselves a race—is deeply resentful of the fact that many people who do not have the disciplines that they seek to impose on their community, their children, their dogs and their way of life, are termed gipsies. I make those remarks in passing.

I think that it is a representative truth to say that it is Conservative Governments who have tried to deal with the problem by legislation—legislation which the Select Committee's report has rightly revealed to be inadequate.

But the truth of the matter has been revealed in many excellent speeches tonight. If families are continually moved on, the children will have no proper, consistent education. I have knowledge of that in my constituency. I am proud that schools in my constituency take pains to give special attention to the needs and problems of the children of travellers. But a particular problem arises on the capitation fees of those schools, because the numbers are taken at certain times of the year which do not correspond with the times when the travellers are there. Therefore, there is gross under-funding. Primary schools may have a 30 per cent. increase in their numbers as a result of an influx of travellers' children for which there is no financial provision, because the children are not there on the day of the count.

Those are factors for which any competent Government must make provision. I do not say "take into account" because two of the most debased phrases in politics are "taking into account" and "make allowances for"—"paying the full cost of" is the currency that I am in business to deal with.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): Does my hon. Friend accept that there is another side to the problem in schools, of which I have evidence in my constituency? The arrival of 25 travellers' children effectively brought a primary school in Chertsey to a halt when they engaged in running battles in the playground. That school did its best to provide education, but it was incapable of doing so.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I think that we are in agreement, not in disagreement. My right hon. Friend has raised another problem—that of a sudden arrival.

I was talking of resources. If the resources do not exist, the problem is still worse. But in some areas the arrival of travellers' children is seasonal and predictable. If their arrival is not predictable, the position is even worse. But if the arrival is predictable, the resources should be made available to deal with them. Those resources should not be on the normal capitation basis, because many of those children need teaching on a one-to-one basis.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I shall give way when I have finished this point.

They need one-to-one teaching if they are not to disrupt the classes. That is not because they have a greater dose of original sin than other children, but because they have a lower threshold of boredom. Unless they can perceive the relevance of what they are being taught to their expectation of their livelihood, their boredom becomes disruptive.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My hon. Friend is a little unjust in berating the Government about capitation, because the formulas are drawn up by each local education authority and vary greatly from one part of the country to another. My own council, Hertfordshire, provides special assistance for schools which have to take travelling children. That takes the form of extra teaching and equipment and more resources for running costs such as the cost of paper. Perhaps my hon. Friend should talk to his local education authority.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Unfortunately, local education authorities can spend only the resources that they have at their disposal. If central Government do not make available significant extra resources for local authorities which have these massive extra expenses, my hon. Friend is simply asking local education authorities to rob Peter to pay Paul. These expenses cannot be met from existing resources.

Many hon. Members wish to speak, and for that reason I shall not cover the whole spectrum of these problems, except to say, first, that the Conservative Government who legislated for a mandatory requirement to provide permanent sites were right. Without permanent sites there cannot be the facilities that go with them, and provision for education. We must accept that wherever those

permanent sites are located they will damage, if not destroy, the value of adjacent properties. That has been apparent throughout the debate.

When a site is chosen it adversely affects one councillor's bailiwick and the rest of the councillors are heartily grateful that their areas are not affected. Therefore, it is probable that the county council—not now the planning authority—which is responsible for choosing the site will, when it negotiates with the district council, find the majority of the district councillors saying, "Thank God, it has not been visited on my bailiwick. Yes, I will vote for it whatever the merits or lack of them." They will do that whether or not the local primary school can accept the children from the site. That is why I impress on my hon. Friend the Minister the fact that there should always be a public inquiry before a decision of this kind is made. That is the only way in which all the issues can be discussed. The damage to the total savings that people have put into their houses is one such real issue that has been brought out in the debate. Other issues are the availability of education, medical resources and transport, which can be properly aired in a public inquiry.

My principal point is that, when a site is chosen, because of the implications which have been so well illuminated in the debate, there should always be a public inquiry before planning permission is granted. It is too severe a test to expect the members of a planning authority, who are relieved that a site is not to be visited on their bailiwick, to decide against the interests of the one councillor who is averse to it. That is my message to my hon. Friend the Minister, who has a most difficult and taxing job to do in this respect. Clearly, none of us envy him.

8.54 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am one of the Members for the county of Surrey, which has recently been directed by the Department of the Environment to provide another 190 official pitches. I do not object to that direction, and I have publicly said so, because it is plain that we need some system of official pitches, as some gipsies, travellers or whatever nomenclature one wishes to apply, want permanent sites.

I have taken the trouble to visit sites in Surrey—one official series of pitches at Claygate in my constituency and another in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The gipsies there were well organised, and by and large seemed responsible. They were looking after the site themselves, in the sense that they had appointed their own hierarchy to make sure that certain tasks were carried out.

Given that the gipsy or traveller problem will not just disappear, I want to put on record before saying some less complimentary things, the fact that the gipsies that I met on the official sites were not likely to cause a great deal of actual harm to the local community, even though the process of assimilation is difficult, especially with schooling, which has been mentioned. Apparently, it is the unknown on both sides which causes tension, but certainly the difference of habit present a serious problem when trying to maintain the normal routine and discipline of school life in the face of an influx of travellers from the permanent sites.

Another difficulty is that there are insufficient permanent sites, certainly in Surrey, for the numerous populations of travellers. It is reckoned that there are about 150 to 200 caravans illegally parked each day in the county. The problem for my constituents and for those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie), who is beside me, is that those itinerants have no responsibility to the community in which they are temporarily parked.

Hon. Members have eloquently given examples of what has happened in their constituencies, and I do not have time to go into much detail. In many cases, temporary stays or in some cases stays of some weeks cause chaos in the community. There is danger from dogs, a perceived danger to health and the travellers call at houses and appear to threaten residents who are going about their normal business. There is disruption because gipsies undertake business practices that no other citizen would ever be allowed on such sites. Travellers often attempt to take advantage of gullible people in the area in conducting their business.

My constituents and those of my colleagues are justifiably angry about the disgraceful rubbish that is often left by gipsies—excrement has been mentioned several times, and it is a genuine problem. The cost of removing rubbish when the gipsies leave is horrendous. There are not just problems of site maintenance; the real cost is that of clearing up after the gipsies have gone. We often have to put up protection against their return. On the Old Common in Cobham in my constituencyy, it is reckoned that the council spent £10,000 putting in a ditch to try to prevent the return of the gipsies after a particularly prolonged stay.

I shall be brief, because other colleagues wish to speak. We do not have sufficient powers under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. I have enormous sympathy for my hon. Friend the Minister who is to sum up a debate in which impassioned presentations have been made, but the legislation on the statute book simply satisfies nobody. It does not satisfy people who have to deal with the problems of illegal parking; it does not even satisfy councils that have achieved designated status, because even when they have achieved that status, they still face legal difficulties in moving people on. It is not a simple process.

As the chief executive of Guildford borough council, in my constituency, said, once designation has been obtained, it is not simple, cheap and quick to move people on. Therefore, I do not believe that there is sufficient incentive to obtain designation, given all the politically charged problems involved in identifying official sites. I know all about those because another village, Claygate, in my constituency contains all the pitches that presently exist in Elmbridge borough. Clearly, residents of that village think that others should contribute to the provision of pitches.

Guildford has provided 17 pitches, but it needs a further 13 to be designated. Elmbridge has provided 16 pitches, but it needs 14 more. There is a dispute between Elmbridge and the Department about whether a group of privately provided pitches should have been included for the purpose of that count, but I shall not go into that this evening.

This problem is not going to get easier and has all the signs of getting worse. It causes great concern to law-abiding citizens, not only when their territory is invaded, but when they are in fear of it being invaded.

When itinerants in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) eventually get moved on, they come into mine. I

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

have a problem in Hurst park, Molesey, in my constituency that I am sure will recur. If itinerants are moved on, they will move to the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton). It is a continual problem and we must have tougher powers even with designation—there is no point in fudging that. I know that the Department does not approve of comparisons with the Epsom and Walton Downs Regulations Act 1984—private legislation—which gave more obviously controlled powers to councils in Epsom and Ewell. That Act cannot be dismissed as applying merely because the Derby is held there, but it may hold lessons that can be extended to wider areas.

We must clarify the Public Order Act 1986 for the police, who constantly say that they do not like to intervene. We must clarify the system of using bailiffs, because there is often insufficient time for them to get round the sites, even when directions have been given, and this causes delays. There was such a case in my constituency.

I shall cut short my remarks but I do not wish my brevity to be interpreted as a lack of detailed argument in favour of the Government gripping the problem. I would not want my hon. Friend the Minister to have to take part in another debate like this one—he has enough problems in other spheres. I hope that he has the good fortune to stay in his current post. Then, unless the legislation is changed, we shall all be debating the issue again in the next Session.

9.3 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I shall make only a few brief remarks, because other hon. Members wish to speak. I apologise for having arrived late from another meeting, but it was absolutely essential.

Before I became a full-time politician, I was an assistant director of social services, heading a research division. I remember the day that the director called me in and asked me to appoint someone to help to deal with the gipsies. That was at Durham county council, and knowing my political affiliation, the House will see the advantage of my having responsibility for the gipsy population.

The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) mentioned the threat to and murder of people in Nazi Germany. Some of those with whom I have to deal have felt under threat for much of the time. There are differences among the travellers in any population. There are those who are poor and others who are rich; some are well educated, others are illiterate and uneducated; some are super-business men, others find difficulty eking out a living.

Durham county council carried out its task of providing for gipsies in a sensible, pragmatic and planned way. All hon. Members have experience of the problems of planning when, for example, people say that they agree that there should be sites for gipsies—but in someone else's area, not theirs. One of Durham's first actions was to adopt a policy of non-harassment. The councillors had some difficulty in agreeing to that, and some of them found it even more difficult to carry out. However, they united behind the policy and it has worked.

Following the Cripps report, the council realised that there were advantages to providing adequate sites for gipsies. If those sites were well prepared with toilets, sheds and so on, the council found that, in general, the gipsies respected them. That was some 13 or 14 years ago, yet some areas still do not provide adequate sites for gipsies.

I have great sympathy with the hon. Member for Tiverton, who referred to the problems of education and the effect of travellers on local schools. Durham carefully studied the possibility of itinerant teachers teaching children on location at gipsy sites rather than in the local schools. The smaller villages with smaller schools cannot always cope with the travellers, who can become a large part of the local population.

I remember a discussion that I had with Hughie Smith, the founder-chairman of the National Gypsy Council. Hon. Members will be aware that, from time to time, people allege that the travellers are not real gipsies. Hughie Smith always says, "A real gipsy pinches the milk out of your tea." People try to disparage travellers by pretending that one group of travellers are real gipsies, but the others are just drop-outs—people who do not want to live in a normal society and who take advantage of the protection for gipsies. That is ludicrous and stupid.

I spent some considerable time talking to gipsies. On one occasion, I attended court following trouble with a lurcher dog which had been worrying sheep. What shook some of the councillors was when I took them to see some of the gipsy caravans. I have always lived in a house, but I must tell hon. Members that the knick-knacks, furniture, silver and other bits and pieces in some of those caravans vastly outweighs the number of such items in my bungalow in Peterlee. Some gipsies are extremely wealthy and some of their caravans are palatial: One had a bigger bar than the Chairman of my Committee had ever seen.

Preparation of sites throughout the country should be speeded up. One hon. Member said that gipsies want to settle. It is true that some do, but we have to provide sites for those who do not. Some gipsies can earn a living only by moving around.

I do not doubt that the Minister is interested in this issue. I know that he took a sympathetic view on the poll tax, and I have no doubt that he will take a similar view of gipsy sites. It would help if local authorities speeded up provision of sites. Some are more dilatory than others.

A policy of non-harassment is vital. We keep talking about gipsies as though there were a different species, but they are human beings and they have to be treated as such. As a group, perhaps because they have lived like that for centuries, they have chosen a way of life that hon. Members would not want. They prefer being itinerant to living in a bungalow like mine in Peterlee. That is merely a cultural difference. We must also consider gipsy children's education, which is essential.

9.11 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I welcome this debate on an important and politically sensitive subject, which has been pushed to the margins of local and central government for far too long. The issue may be prominent for lawyers and theorists, but too often in practice, deeds have fallen far short of intentions.

As so many hon. Members have done, I could also spend 10 minutes expounding the problems that gipsies cause. My constituency is a traditional area for gipsies, and they cause some problems, but a large proportion of

them are law-abiding citizens, who keep their caravans well and make a genuine contribution to the communities in which they live.

There are problems, but they have been caused by lack of firm Government policy and a legislative framework which is too diffuse—reactive rather than proactive—and which pushes gipsy problems on to local councils, which are not best placed to deal with them because of political sensitivities.

I come from a county that is identified in the Select Committee report as one of the laggards. Hereford and Worcester county council is said to be performing badly, despite the fact that it has 157 council and 70 private sites —more than any other county in the east or west midlands.

In the Wyre Forest, at Stourport, we have provision for 56 caravans—the largest provision in the best-providing county. Despite that, we cannot achieve designation. To be fair, the county council has tried for it, and that has produced some justifiable resentment. Moreover, the Hereford and Worcester county council has 550 out of 1,406 caravans—a far greater number than the national average—on unauthorised encampments. As my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said, the national problem is not likely to improve much, and it may well get worse.

The number of caravans is rising all the time: in 1978 there were 8,520; by 1990 that had increased to 11,544 —and we have not even taken into account the factor that the National Gypsy Council mentioned in its latest report, which is the increasing numbers of European travellers who are likely to come here after 1992.

Although there has been some progress in getting more people on to authorised sites, the evidence given to the Select Committee by Mr. Dudding—I feel sorry for him, having heard the drubbing that he has been given—shows that it will take 25 years to clear the backlog and put gipsies on authorised sites, in the process tackling what Mr. Dudding called an intractable problem. Once we have put the gipsies on authorised sites, we must get the sites and amenities up to a reasonable standard.

Three major problems emerge: first, the political insensitivities that surround the issue. Too often, because there are no significant planning guidelines for the allocation of gipsy sites, public inquiries are called for. If an authority wants to set up a new—permanent or temporary—authorised gipsy encampment and has to hold a public inquiry for each one, we shall never make the sort of progress that we need to make to eliminate the problem even within 25 years.

Secondly, the Caravan Sites Act 1968, which I understand was a private Member's measure, was remarkable in that it looked at policy in a wholly demand-led fashion. Because of that, there is never any certainty about whether there will be designation. My county council thought that it would get designation and was told that it would, but having counted the numbers six months later, it discovered that the figures on the basis of which it was trying to get designation were out of date, so none was forthcoming——

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It is a moving staircase.

Mr. Coombs: Indeed.

There are also uncertainties in respect of the powers available to the police under the Public Order Act 1986, although I hope that the Home Department will deal with that problem later this year.

Most importantly, a demand-led policy leads to catch 22: the more virtuous the local authority, the more gipsies come to its area—the honey-pot effect—so the further away designation recedes.

All these problems are exacerbated by the fact that one is dealing with a mobile and undefined population. The National Gypsy Council correctly says that, to deal with the problem in the short or medium term, we must come up with some definition of a gipsy.

This is an intractable problem, not helped by the fact that the legislative framework within which we try to deal with it is weak and diffuse.

The third problem stemming from the legislative framework is that it provides the ultimate opportunity for buck-passing. The Government do the designations; the county council decides where sites go within the county area; then the district council faces the administrative and operational problems of carrying out the policy. Small wonder, then, that Hereford and Worcester county council has not achieved designation, despite trying to for 18 years.

I suggest a number of answers. First, we have suffered because we have taken an unduly paternalistic and public-sector approach to the provision of sites for gipsies.

The National Gypsy Council should be given far more responsibilities for site management and negotiating site acquisitions. That would lead to sites that had been authorised by the National Gypsy Council. It would provide competition for public sector sites.

There is great merit in the National Gypsy Council's suggestion that, if we are to tackle the problem meaningfully and decisively, there should be a national gipsy commission to find sites, and which could also be used as a conduit for either central Government or housing association funding. The Commission would have a role to play in site improvement. It would provide greater impetus for tackling the problem.

We need a better definition of "gipsy". I like the National Gypsy Council's suggestion that it should be "persons of a nomadic tradition of life."
The council believes that a gipsy ought to be able to show that he has followed a nomadic tradition of life for at least two generations before he can call himself a gipsy. By that means, we should be able to cap the potential demand, given the normal demographic and family group factors, for gipsy facilities.

We must also rationalise the operational responsibilities for gipsies. I do not mind whether that is at district or county council level. I should prefer the county council to have the responsibility for both identifying and operating gipsy sites. It would overcome the problem of a local councillor who votes against anything, come what may, because it would affect his own patch. If the matter were dealt with at county council level, it would be administratively simpler and more objective.

In order to get away from the demand-led provision of sites for those who reside in or resort to an area, there ought to be another defence. There is a far greater number of caravan sites than the population justifies in my area. The administrative body ought to be able to say that, if the "resort or reside" demand-led policy is strictly adopted, it

[Mr. Coombs]

would have to provide far more caravan sites than is justified on a strict pro rata population basis. That ought not to happen.

I agree with those hon. Members who have said that tougher enforcement powers following designation, provided that we can speed up the number of permanent gipsy sites by the means that I have suggested, are vital. Enforcement powers should be available, not just for gipsies who happen to be in an area where they are unauthorised and who thereby are causing a nuisance. If we gave the National Gypsy Council more responsibility for the management of both its own and council sites, there would be stricter enforcement powers for sites that are not properly managed. Bad management of sites causes many of the problems of which residents complain.

It is a difficult problem. The Minister has to deal with the problem virtually at third hand through the county and district councils. I do not envy the Minister's task. That applies irrespective of the political colour of the Government. The law needs to be reformed. I hope that the Government will consider my proposals seriously.

9.24 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute briefly to the debate, and I appreciate that other hon. Members have constrained their speeches to allow everyone who wishes to participate in the debate to do so.

I wish to make three points which have been dealt with by a number of hon. Members and to reinforce some of the arguments that have already been aired. I shall concentrate on the numbers of vans, gipsies and travellers that have been designated; the inability of existing legislation to allow the removal of travellers illegally camped on land, and on the permanence and luxury of the vans in which people live, as that affects future numbers, as was spelt out by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs).

The numbers are increasing rather than diminishing. The 1968 legislation was probably based on an expectation that numbers were static or declining but were certainly unlikely to increase. How clear is the Department as to whether the numbers are increasing or decreasing? If we have a 25-year plan for dealing with current numbers, if those numbers are allowed to increase—and how can we prevent it?—we have an insoluble problem which negates all the work and all the money that is being spent.

My second point concerns the luxury and comfort of the vans. This means that the way of life of people who have not considered themselves nomads in the past can be more readily considered as an alternative and as a cheap form of living by those who live in permanent housing and pay for all the responsibilities carried by everyone else in the community. That must be tackled, because it affects the numbers. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest suggested one way in which, through the efforts of the National Gypsy Council, a capping of those numbers could be considered. That suggestion needs following up and pursuing and unless we do that, we shall not find a long-term answer.

Thirdly, the law seems to be unsatisfactorily weighted in favour of those using illegal gipsy sites. They can appeal against High Court injunctions for their removal for a considerable time. In this way they continue to occupy a site for two, three, four or more years, to the great detriment of people living locally, whether in owner-occupied or rented housing. Their lives are being ruined in the way so dramatically described by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). Although my constituency has not suffered the same abuse of individuals and property, there is no doubt that my constituents have the same fears and concerns. They see the local authority as having no powers to remove the illegal encampment, however much it wishes to do so.

Mr. Boyes: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that it is not always that one-sided? I remember an incident involving an illegal site. Thinking that there might be some difficulty, I took someone with me in my car and then went to meet residents of local houses. I assure the hon. Gentleman that those residents, not the itinerants, were trying to turn my car over.

Mr. Wolfson: The hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly proper point, and I accept that it is a valid example. It highlights the points that have been made that such incidents can produce social tensions, and that must be addressed by the changes in legislation. It is little wonder that the residents of those houses felt angry because, as they perceived it, a group of travellers were illegally encamped, yet the law and authority had no power to overcome the problem. That does terrible damage to the law and the standing of the law. We should not be prepared to tolerate that.

A site in my constituency was owned by a gipsy family, on which one caravan was legally parked. The family allowed other members of the "family"—30 caravans—to park on it. They sold plots of the land to members of the family. That was illegal, but they are arguing about title to ownership and can appeal against any action and remain there pending the outcome of those appeals. I am aware that local authorities—I hope that this will not occur in this instance, but I know that it has occurred elsewhere, because I have some knowledge of Cambridgeshire—have done deals to allow part of the site to be used permanently for caravans as a way of solving the problem for the whole of the site. Completely averse to any long or short-term planning arrangements, a permanent site is established quite illegally because there seems to be no other alternative.

Ministers cannot allow that to go on. We need urgently to change the law; and I support the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) that, if action does not follow this debate, we shall be back with more debates on this fundamental and vital issue. We hope for change, and that we shall receive a positive response from my hon. Friend the Minister.

9.33 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): For the most part, this has been an appropriately civilised debate. Subjects that could have been dealt with emotively because of local difficulties that right hon. and hon. Members experience were dealt with sensitively, and the House and those who take an interest in the subject will be grateful for that.

The Minister must be the most unenvied hon. Member and probably the most unenvied Minister of any Department. Almost every hon. Member said that they did

not envy his task. Given some of the other responsibilities that have been part of his portfolio in the past few months, I can understand that he is far from envied, and perhaps justifiably so.

I am a former member of the Select Committee on the Environment. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) presented a typically forensic, accurate and intelligent approach to the subject and he did not understate the case. It was put effectively, as the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee, pointed out. He deserves the congratulations of the House on that task having been so accomplished.

I also congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who clearly represent an area that has a long-standing problem. They resisted the temptation for a media reaction to the resolution of that problem and they talked with great sensitivity and great understanding of the problems in the city of Bradford. They were a great credit to their constituents in the handling of the matter.

The debate has not been party political as this is not a party political issue. However, to take up the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West, it is unfortunate when a political party in any part of the country uses this issue as a stick with which to beat another party at election time. I hope that such heat can be taken out of the subject, as it appears not to have been on at least one occasion in Bradford. It is not constructive, it does not lead anywhere, it builds up false expectations and, in the long run, it is not a helpful way of dealing with the problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) brought to bear on the discussion an understanding unequalled in the House. I cannot think of another hon. Member who has had professional responsibility for dealing with these problems. Although it did not lead to his car being turned over, that is not an irregular event and on occasions, it has been more his problem than anybody else's. He brought a particular experience to the debate, which was useful and helpful. I cannot cover all the speeches in great detail because of the restricted time available, and I am anxious not to overrun the time allocated to me.

The problem is not getting any smaller, as various hon. Members pointed out. The number of authorised encampments in 1981—to take a reference point—was about 4,200; there are no more than 4,500 now. Any progress has been small and has not eaten into the problem. The consequences of not dealing with the demand for places have been outlined by other hon. Members, but they may need underlining further.

Maternity Alliance, which has not been mentioned so far, is not a party political body and is concerned mainly with the problems of childbirth and motherhood. It has highlighted the problem for travellers in securing safe stopping places during childbirth. Apparently, there has been an acknowledged problem—not a huge problem because the numbers are not high—of people finding a secure place to give birth. The Maternity Alliance has also pointed out that the use of the Public Order Act 1986 has, on occasions, led to pregnant women being harassed—not with fatal consequences—at a time when the last thing that they need is to be moved on, harassed and harried by police and other officials.

The National Council for Civil Liberties generates controversy from time to time, but generally it tries to act as a watchdog for our civil liberties, and I am sure that most reasonable hon. Members agree that it fulfils a necessary function. The NCCL has pointed out that, on occasions, the civil rights of travelling people have been breached. It has stated that there is a need for designated sites and proper stopping places. It is difficult to protect the civil rights of anybody who does not have a regular pattern of living.

The NCCL has recognised that about one third of England is, in effect, a no-go area for travelling people. That shows the reality of the choices available to them. They are not welcome in and will be moved on from as much as one third of the area of England. We need to address that serious problem. The NCCL has also published a series of proposals, not all of which either the Labour party or myself would endorse. Nevertheless, it has highlighted the fact that in this case there has been an erosion of civil liberties and that we must deal with that issue.

Several hon. Members referred to the problem of education which, for many travelling children, simply does not exist. Many of them do not have any continuity or pattern to their education because the lack of permanent sites and stopping places makes that impossible. That means that we shall have a continuing problem. The merry-go-round of official action, which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West highlighted so well and to which the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) referred, but from a different perspective, is also evident in travelling children's education. They cannot have any continuity when they are moved from pillar to post and do not know where they will be from one month—or even one week—to the next.

Several studies have been carried out on the health of travelling children and their families. A review article in the *Journal* of the Royal College of General Practitioners in October 1989 listed some of the health problems that general practitioners have encountered when trying to give treatment to the families of travelling people. The article refers to the hostile environment in which travelling people often live, which is often a breeding ground for disease and leads to various other problems. It also refers to their problems of access to health care because, as I said, they do not have a regular pattern of living and have no regular base. Both the length of that article and the limited time available to me prevent me from going into as much detail as I should have liked, but I repeat that we must address that real health problem.

The real problem is that this Government and, to some extent, previous Labour Governments, have failed properly to enforce the legislative powers that already exist. It is that failure that has created all the other problems. It has led to the problems of which my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington has experience and to the problems experienced in constituencies across the country where there are rival hostilities. On the one hand, there is a need to provide homes for people to live in but, on the other hand, there is the problem of the hostility of resident communities when unofficial encampments are set up and sometimes even when there are attempts to establish more permanent bases.

In the end, the responsibility falls to Government. If local authorities, whatever their political persuasion, do

[Mr. George Howarth]

not fulfil their obligations, central Government must make them do so. That is the thrust of the Select Committee report and the thrust that my hon. Friends and I support.

I hope that, at long last, the health, education and other problems that have been raised in the debate, including the need to find sites, are tackled effectively. If they are not, the problems, as in the past 10 years or more, will continue to grow. If that happens, it will bring no credit to the Government, to the House and to hon. Members. While I suspect that the Minister will not be able to satisfy us that all those problems will be tackled, he has a worthy task.

This has been a good debate, which has shown that the Government of the day must try to resolve the problems that exist for this minority of people. Otherwise they will be the Government of only part of the nation and will not be looking after the interests of all, including this minority.

9.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I shall do my best in the 15 minutes remaining to answer the points that have been raised. I join others in congratulating all who participated in the debate, which has been of high quality. It has fairly reflected the fact that this is the first prime time debate on gipsies for many years. It vindicates the use that has been made on this occasion of important estimates time and has shown the widespread interest in the subject by hon. Members in all parts of the House.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on the clear and concise way in which he introduced the debate and presented the findings of the Select Committee. He, as a representative of Hertfordshire, knows more about the problem than many. He drew attention to some of the issues involved.

It has been obvious during the debate that it is not easy to find any consensus on the subject. If we needed reminding of that, we did not have to wait long before we heard the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) complaining that Bradford had been designated, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) complaining that Haringey had not been designated. It is against that background that I have been fortunate in receiving so much in the way of commiseration from hon. Members on both sides.

The starting point is the numbers and the progress that has been made since the passing of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. When that measure was passed, relatively few gipsies were on authorised sites. By January 1979 there were 8,358 gipsy caravans in England, of which 4,182 were on authorised sites and almost an equivalent number on unauthorised sites. In other words, only 50 per cent. by January 1979 were on authorised sites.

By January 1990—it is important when comparing figures always to choose the same month in the year because there is much variation during the course of a year—there were 11,544 gipsy caravans in England, an increase of about 3,200. The number on authorised sites had gone up from 4,182 to 7,650, an increase of about 3,500. That was a creditable improvement in performance, brought about by the way in which the Government implemented the Act. It is also significant that the number of caravans on authorised private sites has gone up significantly, from about 1,100 in 1979 to 2,471 in January this year.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and others pointed out, the question is to what extent the number will continue to increase, for at present the number of gipsy caravans is increasing almost as fast as additional provision is being made. That is why one can get a projection that it will be many years before the problem is resolved. I take a much more pessimistic—or perhaps realistic—view. The problems will never be solved while we rely on the legislation that we have. As soon as the demand is satisfied, there will be additional demands.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West drew attention to the difficulty of defining a gipsy. It is worth reminding the House that the issue was considered in another place in a court judgment in 1988. The judgment confirmed the statutory definition by concluding:

"The test of a person claiming to be a gipsy is that of a nomadic way of life rather than race or origin."

It is for the local authority to decide whether a person or group of people comes within that definition. From what one hears, there may be more scope for local authorities to question the credentials of some people who present themselves as gipsies. If that was done, we might see a slowing of the increase in the number of gipsy caravans. Clearly, it is not worth while for a council to undertake that questioning role unless it is designated. If it is designated, it can take effective action to ensure that unauthorised camping in its area is significantly reduced, if not eliminated.

We have heard that the increase in provision represents genuine progress, but of course things are not absolutely perfect. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green reminded the House of the vile way in which some so-called gipsies behave and the awful consequences for people who live in the area. At the end of a powerful speech, my hon. Friend asked what advice I could give him. My advice is to seek to persuade his council in Haringey to apply for designation. My Department has done all that it can to persuade Haringey to apply for designation.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I assure my hon. Friend that I have done everything within my power to persuade the local authority to apply for designation. It debated the matter, and on a majority vote decided not to do so.

Mr. Chope: That is disappointing news. I know that my hon. Friend will continue to pursue that. He asks the Government to force designation on Haringey, but it is clear from the debate tonight that even where an authority is designated, as Bradford city council is, the council can decide not to use its powers of designation. I fear that, if the Government legislated to satisfy my hon. Friend's request, the irresponsible Haringey council would refuse to use the powers that it had under designation.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Then it could be subject to judicial review or the old writs of certiorari or mandamus.

Mr. Chope: That is possible, but my hon. Friend is familiar with the difficulties of enforcing measures when a local authority is reluctant to fulfil its responsibilities under the law.

Mr. Madden *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I shall come to Bradford. When Bradford was brought into the discussion, it was the low point of the

debate. The hon. Member for Bradford, West said that the result of designation in Bradford was no progress. The only reason why there was no progress in Bradford was that Bradford city council, which is now, sadly, under Labour control, did not use its powers under designation. The hon. Members for Bradford, West and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) traduced the true background of designation in Bradford. None of the neighbouring authorities raised substantial objections to the proposed designation, except North Yorkshire county council.

In the Bradford decision letter, the Department formally warned adjacent authorities such as Calderdale and Kirklees that, if they did not make provision, the Secretary of State would be obliged to take action against them. The Department's regional office has followed up those warnings with meetings, as it is important that adequate provision is made in those adjoining authorities.

Bradford is designated, and it is up to Bradford to decide whether it wants to use those powers of designation. From the information that I have received, I believe that the people of Bradford would much prefer the powers to be used so that they are not subjected to so much unnecessary nuisance from gipsies.

Mr. Madden: In Bradford, there are insufficient permanent sites for travellers who have come to the city over the year and neighbouring authorities have singularly failed to make permanent site provision. Therefore, does the Minister agree that the powers of designation are absolutely worthless? To seek to implement designation is futile because all one would seek to do would be to take caravans to the border of the authority, which would then immediately return. Designation is not an adequate solution to a long-standing problem that has affected administrations of all political persuasions and, over the years, cost the ratepayers of Bradford the best part of £500,000.

Mr. Chope: I am afraid that I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. Designation and the implementation of the powers of designation are not futile. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green recognises that if Haringey had designation, problems would be rapidly resolved. The same would be true of Bradford if the Labour council had the will to do more on behalf of the local people.

Mr. Cryer *rose*—

Mr. Chope: I shall not give way again. I have given way twice, and I have four minutes left in which to reply to the debate.

Important points about enforcement have been raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green spoke about section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986. The House will be aware that, on 26 October 1989, my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary announced an evaluation of the working of section 39 of that Act, which will consider the sort of problems that my hon. Friend raised. The outcome of that review is expected at the end of the year. Certainly there seems to be a difference in the policies of police forces in different parts of the country.

My hon. Friends the Members for Sevenoaks and for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) spoke about enforcement, which is a problem. I was interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks said because, many years ago, I cut my teeth as a barrister largely relying on defending gipsies in Sevenoaks magistrates court. I am familiar with the number of gipsies in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Robert Carnwath, in his report on planning enforcement, considered caravans and how one can effectively issue an injunction against the unlawful occupation of land by a caravan that is being used for residential occupation. The Government believe that legislation is needed in that respect. I hope that it will be brought forward soon and will do something significant to relieve the problems to which my hon. Friends drew attention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) did not believe that the designation powers were quick enough, cheap enough or effective enough. I believe that those powers can be used effectively, but the speed with which they are used obviously depends on the relationship that the local authority has with the local magistrates court—most local authorities do not seem to have a problem in that respect.

Obviously, costs can be incurred when cleaning up after the gipsies have left, but such cost is unavoidable so long as some gipsies behave in an anti-social manner. Designation and enforcement are more effective when more authorities are designated; that is why the Government are putting a lot of emphasis on trying to encourage more authorities to come forward with gipsy sites so that they can be designated.

This is very much a carrot-and-stick policy. The Government have tried to give local authorities the incentive to designate more sites. We have backed that up with a 100 per cent. grant and we are now considering whether to say that after a given period of time we shall no longer give any grant so that the minds of local authorities will be even more concentrated, giving them a greater incentive to seek designation for the provision of the extra gipsy sites that we need.

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to paragraphs (4) and (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates), to put forthwith the deferred Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on Estimates, 1990-91 (Class III, vote 3 and Class VIII, vote 4) and the remaining Estimates appointed for consideration this day.*

CLASS III, VOTE 3

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £87,366,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on market support, grants and loans for capital and other improvements, support for agriculture in special areas and compensation to sheep producers, animal health, arterial drainage, flood and coast protection, and certain other services.

CLASS XVI, VOTE 1

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £21,679,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Welsh Office on market support, grants for capital and other improvements, support for agriculture in special areas and compensation to sheep producers, animal health, arterial drainage, flood an coast protection, and certain other services.

CLASS XVI, VOTE 5

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £194,160,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Welsh Office tourism, roads and transport and certain associated services, housing, historic buildings and ancient monuments, other environmental services (including civil defence), education, libraries and museums, health and personal social services, grants in aid, EC agency payments, other grants and certain other services, including research.

CLASS XVI, VOTE 9

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £30,926,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges that will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Welsh Office on central administration.

CLASS VIII, VOTE 4

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £30,785,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on road infrastructure required for the development of new towns, gypsy sites, smoke control, planning redevelopment and other environmental services, on other water supply, conservation and sewage services, and on town and country planning (including compensation).

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question which he was directed to put, pursuant to paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.).*

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £77,488,089,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1991 as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 242, 243, 244 and 456.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (APPROPRIATION) BILL

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the six foregoing resolutions, the two resolutions of 14 June and the three resolutions of 2 July relating to Estimates 1990-91 (Vote on Account), by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Richard Ryder and Mr. Peter Lilley.

Mr. Peter Lilley accordingly presented a Bill to apply a sum out of the Consolidated Fund for the service of the year ending on 31 March 1991, to appropriate the supplies granted in this Session of Parliament, and to repeal certain Consolidated Fund and Appropriation Acts: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 144.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Business of the House Motion in the name of Sir Geoffrey Howe may be proceeded with, though opposed until the end of a period of one and a half hours after it has been entered upon.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Business of the House

10.1 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move,

That, (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Patten relating to Local Government may be proceeded with, at the sitting on Wednesday 11th July, though opposed, until midnight; and, at the sitting on Thursday 12th July, if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of Mr. Speaker shall at Seven o'clock put the Question already proposed from the Chair and shall then put forthwith successively the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the remaining Motions; and

(2) If proceedings on the above Motions have not been completed before Seven o'clock at the sitting on Thursday 12th July, the Private Business set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means for consideration at that hour shall stand over until the conclusion of such proceedings, and the said Private Business may be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours after it has been entered upon.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you will see, the motion is divided into two parts. As I understand it, it was put down as recently as last Friday. Will you accept a manuscript amendment to the second part, the section which deals with the private business next Thursday? If that were possible, it would be for the convenience of the House. Some of us do not want the second half of the motion, but are quite happy with the first part. As this is only the third day that it has been on the Order Paper, will you accept a manuscript amendment?

Mr. Speaker: The motion was down on Friday, when it was objected to. There would have been time to table an amendment yesterday.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The motion on the Order Paper has two purposes, as the House will divine. First, it provides for the debate on the charge limitation orders to continue until midnight tomorrow and until 7 o'clock on Thursday. Secondly—the point that is objected to by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)—it allows the private business on Thursday to run for a full three hours even if the preceding business prevents that private business from starting at 7 o'clock.

The timing of the local government orders was agreed through the usual channels last week. It is worth noticing that, if the motion were not approved by the House, under Standing Orders the debate on the three separate orders would continue tomorrow evening until they were disposed of, which could be as late as 2.30 am. The debate could not be continued on Thursday and it is clear that that is not what the House would wish.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On many occasions you have ruled that sub judice matters should not be discussed in the House. As the Bill has gone to the Lords, may I ask you to say that the sub judice rule now applies to the business before the House?

Mr. Speaker: That does not arise. The local government motions are delegated legislation and the sub judice rule does not bite on that.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The second part of the motion provides so-called injury time for private business. In allowing that, I am meeting a request from the Chairman

of Ways and Means. Bearing in mind that the business on Thursday—the London Underground Bill—affects the area surrounding the Palace and has been the subject of a report from the Services Committee, the Chairman considers that there is sufficient interest in that Bill to warrant giving it a full three hours' debate. That is the purpose of the second part of the motion.

I hope that the House will agree to this entirely reasonable request from the Chair and to the other agreed arrangements that I have mentioned. Any hon. Member who has concerns about the private business can raise them in the debate in the proper way.

10.6 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): The first part of the procedural motion is as we expected, and all hon. Members understand the need for it. It has been discussed in the usual way. The second part of the motion deals specifically with the way in which we deal with private Bills. It is well known that Opposition Members and some other hon. Members are not happy with the way in which private Bills are dealt with. The reasons are well rehearsed and have been debated many times, and no doubt we shall have another such debate before long, because the Government have issued a consultation document on the subject which I hope will lead to reform of the way in which we deal with private Bills.

I cannot understand—and the Leader of the House has not given us sufficient explanation—why we have to have this unusual procedural motion to deal with one private Bill which will be before the House on Thursday. Why does that Bill have to be protected, if I may put it that way? I am not discussing the Bill's merits because, as has rightly been said, they can be discussed at the appropriate time, but questions need to be raised as to why some Bills are protected by procedure and others are not. At a time when everyone recognises that we need to look at the way in which private Bills are dealt with, why is it necessary to have a rather tactless but specific procedural motion to deal with one private Bill? As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said, the motion was rather surprisingly brought forward on Friday but was not moved.

Mr. Cryer: The motion was not moved on Friday and came before the House only yesterday. That means that a rather sudden procedure has been visited upon the House.

Mr. Grocott: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is precisely for those reasons that we are not happy with the motion. So far, the Leader of the House has not given a satisfactory explanation as to why it is necessary to bring the motion forward on this Bill.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household): It was agreed through the usual channels.

Mr. Grocott: No, it was not, and the hon. Gentleman knows that perfectly well. We must have a satisfactory explanation of why matters have developed in this way.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Did I hear my hon. Friend aright? Did he say that there had been no agreement through the usual channels? Does he recall that, on two occasions last week, the usual channels did not operate, and as a result there was an almighty shambles and a row in the House? The new Leader of the House seems to be more concerned about getting to bed than with dealing with the matters in hand. I think that this matter should go back—I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) agrees—and we should have a discussion about it. We should not treat Mr. Speaker with contempt because he made it abundantly clear last week that he wanted to sit in the Chair and see the usual channels operate. I do not want to sound as though I am protecting the Speaker——

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): My hon. Friend is doing a good job.

Mr. Skinner: I know that it sounds like that. It is high time that the usual channels got together and sorted this out. I have reason to believe that if the line goes ahead there will be a great big heap of earth stuck in the middle of Parliament square for five years——

Mr. Cryer: Seven years.

Mr. Skinner: Seven years—it is going up—any advance on seven years? The Speaker will not be able to get his car round it. The Prime Minister will be gone by then and there will be a new Prime Minister with a Daimler who will not be able to get round the heap either.

Mr. Grocott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his diplomatic intervention. He is almost part of the usual channels himself these days, and he has been helpful.

It is clear that such motions should not go down on the Order Paper in this way, without proper discussion. I am sure that, unless the Leader of the House comes forward with a far better explanation than he has done so far, many of us will be inclined to vote against the motion.

10.13 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Many of us are concerned about the Government's use of private Bills. The London Underground Bill will provide another arm in the legislation that the Government are introducing. The House knows of the difficulties that we have had over the Bills relating to docks and the opposition that has been generated because of the Government's actions. Therefore, to use this procedure as the Leader of the House is suggesting is contrary to the will of the House.

Private business and private Bills are a matter for the House of Commons, not the Government. Irrespective of any letter from the Chairman of Ways and Means, for the Government to table a motion insisting that we have three hours of debate with no interruption makes many of us suspicious that the Government have done that in the hope that they can pass the Bill on Thursday night in one sitting. If that were to happen, it would be outrageous. This is a highly contentious Bill.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend makes a valuable point, because the Government appear to be prejudging any decision that you, Mr. Speaker, may make tomorrow night. By putting down a time limit of three hours it is obvious that they expect you to accept the closure motion on this important private Bill. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) would agree that it is wrong for the Government to seek to restrict debate in the House on such an important matter.

Mr. Orme: I put it to the Leader of the House, because I think that he is a fair person——

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Leave it to the sagacious Members of the House. My hon. Friend knows best.

Mr. Orme: I am sorry if my hon. Friend does not agree, but I am sure that the Leader of the House is a fair person. I speak as a member of the Select Committee dealing with the Bill. We have met the Secretary of State for Transport and the chairman of London Transport, and have taken technical advice. The Committee sees the Bill as a major proposition and believes that it should be examined in detail. Many of us believe that the Bill is seen by many people as a developers' Bill that will assist the development in Canary wharf and the east end of London.

I must make it clear that, although many of us are opposed to some aspects of the Bill, we are not opposed to the Jubilee line. We are opposed to the interchange being sited in Parliament square, and we shall develop that argument more fully on Thursday. I urge the Leader of the House to withdraw the motion.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Does the right hon. Gentleman, who is chairman of the parliamentary Labour party, understand the proposals? I shall remind him what they entail. The first point is not opposed by anyone—it has been agreed through the usual channels. It allows the debate to proceed until midnight tomorrow and until 7 o'clock on Thursday. The second point is designed to prevent the time available for debate on Thursday being curtailed by any Divisions that may take place at 7 o'clock. It is designed not to constrict, but to enlarge, the amount of time available. It will ensure that there is a full three hours for debate.

The motion has been tabled in response to a specific request from the Chairman of Ways and Means in the following terms:

"As you know, this Bill affects the area immediately surrounding the precincts of the Palace and has been the subject of a report from the Services Committee. The Chairman of Ways and Means feels that there is sufficient interest in this Bill to warrant Members being given a full three hours debating time."

I am responding to a request from the Chairman of Ways and Means to enlarge the time available to accommodate precisely the sort of points that the right hon. Gentleman wishes to make. Had I not tabled the motion, the time available would be reduced by whatever time was taken by Divisions. I am responding to a specific request to meet the very points being raised by the right hon. Gentleman. I hope that, on that basis, he will now concur with the motion.

Mr. Orme: I followed closely what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said. Will he give an assurance that he will not move the closure and seek to put the matter to a vote on Thursday evening?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The conduct of the proceedings on Thursday night will be under the charge of the Chairman of Ways and Means in the usual way. All that I am doing is attempting to ensure that the usual amount of time is available for that to take place.

Mr. Orme: It is that very point that makes me so suspicious. I understand the request from the Chairman of Ways and Means, but it is a Government motion. The Government are responsible for the motion and for the conduct of the business. We have a suspicion that the Government are trying to bounce the House to pass a Bill on a basis that is quite unacceptable to the House. I could develop that argument, but I think that I have made my point. I urge my hon. Friends and any Conservative Members who want fair play to vote against the motion.

10.18 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): We are in an unusual and I understand, unprecedented position, because the Government's proposals to cap the poll tax in an enormous number of local authorities—which are to be debated for an extended period tomorrow and until 7 o'clock on Thursday—do not allow sufficient time for proper consideration of what is probably the most draconian imposition on local government that we have ever witnessed—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) would just listen for a moment, he would hear my argument. The proposals merit far more than a day and a half of debate—indeed, far more than an extended day and a half.

With more democratic management, there would have been far longer and there would not have been any risk that the time necessary to discuss and vote on the three orders would interfere with the time set aside under the procedures of the House for private business. The usual channels—not a mechanism which normally benefits my party or one which we endorse—regard a day and a half as sufficient. I think it is not sufficient, even if one includes the time for three votes—up to three quarters of an hour. The motion has been tabled as a result of bad management. The Government have not allowed enough time.

However, I shall vote for the business motion tonight, for the following reason. We need at least three hours for the Second Reading debate on the London Underground Bill and the Jubilee line. I agree with the chairman of the parliamentary Labour party, the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), who said that we need more than three hours.

I have a particular interest in Thursday evening's debate, because the London Underground Bill greatly affects my constituents. It contains a proposal to extend the Jubilee line from Green park via Westminster, under the river to Waterloo, through the north part of Southwark, into the Isle of Dogs, on to the Greenwich peninsula and then on to Stratford.

Until this morning, there had been a general expectation that the underground would have two new stations in the borough of Southwark—in Southwark and in Bermondsey—as part of the proposals to which the Government would announce their commitment. I awoke this morning to find two reports in the national press suggesting that those stations might now not be built. I had already yesterday arranged an urgent meeting for today with the Minister for Public Transport.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, but surely his argument is more relevant to the private Bill than to the business motion.

Mr. Hughes: I am seeking to keep to the subject of the business motion, and I understand the difference. The important relationship between the business motion and Thursday's debate is that that will be our only opportunity to debate what appears to be a substantial risk that a Bill

which originally would have produced some benefit for my constituency will not now do so. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that we have an extended debate of three hours.

The conjunction of business on Thursday means a debate and vote on poll tax capping for Southwark and then a debate on the Jubilee line, which is proposed to go under Southwark, but with no commitment for extra stations for the borough.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): All for nothing.

Mr. Hughes: As the hon. Member for Workington says, the risk is that we will have four or five years of disruption for the building of an underground line under the borough with no new stations to show for it.

The reason why we need time on Thursday for the private Bill but why this is bad management of business for the poll tax debate is that there are substantial cost implications for Southwark of the London Underground Bill, which the same day will probably be capped and have its budget reduced from £241,000 to about £229,000 if the orders are passed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Surely not? It is £235,000.

Mr. Hughes: No, £291,000 is currently the council's budget. The juxtaposition of the draconian poll tax capping of one of the poorest boroughs in Britain with a debate in which we are likely to hear that there will be no commitment to public transport benefit for the same borough is pretty rich indeed.

I hope that we shall have three hours for the London Underground debate on Thursday. We should also have had far longer for the poll tax debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Labour gain.

Mr. Hughes: It will not be a Labour gain. In this May's local election, Labour got 35 per cent. of the vote in Southwark and Bermondsey, and we got 55 per cent. I shall try not to be distracted again.

I am sad that the result of the procedural muddle into which the Government have got themselves is that the important debates of tomorrow and Thursday will be curtailed; and that the House's usual procedures will now —although rightly—be disrupted by the need to protect private business.

I gather that the House is soon to decide on how to conduct private business—there have been inquiries, Committees have reported and the Government have given their responses. If we are to debate private legislation in this place, we need enough time to discuss it properly on Second Reading, and that may necessitate far more than three hours. If we are not to debate private legislation here, then major development must be decided by a proper democratic process. At the moment, all we have is a muddle, and inadequate time to discuss matters of immense local interest. We have to contort the procedures of the House to squeeze in a combination of public and private business—trying to pour a quart into a pint pot. it is a sad state of affairs, and this motion will barely rescue some time for consideration of the vital private business on Thursday.

10.26 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The first half of the motion is the more palatable. It is worth pointing out that every order should have at least one and a half hours discussion; by lumping the orders together tomorrow, the Government will allow each one much less than that.

One of the Government's problems is that they are short of time. They have already announced that the House will rise on 26 July, so by means of this motion they are pushing through legislation as rapidly as possible in the diminishing time that they have left. That is entirely typical of a Government who, for the past 10 years, have abused the democratic procedures of the House and forced through Act after Act—far more, in fact, than the House and its secretarial staff can cope with.

Mr. Skinner: Is my hon. Friend really trying to convince me, at 10.27 pm, that the Government are in time trouble? Is he seriously telling us that, because the House is getting up at the end of July, they do not have time to deal with this matter? I read a report in the *Evening Standard* that the House would have risen on the 19th, but that the Government would carry on to the 26th not because they did not have time but because two more garden parties had been laid on. Three of them have been put on this time—one extra because "she" is not paying the poll tax. If that is so, we are only here to allow those garden parties to take place, so that all those Members of Parliament can go trotting down the Mall. When I bump into them at the end of St. James's park, I say, "'Eh up, Jack, where are you going?" They say, "Well, it's the wife, you know."

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would it not be more appropriate if the hon. Gentleman sought to catch the eye of the Chair to put these most interesting points to the whole House rather than to his hon. Friend?

Mr. Cryer: I am surprised by my hon. Friend's comments. What worries me, as he knows, is that the national executive committee of the Labour party has expressed some reservations about the anti-poll tax union. If Her Majesty is not paying the poll tax, as my hon. Friend suggests that she is not, that means that she will be part of the anti-poll tax union, so when we are in government our leadership may be somewhat reluctant to go and talk to her——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a long tradition of the House that we do not involve members of the royal family in our arguments.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for preventing me from entering that area. I must relate my remarks to the two motions. I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The Government are in difficulty over timing.

Mr. Skinner: We could come back in August.

Mr. Cryer: The only way the Government have managed to get their legislation through is by one guillotine after another. Only by tabling procedural motions such as this have they been able to squeeze in the additional legislation.

Earlier this evening we discussed the problems associated with gipsies. It was one of the few occasions when we had time to debate that important subject without the continuing pressure of legislation. The House does not deal effectively with delegated powers. The capping orders are affirmative orders that each deserve one and a half hours of debate. The majority of legislation affecting our citizens is not primary legislation—it is provided by means of delegated powers, such as the poll tax capping orders. Delegated legislation should be given the degree of attention that it merits—much more than one and a half hours for each order.

We are considering 20 orders which, if each were given one and a half hours, would be debated for 30 hours. That shows how the House is being robbed of time. There would be 20 Divisions, so that we could register our clear opposition to each order. Every hon. Member representing a poll tax-capped authority would be able to spell out the cuts that the Government are imposing on them. Each authority will have to make emergency plans. We ought to be able to refer to the teachers and caretakers who will have to be sacked and the services for the mentally handicapped that will have to be cut, all because of the Government.

The first part of the business motion inevitably means that those details cannot be spelt out in the time available. There is insufficient time to accommodate all 20 Members of Parliament who represent poll tax-capped authorities. All of them are represented by Labour Members, but a crop of Tories will be sent in by the Whips, who will tell them, "Don't let the Opposition take up too much time —We want you to go in and speak for Tory-controlled local authorities that are not poll tax-capped." Those Members will use up 10 minutes of our time, in which we could have referred to areas being robbed by this Tory Government. We shall be robbed by the Tory serfs—servile people who speak in the debate at the behest of the Whips and take up our time. Then the Leader of the House —Mogadon man personified—comes here to set the place on fire.

Mr. Skinner: Mogadon man has changed his name; he is now Slippery Dick.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In ordinary circumstances, if the Tories took up half of each one and a half hours, with luck we might get 45 minutes. The Leader of the House has now come to tell us that we cannot even have that. We are to be limited to less than the full 30 hours which ought to be allocated to the order.

It is true that this has been agreed by the usual channels, but the usual channels know full well that the Government would bring in their huge majority and push through a more restrictive business motion.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Hon. Members should be quite clear that the Government have fiddled the arrangements, because they have concertina-ed 20 poll tax-capping provisions into three orders, one of which deals with a single authority, another with three authorities and the other with 16 authorities. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, there should be a separate debate on each of those motions. The Government have already concertina-ed those into three orders so it is a double fiddle—first, reducing it to three orders and, secondly, giving us only one debate for 20 councils' poll tax limits.

Mr. Cryer: The House will soon have to consider the delegated legislation provisions. It is quite wrong to compress orders in this way. If the orders are important,

they should be given the one and half hours maximum time. The hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) mentioned the Education (Student Loans) Order, but debate on that was curtailed. Many hon. Members wanted to participate but made short speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) was unable to participate, and made a point of order in protest.

Serious and important legislation such as these poll tax capping orders, which will affect millions of people, is being rushed through the House in, at best, an hour and a half and, at worst, in a few minutes. That is a matter of considerable outrage.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend said that the timing of the debate on poll tax capping had been agreed by the usual channels. I am not quite sure what "usual channels" means, so perhaps he will explain that to me. The Leader of the House must realise that it has not been agreed by Back Benchers, and if it has not been agreed by Back Benchers, there may be problems for the Leader of the House.

Mr. Cryer: The usual channels, as my hon. Friend knows, are the Whips on both sides. My hon. Friends in the Whips Office are in some difficulty because they have to negotiate the best deal.

Mr. Skinner: 'Allo, 'allo, 'allo!

Mr. Cryer: The Government are always imposing the potential threat, "If you do not agree, we will bring the troops in and force something through which is much less acceptable." As far as I understand it, that is how the usual channels work. Not having anything to do with the Whips Office at any time, I can tell my hon. Friend that I am not aware of the intricate mechanisms.

Mr. Sedgemore: My hon. Friend will be.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) suggests that I will be. With his new-found enthusiasm for the European Community, he is much more likely to get into the Whips Office and the establishment before me.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The abuse of orders that my hon. Friend mentioned is considerable. Last night, we had an hour and a half on the Education (Student Loans) Order, which was much more significant than the Education (Student Loans) Bill. The Bill was a general enabling measure, and the detail was contained in the order. The order was 50 per cent. longer than the legislation, which we had spent considerable time debating in the House, but we had no chance of a reasonable or proper discussion on any of the serious issues.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful for those points, and my hon. Friend is right. The motion is pushing through a chunk of delegated legislation. At the end of 1989, we held the Commonwealth delegated legislation conference, which occurs every five years. Many Commonwealth countries have much more careful scrutiny of delegated powers. In Canada, New Zealand and Zimbabwe, it is recognised that delegated powers have as much impact as—and sometimes more than—primary legislation.

The equivalent of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which scrutinises delegated legislation, often has the right to prevent a debate from taking place until it has reported to the legislature, which does not occur here, and it has the right to stop the legislation coming into operation until it has received all the information it has requested. If there is a suggestion that the delegated legislation being considered is ultra vires, the Committee has the right to stop the legislation coming into force until a replacement order is put into operation.

The business motion shows how inferior this House is. We not only do not have an hour and a half—itself a nominal period—but no Committee, whether the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments or any other Select Committee, has power to modify, delay, disrupt or change statutory instruments.

It has been pointed out that some of the statutory instruments mentioned in the business motion are being grouped together.

Mr. Skinner: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cryer: I will just finish this point.

The House does not have the right to amend delegated legislation, which is wrong, because many of the statutory instruments are far longer than the primary legislation which gives the Minister power. That is absurd. It is a convenience for and an abuse by the Executive to put through the House primary legislation consisting of half a dozen clauses with wide enabling powers and then to produce statutory instruments 20 or 30 pages long and containing 40 or 50 enormous schedules.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cryer: I will give way, but I have a list and I like to be fair, so I shall give way to hon. Members in the order in which they caught my eye.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover —*[Interruption.]* It is late, isn't it? My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is talking about delegated and primary legislation. I hear him talk about it on many occasions. We put him in a special job. We shunted him along to be Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which includes Members of the House of Lords. I and my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), the new Euro-fanatic, are beginning to wonder what my hon. Friend is doing in the Chair. We hear complaint after complaint. Why is my hon. Friend not delivering the goods? It is time we heard about that. Is my hon. Friend telling me that he is not smart enough to beat Mogadon man?

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend—I am not sure what for, but one has to be courteous on these occasions. My hon. Friend will recall that the order on student loans was withdrawn by a Minister and deferred for almost a week because the Committee had not reported. That was done on the insistence of myself, as Chairman of the Select Committee, and other hon. Members. The House insisted on having the information that we are required by Standing Order to provide.

Mr. Trimble: I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's complaints about delegated legislation, which he said was sometimes almost as important as primary legislation, and about the absence of an opportunity to amend it. Does he agree that those points

[Mr. Trimble]

apply with even greater force when the delegated legislation is primary legislation, as with Orders in Council for Northern Ireland? Will he support us in trying to end that iniquitous system?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has been very good up to now in relating his comments to the business motion. Perhaps he will continue to do so.

Mr. Cryer: I shall, of course, relate what I am saying to the business motion——

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance on the business motion, which is split into two parts. May I take it that you will be putting both parts separately?

Madam Deputy Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman knows me better than that. When the time comes, I shall put the motion as it stands.

Mr. Cryer: The scrutiny of delegated legislation is unsatisfactory. Bringing that fact to the attention of the Chamber is an important way of seeking improvements which, I judge, is part of my task as Chairman of the Committees on Statutory Instruments. Raising these points also highlights one difficulty which will be compounded if this business motion were to apply to legislation affecting Northern Ireland—that the scrutiny of Northern Ireland legislation, which is under the control of one individual, is less than satisfactory. The Committee receives certain orders governing Northern Ireland, but by no means the whole gamut. I share the concern of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) that this matter involves a great issue which needs rectifying.

Mrs. Mahon (Halifax): My hon. Friend takes a great deal of interest in my council area of Calderdale, which is covered by one of the orders. From what my hon. Friend and other hon. Members have said, am I right in understanding that the capping of Calderdale council will not be debated separately? This is a serious issue. Indeed, the local council issued a press release earlier tonight to the effect that £1 million will have to be cut from the education budget. As my hon. Friend knows, we are in the bottom 10 per cent. in terms of education spending. Furthermore, there is still selective education—grammar schools—in my constituency.

Is there no way in which we can have a separate debate on the capping of Calderdale council, given that it set the 47th lowest poll tax in the country and, as a result of the capping, will have the fourth lowest? No one—except the Secretary of State for the Environment, who made a political decision—can understand why on earth Calderdale council has been capped. Is there no procedural way in which we can achieve a separate debate on Calderdale council? The constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) borders my local authority area. He therefore has a great interest in this matter, because constituents cross from one area to the other.

Mr. Cryer: As usual, my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has raised an important point on behalf of her constituents. She is concerned about the wicked effects on her constituents of this delegated legislation, which will be forced on Calderdale local authority with such vicious ruthlessness by the Government. Unfortunately, under the terms of the business motion, which relates to the motion tabled by the Secretary of State for the Environment, the order affecting Calderdale will be one of 16 to be lumped together. That means, in effect, that speeches from 16 hon. Members, one from each constituency affected—there are several representing Calderdale alone—and from 16 Tory Members will just about fill the time allowed for the debate. Yet four other orders are to be taken into account. All the orders should be dealt with separately.

We are therefore faced with an extremely unsatisfactory set of circumstances. That fact emphasises the wide powers granted to Ministers by the House under delegated legislation—but granted only because the Government have a majority. It is rare for Ministers to concede that delegated powers should come to the House. On some occasions—not in these orders—they have powers to produce statutory instruments which do not even have to come back to this place, so I suppose that it is some modest consolation that we shall have at least some debate on the important capping instruments.

I must conclude soon—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."]—because others wish to speak, although I appreciate that there is a general clamour for me to continue. So far, I have been referring to the first half of the motion, but I must comment on the second part.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend pointed out that Calderdale was in the group of 16. That relates to the first part of the business motion. We have been trying to discover why those 16 have been presented in that fashion, why three are in another group and why one—Hillingdon—appears on its own. Can my hon. Friend explain why those areas are being taken separately in that way? Why, for example, does Doncaster appear in the group of three? Why are the 16 lumped together?

I should like to talk about Derbyshire. I want to know why, because of poll tax capping, we cannot have a nursery at the Langwith Bassett school and why other cuts have to be made. If my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and others cannot talk about such matters because the 16 are lumped together, one is bound to wonder whether preferential treatment is being given to Hillingdon.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend raises an important point. The Minister will spend perhaps an hour or more explaining those points, which will mean that we cannot have an effective debate. The Government spokesman will take a huge chunk of the time allowed under the business motion to explain the intricacies. An hour and a half should be provided for each and every order, with an explanation in each case as to why the capping is taking place in that area. We could then explain the devastation that the Government's decisions are causing to those areas, be they Labour, Tory or Liberal. That devastation is being caused by the actions of the Government, not by the actions of the local authorities.

Mr. Redmond: Is my hon. Friend aware that he is wasting his time talking to Conservatives about democracy? They are interested not in democracy but in dictatorship. If they were interested in democracy, they would not stifle discussion on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend raises an important point which reflects the fact that we cannot accept the agenda that the Government have set. We have our socialist ideals —*[Interruption.]* We cannot allow the Tory Government to lay down the agenda of our programme or our thoughts. That danger is ever present and we must guard against it. We must always be prepared to maintain our ideals, such as getting rid of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Harry Barnes: As my hon. Friend rightly points out, had we been allowed a debate lasting an hour and a half on each area, we could have debated the Derbyshire situation for that length of time. It could have been a fruitful debate because the nine Derbyshire Members could have divided the 90 minutes equally, taking 10 minutes each. We could all, including the five Conversative Derbyshire Members, have had a say. The Conservative Members could have explained, for instance, whether their views coincided with those of the Conservatives on the county council who do not agree with the Government's proposals for Derbyshire, and my hon. Friends and I would then have had time to explain what is wrong with the poll tax-capping arrangements.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right, but unfortunately that is not possible under the business motion. Even if we adopted the system of an hour and a half for each affirmative order, which is less than adequate, the nine 10-minute slots that my hon. Friend proposes would not be adequate, as that would not leave Front Bench Members on either side any time to speak, and Ministers tend to take a long time because they have some difficult explanations to give.

We all know that the Government's political prejudices have led them to pick out 20 Labour-controlled local authorities for deliberate vindictive action. It is difficult to shield that prejudice with talk of being reasonable and fair and adopting objective criteria, when we all know that the criteria are entirely subjective.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): I have listened to my hon. Friend's closely argued points. I noticed that he emphasised the need for hon. Members from areas which have been charge-capped to be heard. He presents a modest case. Hon. Members from areas which have not been capped also have something to say, because the implication for councils such as Oldham borough council is that they will be inhibited in their spending. They will always be looking over their shoulder at councils which have been charge-capped. They are anxious not to be charged-capped. I should like some time in the debate on one of the orders to put that point. Other hon. Members from areas which have not been charge-capped will want to speak about the implications for their councils.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), but I wish to raise a matter with the Chair because the Chair's ruling on it may affect the rest of my hon. Friend's speech.

I refer you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the last sentence of paragraph 1 of the motion. I wish to relate it to paragraph 2. I raise the matter as an hon. Member whose council has been charge-capped and who wishes to speak in a debate on either Wednesday or Thursday. I wish to speak on the order on the three councils.

The motion says:

"Mr. Speaker shall at Seven o'clock put the Question already proposed from the Chair and shall then put forthwith successively the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the remaining Motions".

That is simple enough as far as it goes, but paragraph 2 says:

"If proceedings on the above Motions have not been completed before Seven o'clock at the sitting on Thursday 12th July, the Private Business"

will continue thereafter. That suggests that the second part of the motion gives the Chair discretion to allow the debate to continue after 7 o'clock if some hon. Members have not been called.

That is vitally important. I understand that the Prime Minister is to make a statement to the House on Thursday about her visit to the United States. That will take up at least an hour of the time allocated to discussing the orders. If one also takes away the time that will be taken by the Front Bench Members, there will be a maximum of just one hour and 10 minutes for hon. Members to speak in the debate. I should like a ruling from the Chair. If that is the position on 12 July, will the Chair allow the debate to continue after 7 o'clock to allow hon. Members to speak if the debate about their councils has not been reached?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That was a long point of order. The hon. Gentleman has misread the motion. The Chair will have no such discretion.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) is right. As the Leader of the House knows, the business motion will tend to exclude hon. Members who want to comment on the consequential effects of the orders on their constituencies and the people whom they represent. The Leader of the House does not want to encourage or sustain debate, but to rubber stamp the business that the Government want to push through. The Government are exploiting their strength in the House by crushing yet another vestige of local democracy and autonomy.

I do not believe that it would be unreasonable for Mr. Speaker to give preference to those hon. Members whose areas are rate-capped, but my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton is right that other hon. Members should be able to express a general view about the consequences of such capping.

Mrs. Mahon: My hon. Friend mentioned the motion relating to Calderdale. He was mistaken about the number of hon. Members who represent the area—there are only two, myself and the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson). It is important that the views of that hon. Member are heard in a separate debate, as, until recently, he and the Conservative party of Calderdale applauded rate capping. Before the elections in May, they issued a leaflet to say that £50 would be knocked off the bill if people voted Tory. The council was then hung, but the electorate did not vote Tory, and Labour now has control with four seats. It would have been interesting to hear what the hon. Gentleman had to say for himself.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will return to the business motion.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) is concerned that the business motion will preclude contributions from those on the periphery of the

[Mr. Cryer]

Calder valley because of the time limitations imposed by it. My hon. Friend is right that hon. Members sometimes say things in their constituencies which are not always made clear in the House, and vice versa. The debate between the two Members representing the Calder valley would have been extremely interesting and illuminating. It would have enabled local people to make a much better judgment as to who represents their interests. Every cent of my money would be on my hon. Friend.

I shall conclude——

Mr. Orme: Other people want to speak.

Mr. Cryer: My right hon. Friend is right, but he will know that I have had to give way to pressing interventions several times. My speech has lasted only five minutes, but I shall conclude shortly as my right hon. Friend's brow is furrowed and he likes to have a happier demeanour.

The arrangements on the London Underground Bill relating to the Jubilee line have been designed to enable it to speed its way through the House without the usual opportunities for extended debate. The statement by the Prime Minister, business questions and a possible vote on something will not be allowed to take time out of Thursday night. The three hours provided by the business motion will prevent a closure being obtained that night. That closure would mean that the Government would have to bring the Bill back—it is their Bill, after all—on another evening but they are running out of time. That is what this is all about.

The Leader of the House is sitting here complacently as he always does. The Bill will mean that Parliament square is wrecked for upwards of seven years.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Rubbish.

Mr. Cryer: The right hon. and learned Gentleman——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): What does the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) know about London?

Mr. Cryer: I live here five days a week, I have travelled down here each week for 13 years, and my guess is that the vast majority of Londoners do not want Parliament square turned into a building site for seven years. There are other suitable sites for an interchange, but London Transport does not want them because its own premises are adjacent to them. That is what this is about—and that is why we shall vote against the motion, which is an abuse of the procedures of the House.

11.4 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I am rather surprised to be debating the motion, especially since two major issues are involved—rate capping and the Jubilee line. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) referred to the time that the New Building Sub-Committee spent debating the Jubilee line since hearing that the matter would be dealt with in a private Bill. Because of the importance of the Bill and because 650 elected Members of Parliament would be affected by the proposals, we decided to meet weekly, not for half an hour or for the usual nod as happens on statutory instruments, but for two and half to three hours on a Tuesday night.

On 15 May 1990 we presented a 99-page report to the House. The Leader of the House received that report as the Chairman of the Services Committee, and expressed its thanks for the amount of work that had gone into preparing it. Having prepared it, we expected at least a day to debate it. We were not representing one side of the House; we were representing all Members of Parliament, yet the Government, backed by the Leader of the House, intend to curtail the debate on Thursday night after 7 o'clock. I am rather surprised to find that the Chairman of Ways and Means has been prayed in aid as having pressed the Government to agree to a three-hour debate. How ridiculous that we should come here tonight and discover that we shall be limited to fewer then three hours to debate the Jubilee line and the far-reaching issues that that involves.

The New Building Sub-Committee was faced with the difficulty of deciding how we, as Members of the House, could be responsible for setting up a Committee of hon. Members to deal with issues that directly affect hon. Members. The report says:

"Since the House is unable to petition itself in respect of a Private Bill, the Committee have sought to examine those parts of the London Underground Bill where the interests of the House may be 'directly or specially affected', in the expectation that our findings will be taken into account both during the second reading debate and, if that stage is passed, by the Opposed Bill Committee to which the Bill will be referred."

This is a unique Bill in so far as we as Members of the House and the Committee of Selection will be selecting Members to deal with a private Bill in which we have a direct interest as it affects us in Parliament. We should be allowed more than three hours for the debate on this important line. I am amazed that the Leader of the House should limit the debate to three hours.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend is right to complain about the restriction of debate on this important Bill. It is said that the work will take seven or eight years. My hon. Friend has had experience of the construction of the building across the road and knows about slippage. Will he confirm that the job is expected to take seven years and that with slippage it could take longer?

Mr. Powell: Specialists employed by the House reported on how long the job would take if we accepted the Jubilee line proposals. The Bill is to be debated on Thursday and will then go to a Committee, which will report to the House. If all the proposals in the plan are accepted by the Committee, the job will take four to five years to complete after the Bill has passed through all its stages. That is the view of the experts. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) asked about phase 1 of the new building across the road. That has already been delayed 12 months. Phase 2 involves the development of a new station at Westminster, with a raft and offices above it. As the report and the experts suggest, that could well take four or five years.

The Leader of the House said that the motion was moved on Friday. I understand from the Opposition deputy Chief Whip who was in charge of us on Friday, that that was not the case. We were told that agreement had been reached through the usual channels. I have made inquiries and found that there was no such agreement. Why do the Government want to push such an important Bill through the House in three hours?

It would be in the interests of the House to have a long debate on the issues and complications relating to the Jubilee line, because the line will affect the Palace of Westminster and its precincts. It will affect our access to the House, because the proposals for the line include a raft over the roadway around Parliament square, which would raise the road by about 3 ft. The Serjeant at Arms would be charged with making sure that hon. Members had access to the Palace, and he would find it difficult to carry out that task. The matter should be dealt with in great detail, and it cannot be done in three hours.

Mr. James Lamond: In an intervention, the Leader of the House claimed that he is not trying to restrict the debate to three hours, but is acceding to a request in a letter sent to him by the Chairman of Ways and Means asking that at least three hours should be devoted to the debate. In other words, the debate is likely to go on much longer.

When we debated, in the distant past, the construction of the underground car park here, that highly respected and long-serving former Member, Mr. Arthur Lewis, continually said that Big Ben was in danger of collapsing into the hole that was being dug. Thankfully, that did not happen, but I have no doubt that many Members will raise such points, which most of us have not even thought of, but which will have to be carefully examined. What if Mr. Arthur Lewis had been correct? How would we have looked if we had had a guillotined debate and refused to listen to his point about Big Ben and one day it had collapsed? We should have looked foolish if we had forced such a Bill through the House.

Mr. Powell: My hon. Friend is perfectly right to raise that point. The matter was discussed in Committee at some length. We envisaged a big screw coming up in Parliament square, spewing out all the earth from the Jubilee line. That will happen, the site will be barricaded, and tunnels will come in and out to ensure that there is a new station at Westminster. In all probability, the ex-Member to whom he referred, Mr. Lewis, was right when he talked about the underground car park being dug. The foundations of the very building that we are in now, could well have been affected.

Mr. Redmond: Did the Committee discuss whether the water table beneath the Palace of Westminster, from which we get water for use within the building, would be contaminated?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is putting detailed questions to his hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) that do not relate to the business of the House motion, so I shall save the hon. Member for Ogmore from responding to them, because I know that he will want to deal with the business of the House motion.

Mr. Powell: You, Madam Deputy Speaker, are right. But this is a relevant point——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not at all relevant, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Mr. Powell: Paragraphs 16 to 27 of the Committee's report mention the "considerable dismay" with which it first heard about the Jubilee line proposal. Its members regretted that neither they nor the authorities of the House were consulted earlier. I cannot understand why there is such a rush now. Why were not hon. Members, officials of the House and the New Building Sub-Committee consulted, because the effects of the development of phase 2——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: London needs railways more than we need offices.

Mr. Powell: I do not know whether the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) has a good office, but some Members are desperately in need of office accommodation, which is what the New Building Sub-Committee has been trying to develop. However, the Government are more concerned about getting the London Underground Bill on the statute book, come hell or high water, and are not particularly concerned about the interests of Members and the New Building Sub-Committee that we are trying to establish to ensure that hon. Members have accommodation.

You, Madam Deputy Speaker, would know more than anyone else that hon. Members are stuck in the cloisters working in office accommodation that would not be tolerated anywhere outside this building. Instead of having the Government's co-operation to establish a building to accommodate Members, we are highballed by London Underground. It is important that we have far more than a three-hour debate on Thursday—which is all that is promised—to deal with such an important and emotive issue.

We have discussed two motions tonight and it is now 11.19 pm. I should have wished to continue for another hour at least. Some hon. Members do not have the time to sit down, read and digest all the lengthy reports published by the different Committees. The report that we are discussing has 99 pages dealing with accommodation and premises for the House of Commons. It also deals with the Jubilee line proposals that will make Parliament square a building site for at least five years. We must think about all the visitors to London. It will not be a temporary building site for 12 months or less; it will be with us for at least four or five years, and the whole site will be boarded up. We are not being given the time for debate that the proposals deserve.

Tonight we are debating only the Government's motions. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will recall our discussions and the report of Services Committee about the delay in phase 1 of the new parliamentary building. Surely we do not want delays in the building of phase 2. He would have had the full co-operation of the New Building Sub-Committee and of Opposition Members if he had introduced the proposals properly and allocated time for them to be discussed in detail.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman should not think that he can force through such issues because the Government have a 100-plus majority. I remind him that the Bill first has to go through the private Bill Committee. Unless the proposals of the New Building Sub-Committee, which were presented to the House and to London Transport, are accepted, I doubt whether hon. Members, when they read the report and understand the devastation that will be caused in the area surrounding Parliament, will be eager to pass the Bill without reservation. Indeed, I even doubt whether Conservative Members will give the Bill their blessing.

I hope to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, on Thursday evening.

11.23 pm

Sir Geoffrey Howe: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to respond to the serious points raised by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). I hope that, within the bounds of order, I can acknowledge the debt that the House owes to him and his colleagues on the New Building Sub-Committee for their work on that great project. I share his dismay at the pace at which phase 1 of the new building has gone ahead. I understand the sense of unease, to put it mildly, that he and his colleagues felt about the way in which London Transport originally presented the proposals to the Sub-Committee. All those points were fair.

I hope that I shall not be regarded as offensive if I say that my recollection of the purpose of the Labour party that was born in Ogmore, in Aberavon, in my south Wales and in the remainder of the country, was to build the new Jerusalem. I am slightly dismayed by the tone of some Opposition Members, suggesting that they are more concerned about viewing Parliament square and these buildings as though they were museum curators. We have an enormous task and challenge ahead of us. We must shape the modern buildings that can be put on that side of Parliament street in a fashion appropriate to Parliament in the next millenium.

Of course, the conditions spelt out by the New Building Sub-Committee need to be considered with care, but we have an opportunity that we should reach out for, if we possibly can, and it is in that sense that I have responded to the requests made by the Chairman of Ways and Means in relation to this debate.

I was fascinated, as always, by the observations of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) when he intervened at an early stage in the debate to say that he entirely endorsed the first part of my motion and was not seeking to oppose it, which was quite understandable, as it was agreed through the usual channels. I announced the business for tomorrow and Thursday to the House last Thursday. There was ample opportunity to query it, but it has not been taken up. I was fascinated by the skill with which he was able to develop his non-opposition to that benign part of the motion for a minute or two, in the course of his brief observations.

I was grateful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for his agreement to support the motion. I understand his anxiety about the reported uncertainty surrounding the two stations south of the river. A number of hon. Members will want to hear more about that matter, but I am glad that he agrees that three hours are necessary for the debate.

I cannot do more than ensure that the three hours which would normally be allotted tomorrow are not curtailed by voting for a shorter time. I tabled the second half of this motion in response to the Chairman of Ways and Means. He said that he felt

"there is sufficient interest in this Bill to warrant Members being given a full three hours debating time."

That is what we are seeking to provide by the second part of the motion.

The Government are acting to protect the time that will be available for private business in this way. We would not want to curtail that, even if it were in our power to do so. We support the concept of a three-hour debate in respect of that. On that basis, I hope that the House will regard the second part of the motion with as much enthusiasm as it apparently regards the first part. I commend it to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 165, Noes 50.

Division No. 289] **[11.27 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo

Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Carr, Michael
Clelland, David
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fyfe, Maria
Graham, Thomas
Grocott, Bruce
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Litherland, Robert
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N.
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Resolved,

That—

(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Patten relating to Local Government may be proceeded with, at the sitting on Wednesday 11th July, though opposed, until midnight; and, at the sitting on Thursday 12th July, if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of Mr. Speaker shall at Seven o'clock put the Question already proposed from the Chair and shall then put forthwith successively the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the remaining Motions; and

(2) If proceedings on the above Motions have not been completed before seven o'clock at the sitting on Thursday 12th July, the Private Business set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means for consideration at that hour shall stand over until the conclusion of such proceedings, and the said Private Business may be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours after it has been entered upon.

PETITIONS

Schools (Leicestershire)

11.37 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I have three petitions to present. The first is signed by 100 Leicester residents concerning the current levels of experience of members of the teaching profession in Leicestershire and the lack of teachers in local primary and secondary schools. They are concerned that there are so many vacancies in the county and they would like Government expenditure on education to be increased in order to provide additional teachers.

"Wherefore your Petitioners pray that the House of Commons calls upon the Secretary of State for Education and Science to ensure that the education of future generations is not jeopardised by this lack of funding and further calls upon him to increase the funding available for education and to secure the best teaching staff available for our children.

The second petition is signed by 246 residents of Humberstone, Thurncourt, Coleman and Evington and concerns the A46-A47 link road, which will go through the eastern part of my constituency. The petitioners are concerned that the local authority and others are not sufficiently taking into account the safety standards of the proposed road. They are concerned, because many schools are near the route, about the possibility of injury to children. It says:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House encourage the Secretary of State for the Environment to consider the views of the residents of Humberstone, Thurncourt, Coleman and Evington during his considerations of the Appeals against compulsory purchase orders, and other objections related to the two routes planned by Leicestershire County Council. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The last petition concerns the lack of lollipop ladies outside schools in Leicestershire. Local residents, in particular the parents of young children, are concerned that there are few lollipop patrols. They believe, and I support their belief, that that is because of the appalling wages paid to lollipop ladies. We face the prospect of children having to stay in school for longer hours because there are no lollipop ladies or gentlemen available.

The petition has been signed by 339 residents, who say:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House encourage the Secretary of State for Education and Science, to provide more central funding for provision of this vital service to protect our children, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the table.

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

11.41 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): I welcome the opportunity to raise in this Adjournment debate an extremely serious subject relating to the hepatitis virus. My purpose is to attempt to exercise the minds of Ministers and, hopefully, to draw public attention to the need for vaccination for high-risk groups who come into contact with hepatitis carriers in their normal work.

The word "hepatitis" is well known, but we usually relate it to yellow jaundice and assume that it is the fancy medical term for that condition. Hepatitis is often a short illness leading to jaundice, and most patients recover within a few weeks or months. That hepatitis virus comes under category A. Regrettably, there is more than one type of the virus. Hepatitis A never produces permanent disease, but hepatitis B and C do, and they do not respond to antibiotics. Like hepatitis B, the C virus is transmitted through contact with infected blood and body fluids. Little is known of the C virus, there is no vaccination to protect against it and no established cure.

However, the hepatitis B virus, with which I am concerned in this short debate, can be prevented if resources, education and intention by the Government are brought into operation. My concern about the seriousness of hepatitis B was stimulated by a pamphlet produced by the Russell Harty hepatitis and liver research fund. Normally, we pay scant attention to the volumes of circulars that come in our mail, and this pamphlet was almost doomed for the waste-paper bin burial ground, but on the front was a challenge—"Dare you read on?" I took the challenge and read on.

The pamphlet outlined how the fund began, its aims and the startling information which made me sit up and think. Two hundred and eighty-five million people are carriers of this virus. Hepatitis B can live outside the body of the carrier, which makes it easier to catch than the virus that causes AIDS. It can be caught simply by coming into close contact with a carrier and unknowingly absorbing the virus from contaminated blood, from saliva, from tears, from semen, from vaginal secretions and even from perspiration through small cracks in the skin. It can be caught by kissing an infected person or by sharing a toothbrush, a razor blade or needles. The most chilling fact was that hepatitis B kills more people worldwide in one day than AIDS does in a whole year. Who can catch the virus? The answer is, every one of us.

Hepatitis B can be prevented by vaccination, and that is why I want to raise the problem of the low take-up of the hepatitis B vaccine among high-risk groups, which demonstrates a miserable lack of action by the Government. Despite Government advice that members of high-risk groups should be vaccinated, we have no Department of Health figures or studies on the current level of vaccine take-up. I call on the Government radically to increase their responsibilities in this area.

Hepatitis B is a potentially fatal viral condition which affects the liver. The virus is more than 100 times more infectious than HIV. About 2 million people worldwide die each year of hepatitis B infection. In the United Kingdom, the annual reported incidence of acute hepatitis B has been about 1,000. The exact number of carriers is not known, but it is estimated to be more than 50,000. There is no effective treatment for hepatitis B, and the best prevention of infection is vaccination.

The hepatitis B vaccine is available on national health service prescription to all high-risk groups, although many general practitioners appear still to be confused about who is entitled to receive it. In line with the World Health Organisation, the British Medical Association recommends that active immunisation is provided for health care staff in frequent contact with blood, needles or other sharp instruments in the community, in hospital or in dental departments. The Royal College of Nursing also supports the recommendations of the World Health Organisation and stresses that all nurses, including junior nurses, should be vaccinated. The RCN also recognises that there is a special risk to student nurses who regularly change their area of specialty and whose lack of experience makes them especially vulnerable to needlestick injuries.

The British Dental Association also supports the WHO guidelines and has issued a set of guidelines of its own on the prevention of infection and cross-infection for all dental health workers. The guidelines call for all clinical dental professionals to be immunised against the virus as soon as possible. Many other organisations and trade unions follow and recommend the WHO guidelines.

The incidence of hepatitis B in institutions, especially those for the mentally ill, has been significantly higher than in the general population. One recent survey found evidence of past infection in almost half the patients in a large mental hospital. Nursing and administrative staff who come into contact with highly unpredictable patients are inevitably at risk of infection. One tragic example is that of a psychiatric nurse, Thomas Rowe, who died from hepatitis B after being bitten by a patient at the Turner Village hospital in Colchester.

Accidental needlestick injuries from syringes infected with hepatitis B or HIV have become increasingly common. A number of cases have occurred among staff working in needle and syringe exchange schemes. The growing number of arbitrary cases is especially worrying, ranging from the reported cases of refuse collectors and road sweepers receiving pricks from discarded needles, to a young girl in Rhos-on-Sea receiving a needlestick injury after pricking her finger on a discarded syringe in a pub beer garden. I have also received many complaints from parents and grandparents about syringes and needles being found in school playgrounds. Vaccination to cover all such eventualities would be a massive operation, but high-risk groups at least should have the opportunity of vaccination.

Vaccination is usually given in three separate doses—an initial vaccination, followed by further doses one and six months later. A booster vaccination is recommended every three years. A course of treatment costs £30—not a great deal of money when compared with the cost of treatment once the virus is contracted and with the pain and misery suffered by the patient.

Sadly, because the hepatitis B virus is not new and has not captured public concern in the way that the AIDS virus has, it lacks a comparably high profile, and its virulence and potential danger are generally unknown among the public at large. Although incidence of acute hepatitis B is falling, due to more effective measures of protection, the absence of any official statistics and a

general apathy towards monitoring vaccination of staff and reporting incidents within health authorities have resulted in a confused and ill-informed picture.

To illustrate this point, I would point out that a young nurse recently contracted hepatitis B at Stoke Mandeville hospital after she was exposed to a contagious patient. During prosecution of Aylesbury Vale health authority, it transpired that a policy change in vaccinating staff had resulted in nurses having to wait six months before receiving vaccination. There are all too many cases of nurses and other health care workers contracting the virus through inefficient hospital management.

Particularly worrying in the United Kingdom is the significant number of people who get hepatitis B because of the kind of work they do. Hepatitis B has long been identified as an occupational risk to those whose work brings them into contact with blood and body fluids—such as doctors, nurses, dentists, laboratory workers, the emergency services, prison staff, and those who work with the mentally handicapped. Intravenous drug abusers and practising homosexuals are also vulnerable. There is therefore a real risk of infection for those whose work or life style brings them into contact with blood and other body fluids and who have not yet received vaccination.

Last year, the Russell Harty hepatitis and liver research fund was set up to promote awareness of the risks of hepatitis B, following the death of Russell Harty from the virus. The chairman of the fund, Alan Tomlinson, lost his nine-year-old son in 1982 as a result of his contracting hepatitis B. Both were treated at the liver disease unit of the St. James's hospital, Leeds, which is providing a focal point for the fund's activities.

In 1988, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommended that named high-risk groups and their families should be vaccinated against hepatitis B. However, no new money was provided, no programme of vaccinations was set up and no follow-up monitoring was established.

From independent research undertaken in the last year, the fund believes that there is widespread ignorance among at-risk groups about the dangers of contracting the virus. It also believes that many GPs lack adequate information about the at-risk groups and that health authorities are treating the management and monitoring of vaccination programmes for own staff as a low priority. As a result of that inefficient state of affairs, people are dying needlessly.

The critical need for better management and application of the JCVI recommendations is clear and has been ignored by the Government. The inadequate provision of educational information about the dangers of hepatitis B to high-risk groups is a scandal.

Because of the lack of awareness and widespread ignorance of the dangers of hepatitis B, plus the inadequate funding of the health service, the regional health authority gives no lead and has a blinkered approach to this serious subject. The cost of immunising health service personnel and other high risk groups must be weighed against the financial demands for routine health care; so I urge the Minister to commit himself to a number of actions to redress the appalling threat to human suffering.

The Government should give an assurance that no member of a high-risk group will be denied vaccination against hepatitis B. The Government should institute their own monitoring programme to ensure comprehensive vaccination uptake according to JCVI guidelines. They should add hepatitis B to the screen study that is currently in progress on the incidence of AIDS and HIV. The Health Education Authority should conduct an education campaign targeted at identified high-risk groups, their families and prescribing physicians. Hepatitis B is no respecter of persons. That is why I ask the Government to act now and save lives.

11.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I hope that the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) will not take it amiss if I express regret at the outset that he alleged that there was a division between the action that he wants taken and the stance that the Government have adopted. There is no substantial difference, and any attempt to establish a difference between his position and ours is, as I shall argue, not soundly based.

The hon. Gentleman began by emphasising the terrible nature of hepatitis B as a disease, and there is no dispute about that. It can often be fatal. Whenever the opportunity exists to prevent or impede the spread of a potentially fatal disease, we shall take what action we can to achieve that result.

The hon. Gentleman stressed that the disease was widespread elsewhere in the world. That threat we must recognise and take seriously, although we are entitled to look at the scale of the threat that the disease represents in this country, because it is to this country's resident population that our principal effort in terms of prevention must be directed.

The welcome news in the context of hepatitis B is the fact, as the hon. Gentleman emphasised, that a vaccination has been available for some years which immunises the vaccinated individual against contracting the disease. The cornerstone of his case, and the cornerstone of the Government's position, is that that vaccination should be available to anyone who is at any serious, identifiable risk of contracting hepatitis B.

That is why, to take up the first of the three objectives that the hon. Gentleman set in his concluding remarks, the Government have no difficulty in giving the assurance that no member of a high-risk group should be denied vaccination against hepatitis B. Indeed, that is our policy. We are entitled to say that that policy has been carried through in the past few years with a degree of success.

The figures on the development of the disease in Britain in the past five years are startling. The number of individuals who have been vaccinated—both the hon. Gentleman and the Government want the vaccine to be made available to high-risk people—has increased from under 19,000 in 1985 to an average of more than 300,000 in 1988 and 1989. The figure for 1988 was 325,000 and the figure for 1989 was 294,000. The vaccination programme has run at a rate of 300,000 individuals per year. We do not yet know the full life of the protection provided by the vaccine, but we are advised that we can expect that vaccination will be effective for a minimum of five years. If one adds up the figures in the past five years, roughly 850,000 individuals have received protection as a result of the vaccination programme that the Government set in place.

The effect of the vaccination programme on the development of the disease is remarkable. In 1985, a total of 1,785 cases of hepatitis B were reported. By last year, on

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

the provisional figures available to us, the incidence had fallen to 560 cases. We have cut the incidence of the disease by more than two thirds in five years by adopting precisely the commitment to vaccination that the hon. Gentleman espoused. That is not a sound foundation for the party political attack that the hon. Gentleman directed at the Government.

Other figures on the development of the disease show that in 1985 545 cases of hepatitis B were directly attributable to drug abuse. By 1988, that figure had dropped to 108 cases—a fall of almost 80 per cent. The incidence of hepatitis B among homosexual men had fallen from 128 reported cases in 1985 to 52 in 1988. The incidence among health service staff fell from 47 cases in 1985 to 24 in 1988.

The end result of the vaccination programme is to reduce the number of deaths caused by hepatitis B. I can report to the House that the number of deaths attributable to hepatitis B has been effectively stable throughout the whole period from 1985 to 1989. The highest number of deaths was in 1987, when the total was 69. The total reported in 1989 was 58.

I simply do not accept that it is a fair representation of the record of the past few years to say that vaccination has not been available to those who need it. On the contrary, the evidence is that the vaccination programme has grown considerably. The effect of the programme is there for all to see in the number of reported cases of development of the disease.

We have stressed, as the hon. Gentleman stressed, that vaccination must be available to high-risk groups. There is no constituency for the argument that immunisation should be available to all adults. The vast majority of adults are not at any appreciable risk of contracting the disease. The Government therefore accept the proposition that the vaccination should be available to high-risk groups. The broad categories that the hon. Gentleman described are not a cause for contention between us.

We do not accept, however, that every policeman should be vaccinated against hepatitis B. There are some individuals within the police force who should be vaccinated because they are at risk, but a policeman on duty in the House does not face an appreciable risk of contracting hepatitis B. Resources will always be scarce and I do not think that it would be sensible to spend more than £30 vaccinating a policeman in the House against hepatitis B when he cannot by any stretch of imagination be judged to be in a high-risk group.

The hon. Gentleman repeated several times that high-risk groups should have access to the vaccination. That is not disputed by the Government. The hon. Gentleman also argued that the Government should provide better information on the rate of take-up of the vaccine. I have given the figures relating to the number of vaccinations against the disease and the number of reported cases. Information is not in short supply, as hepatitis B is a notifiable disease and proper laboratory tests are carried out, when appropriate, as a result of that notification process. In that respect, the disease is unlike AIDS, where the same disciplines do not apply, for reasons familar to the House.

The Government have access to information as to the spread of the disease and the rate of vaccination against that spread. If the hon. Gentleman wishes us to publish the take-up as a percentage of the target group, there is a difficulty. As the policy is to ensure that vaccination is available to high-risk groups, it is difficult to produce an accepted denominator to work out the percentage represented by the number of vaccinations given, because we cannot accurately identify every person in the community who is a member of a high-risk group. We have sought to ensure that every individual who is in such a group is made aware of that risk and of the fact that vaccination is available to prevent the spread of the disease. I do not accept the argument that there is a shortage of information about the spread of the disease. I accept that we have been unable to produce a percentage breakdown of target group, but I do not believe that that is achievable in practice.

Bearing in mind the fact that the disease is a notifiable one and that a reporting regime is available through the public health laboratory service and that information is available to general practitioners through any number of channels, I do not accept that there is a paucity of information about the dangers of the spread of the disease among the high-risk groups or about the availability of vaccination to prevent that spread.

The hon. Gentleman also alleged that no funding was available for vaccination, but I suppose that that is ritual comment on any subject to do with the national health service. It is true that there is not special central funding, and nor should there be. We are talking about relatively small sums of money in the £29 billion budget of the Department of Health. It is an entirely proper obligation for health authorities, on behalf of their populations, to make such protection available to high-risk groups, and there is no serious evidence to support the view that vaccination has not been available to any high-risk individual on the grounds of a local lack of funding.

In conclusion, I return to the factual background to the successful control of this terrible disease in Britain. I do not dispute for one moment that it is a substantial killer elsewhere in the world and that it is far from being under control on the earth's surface, but we in Britain can claim that we have successfully made information available so that those who are at risk of contracting it have that fact drawn to their attention, and that effective arrangements have been made to ensure that those who are at risk, and to whom the education programme that the hon. Gentleman espoused and which we have sought to put in place is directed, understand that vaccination is available. The effectiveness of that policy is shown by the fact that, in five years, we have reduced the number of reported cases of the disease by two thirds.

The hon. Gentleman has raised the serious problem of the control of the spread of a terrible disease. We want to continue to do better, so that its further spread is inhibited altogether, but cutting the incidence of the diseases by two thirds in the past five years cannot be said to be anything other than one of the successes of the NHS.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 11 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rights of the Child

1. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to ratify the United Nations convention on the rights of the child; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The United Kingdom signed the United Nations convention on the rights of the child on 19 April 1990. We intend to ratify the convention as soon as possible.

Dr. Reid: Can the Minister explain why, eight months after the convention was signed, and 66 years after the declaration of the rights of the child was first accepted by the League of Nations, we still do not have a timetable for ratification in Britain? Why is it that countries such as Ghana and Vietnam can ratify the United Nations convention but we cannot? Does the Minister not consider that our children are entitled to have their rights under the convention – such as the right to a decent education, a decent standard of living and access to a decent health service—enshrined in law when the rights of other children in other nations are obviously being ratified?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman must be aware that although 90 countries have said that they would sign the convention, only six have so far ratified it. The explanation is to be found in the fact that the convention covers important, wide-ranging and complex areas of legislation, and no fewer than nine Government Departments are involved. The Government take our obligations under such conventions extremely seriously and we will not ratify until we are sure that our domestic legislation is entirely in harmony with our commitments under the convention.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I welcome the Minister's declaration in principle on the ratification of the convention on the rights of the child. Does he think it appropriate that on our visit to the West Bank and the Gaza strip next week, the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) and I should press the Israeli Government to look carefully at article 22, which deals with refugees, article 14, which deals with religious freedom, and article 38, which deals with children and armed conflict—especially as the purpose of our visit is to look closely at the devastating criticism of the actions of the Israeli army against the children on the West Bank and the Gaza strip by the Swedish Save the Children Fund, which instigated the new declaration of the rights of the child?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware, as we all are, that—unhappily—there are all too many countries where the clauses of the convention do not appear to be well observed. Happily, in this country, many, if not most, of the aspects of the convention are already enshrined in law, including the matters of education and health to which the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) referred. That is not so in many other countries.

Miss Lestor: Is the Under-Secretary aware that since I first wrote to the Prime Minister about this matter in November, I have been referred both to the Under-Secretary—he kindly replied that he was taking the matter seriously—and to another Foreign Office Minister who referred me to the Home Office? The process has been going on for eight months.

I am glad about the signing, but can we now be told who is the overall co-ordinator for the convention? Has the programme of consultation with every Government Department, which I was told was taking place, finished? Does the Minister think it likely that the House will debate the matter before the recess and that final ratification will take place?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I said in an earlier reply, the legislation is wide ranging and complex. Many aspects of the convention are already dealt with in our domestic legislation. We want to make sure that our domestic legislation is entirely in harmony with our commitments under the convention, because we take these matters seriously and we are determined to get them right. There are nine Government Departments involved and—inevitably, I am afraid—the consultations involve many lawyers because there are legal aspects to the matter. I am afraid that at this stage I cannot give a timetable; I can only confirm that we shall complete the work as soon as we possibly can so that we can ratify the convention.

Ethiopia

2. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the progress of efforts to secure peace in Ethiopia.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): The negotiations between the Ethiopian Government and the rebels are, sadly, deadlocked. We shall continue to work for their resumption.

Mr. Bennett: The Minister's answer is sad. What are the British Government doing to help both the rebels and the Ethiopian Government to resolve the problems and to bring peace to Ethiopia? What are the prospects for putting together a long-term aid package between Britain and the other EEC countries that could be offered to the Ethiopian Government and the rebel troops as soon as a peace treaty is signed?

Mr. Waldegrave: If a peace treaty were signed, I am sure that the international community as a whole, and especially the European Community, would be in the

vanguard of wanting to help with the rebuilding of Ethiopia, which will be a mammoth task. I am sorry to note that the Eritrean People's Liberation Front has now shifted its position. Having pressed for the presence of United Nations observers at the talks—the Ethiopian Government accepted that—the EPLF has changed its position and withdrawn from the talks. We are no further forward.

Mr. Aitken: Why cannot the Foreign Office recognise that propping up the evil Mengistu regime is the most misguided policy, especially at present? Surely the time has come to dissociate ourselves from the well-meaning international pretence by the EEC and others that Ethiopia still has any form of moral or territorial integrity left, because it just does not.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no question of propping up one Government or another. If my hon. Friend is seeking to pursue a course that will encourage the division of Ethiopia, I must urge him to recognise that he will be recommending a course that will prolong the war indefinitely. We should be saying to the Eritreans, "You have won by force of arms as much as it is realistic to win and you should now settle for the advanced autonomy that you can negotiate."

Economic, Monetary and Political Union

3. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the principal policy objectives which Her Majesty's Government would wish to see in the twin intergovernmental conference preparations for economic and monetary union and political union, as specific components in a list of policies for the discussions at the end of the Italian presidency of the Council of Ministers in December.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): We shall be working in both intergovernmental conferences to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of the Community, creating strong Community institutions, but respecting the diversity of national traditions and the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Dykes: I wish my hon. Friend and his colleagues at the Foreign Office the best of luck in developing those proposals. Does he agree that the Government and the parliamentary Conservative party can enthusiastically and totally unite behind this country's energetic and enthusiastic development of the various proposals for the twin conferences? Does he further agree that there are a number of important priorities, not least to ensure the accountability of member Governments to their national Parliaments, enhancing the role of the national Parliament, and to ensure the accountability of the Council of Ministers as a whole to the European Parliament and to increase the power of the European Parliament at the margins?

Mr. Maude: For the second intergovernmental conference, we have put forward a series of proposals for ways in which the Community can make itself more effective and better at doing those things that only the Community can do. As my hon. Friend has suggested, part of that process is to increase the accountability of Ministers to their national Parliaments. We believe that if the role of the European Parliament is to be increased, the European Commission should be held more to account. We also need to look at reinforcing the rule of law in the European Community. There are a whole range of areas in which improvements could be made and we shall be making constructive proposals.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the Government agree with the Italians, the Germans, the French, the Spaniards and the majority of the other members of the Community, in having as their aim the creation of a democratic federal European Community?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman is misinformed if he believes that all those countries believe in a democratic federal Europe in quite the simplistic way that he has suggested—they do not. There is no consensus or anything approaching a consensus in the Community in terms of such a development. There is, however, a growing belief that the Community should do better that which it has to do. That may involve decentralising decision making to the member states to a certain extent to enable them to do those things that do not have to be done by the Community.

Mr. Cash: Given the recent speech by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on economic and monetary union when he said that we shall not move towards a central bank, does my hon. Friend agree that the question of subsidiarity, with respect to both economic and monetary union, and political union, must be defined in such a manner as to rule out the political impetus that has been given to both the central bank and to the subservience of this House to the European Parliament and other Community institutions, which seems to be the fetish of some of the European leaders in the European Community?

Mr. Maude: There is a great deal of scope for increasing the economic and monetary integration of the Community. Our commitment to the single market is evidence of that. A good deal more can be done on monetary matters. We have wholeheartedly supported stage 1 of the Delors report and put forward some well-developed and sophisticated proposals on stage 2. Those are being seriously considered throughout the Community. A great deal can be done before developments such as those to which my hon. Friend referred take place.

Mr. Robertson: Is the Minister aware that the recent Dublin summit represented a comprehensive defeat for the Prime Minister, on establishing both of the intergovernmental conferences and also on the social charter, aid to the Soviet Union, lifting sanctions on South Africa and even the reappointment of that French Socialist Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission? How on earth can any of our partners have any confidence that proposals from the United Kingdom Government can be taken seriously or seen as anything other than a cosmetic camouflage for the same old obstructionism?

Mr. Maude: To take the last example from the hon. Gentleman's list, he failed to observe that, far from being isolated on the reappointment of Monsieur Delors, the Prime Minister nominated him. That is a pretty odd way of being isolated. Virtually everything that the hon. Gentleman said was wrong. He has simply got stuck in a

time warp. He is playing again records that were worn out a long time ago and should have been discarded. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that we are isolated, for example, on aid to the Soviet Union, he should consider what was decided at the Houston summit. He will find that the argument of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which was widely accepted as entirely correct, has gained even greater endorsement since the summit.

Irish Republic (Extradition)

4. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic about the present arrangements for extradition between the two countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed our concerns with the Irish Foreign Minister on 21 April.

Mr. Gow: Have arrangements for extradition improved or deteriorated since 15 November 1985? Would not arrangements for extradition and Anglo-Irish relations generally be improved if articles 2 and 3 were removed from the constitution of the Irish Republic?

Mr. Waldegrave: The downturn in the success of extradition took place at about the turn of the year. I should not make the link with the Anglo-Irish Agreement that my hon. Friend implied in his question. I agree with his latter proposition.

Mr. Bellingham: With the approach of 1992 businesses will face greater harmonisation, as will water companies, farmers and financial institutions. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only people who will not be affected by 1992 are terrorists? Does he agree that we should move towards a European treaty on extradition? Surely, instead of talking about monetary or political union, the intergovernmental conference should devote more time to the important question of extradition.

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is, of course, the European convention on the supression of terrorism. Recent events in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany show that there is ever-increasing practical and efficient co-operation between the partners of the Community against terrorism.

Western Sahara

5. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have offered any assistance to the United Nations to conduct the referendum in the western Sahara.

Mr. Waldegrave: Like the other members of the Security Council, we support the recent efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and stand ready to consider requests for assistance.

Mr. McKelvey: Nevertheless, will the Minister use his considerable influence with the Moroccan Government and with Polisario in suggesting that they should co-operate to the fullest, so that the United Nations can get the referendum under way? Will the Minister confirm that assistance will take the form of the provision of officials and observers? If we are to send observers, will the right hon. Gentleman consider including me as one of them?

Mr. Waldegrave: I cannot but accept the hon. Gentleman's offer, because it might be a rather arduous mission and we are therefore happy to have volunteers. More seriously, as a permanent member of the Security Council, we are entirely behind the secretary-general's efforts. There again seems some hope of making progress, and we stand ready to accept requests.

Mr. Conway: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that King Hassan of Morocco has moved considerably towards holding a referendum in the western Sahara? One of the difficulties with which the United Nations has to come to terms is defining who lives there and exactly where, in order that a referendum can be held. If there is any question of observers being sent to represent this Parliament or the British Government, will my right hon. Friend ensure that apologists for the Algerian Government or Polisario are not among them?

Mr. Waldegrave: I thought for a moment that another volunteer was coming forward. However, it is a serious matter. I do not want to appear, by what I say at the Dispatch Box, to endorse one side or the other in the dispute. It is far better to support the secretary-general and to proceed on the basis of the census taken by the Spanish —which is the information the secretary-general is now working on—in compiling a proper electoral roll and arranging a referendum.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Minister join us in paying tribute to the secretary-general for restarting last week the first direct talks between Iran and Iraq, the success of the referendum in Namibia, and now his work in respect of the western Sahara? Will the right hon. Gentleman respond readily and positively when, as we hope, the technical mission returns from the western Sahara at the end of the month? How seriously do the Government view the failure on Monday to establish a direct dialogue between the two sides?

Mr. Waldegrave: I happily join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the secretary-general, who has taken full advantage of the possibilities offered by making proper use of United Nations machinery that the improvement in the general world climate and between east and west has offered him. In the issues that the hon. Gentleman mentioned and in one or two others that one could mention, the secretary-general has played his proper, vital part. The secretary-general's initiative in respect of the referendum rather than any separate direct talks has our fullest support.

Nelson Mandela

6. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his discussions with Nelson Mandela, deputy president of the African National Congress of South Africa.

9. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent talks with Nelson Mandela.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I had friendly and positive discussions with Mr. Mandela on 3 July about how best to take forward the process of ending apartheid in South Africa by negotiation.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that there is a long way to go before negotiations on the full transfer of power can begin and that the peace process in South Africa is still very fragile? Does he accept that the people best able to judge when fundamental and irreversible change has taken place are the South African people themselves? If so, would not he be wise to listen to them and to maintain sanctions until they consider it reasonable for sanctions to be lifted?

Mr. Waldegrave: I wholeheartedly endorse the hon. Gentleman's argument that we should listen to the people of South Africa—all the people of South Africa. Mr. Mandela represents a considerable number of them, which is why it is very important to talk to him. However, I do not endorse the hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks. Nor would Mr. Mandela, who seems optimistic about the pace of progress. He has said:

"It is possible that by the next time the question arises in the European summit"—

that is, the question of sanctions—

"it will no longer be an issue because we may have reached agreement by then."

Mr. Mandela is talking in terms of a very optimistic time scale, which makes it clear that he is not now making sanctions a central issue of principle. It is just an argument about timing.

Mr. Hunter: While warmly welcoming Mr. Mandela's overdue public acknowledgement of the Prime Minister's opposition to apartheid, does my right hon. Friend agree that other black South African leaders outside the ranks of the African National Congress should be encouraged to play their part in the creation of a just and equitable society in South Africa—not least because Mr. Mandela and the ANC have too long and too closely flirted with murder and Marxism?

Mr. Waldegrave: It should be the Government's policy to talk to all those leaders in South Africa who are willing to negotiate a way to peace. There are other representatives of communities in South Africa as well as Mr. Mandela with whom we talk and with whom we should talk. However, my hon. Friend was right on one point. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is owed an apology from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) who said:

"She is the world's best friend of apartheid."—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 278.]

The right hon. Gentleman constantly tells us to listen to Mr. Mandela. Will he now retract that in view of what Mr. Mandela has said?

Mr. Flannery: Despite what the Minister has just said and his comments about my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), is not it a fact that, as well as saying what he did, Mr. Mandela also asked us not to relax sanctions? Did not he ask that everywhere he went? Is not the Minister being a little gauche in the way that he just put that?

Mr. Waldegrave: Whether gauche or not, we have had a long-standing disagreement and I am glad that the European Community and others are now coming closer to our position. As progress is made, there should be a steady relaxation of sanctions. Mr. Mandela takes a different view. As the Labour party's position is entirely that of Mr. Mandela on every other matter, we are owed an explanation of why it is different on the assessment of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Gardiner: Did my right hon. Friend detect any understanding by Mr. Mandela that, as South Africa puts the doctrines of apartheid behind it, the crying need of its people is for a far greater flow of international investment in that country to produce more jobs and to sustain an economy that is capable of investing far more in education and health services? Did Mr. Mandela give any sign of the encouragement that he is giving to international business men to invest in South Africa?

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. Mandela met leading business men in London and elsewhere. He said:

"Private capital, both domestic and international, will have a vital contribution to make to the economic and social reconstruction of South Africa. . . This cannot happen without large inflows of foreign capital, including British capital."

Those are welcome steps away from the old socialism which I am afraid some Opposition Members have been misleading Mr. Mandela into following for many years.

Mr. Kaufman: Do I take it from the Minister's quotation from Mr. Mandela, the deputy president of the African National Congress, about the Prime Minister, that the Government now take their orders from the ANC? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kaufman: If the Government are selectively to quote one kindly and generous reference by Mr. Mandela to the Prime Minister, will they now accept what Mr. Mandela said in the hearing of the Minister and myself when we lunched together last week—that Mr. Mandela is adamant in his insistence that sanctions should remain?

Mr. Waldegrave: The right hon. Gentleman has answered the first part of his question with his final sentence. We disagree with the ANC about sanctions. Is it impossible for the right hon. Gentleman to admit that he was wrong?

Mr. Quentin Davies: Do my right hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues on the Front Bench agree that it cannot make the faintest sense to promote aid and credits as the best way to encourage political progress and reform in eastern Europe and sanctions as the best way to encourage exactly the same developments in South Africa?

Mr. Waldegrave: I share my hon. Friend's view. The right hon. Member for Gorton witnessed an argument on this matter between Helen Suzman and Mr. Mandela which, I believe, once again Mrs. Suzman won. It is crazy to be seeking to bring back international capital to South Africa in six months time and to be trying to drive it away now.

EC Foreign Affairs Ministers

7. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet the European Community Foreign Affairs Ministers.

15. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet the European Community Foreign Affairs Ministers.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend will meet EC Foreign Ministers at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on Monday and Tuesday next week.

Mr. Salmond: Given the interest of European Foreign Ministers in easing the transition of eastern European countries from communist dictatorships to nascent democracies, does the Minister envisage that similar interest might be shown in easing the transition of Scotland from a province governed by the diktat of the House to a country that democratically elects its own representatives to the European Councils?

Mr. Maude: I thought for a moment that the hon. Gentleman sought to draw the analogy that Scotland might be transformed from a socialist economy into a free enterprise one, but I do not think that he had that in mind. East European countries are rediscovering that freedom and the ability to have a democracy and a free enterprise system is the way to go. They are keen to draw many of their lessons from the experience of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Minister discuss with his European colleagues joint action to defend and protect the continent of Antarctica? What steps has he taken to ensure that Antarctica remains free from military exploitation and disturbance and from economic exploitation and pollution? What steps will he take to ensure the future of that continent as a truly international asset that belongs to the world?

Mr. Maude: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not know that the Antarctica treaty system rules out any military intervention of the sort about which he appears to be anxious.

Mr. David Howell: When my hon. Friend meets other EC Foreign Ministers will he check how many of them have removed visa requirements for visitors from east European countries? I suspect that he will find that a number of them have removed, or plan to remove, those requirements. In view of that will he undertake to speed up the process undertaken by the British Government to review and remove the long visa delays imposed on many business visitors, as well as tourists and others, from eastern Europe?

Mr. Maude: This is a matter in which my right hon. Friend has taken a close interest and we are looking at it carefully. It is desirable, wherever possible, that the European Community should move forward together for such purposes and it is certainly something that has been and is being discussed among the Twelve.

Mr. Churchill: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a growing threat to regional stability and a potential threat to Europe from the determination of military dictatorships such as Iraq and Libya to acquire chemical, biological and nuclear weapon capabilities, allied to a long-range delivery capability? Bearing in mind the fact that some European Governments have, in the past decade, supplied military-grade uranium to Iraq, and given the recent saga of the long gun, for which parts were provided from this country and Germany, will my hon. Friend ensure that that matter is raised at the next meeting of EC Foreign Ministers so that we do not aid and abet the future acquisition of such capabilities?

Mr. Maude: These matters are discussed regularly among the Twelve. Of course, it is important that the non-proliferation obligations to which we all sign up are observed.

Mr. Tony Banks: When the Minister next meets his EC colleagues will he raise with them the trade in Hong Kong ivory? Does he recall that the Government gave an assurance in the House that the reservation entered into on behalf of Hong Kong would end at midnight on 17 July? Is he aware that a major loophole has emerged? It is clear that that trade will continue under the guise of personal effects moving out of Hong Kong. I know that the Government would not wish to have misled the House, but they have been misled by the Hong Kong authorities. Will he take urgent steps to close that loophole? If not, the only sufferer will be the African elephant.

Mr. Maude: There is no question of the House being misled. I am aware of the concern that has been expressed and it is being considered.

Sir Peter Hordern: If the discussions with other European Foreign Ministers touch on aid to eastern Europe, will my hon. Friend impress on them that it is better to create the conditions for genuine investment in eastern Europe than to throw money at any of those countries? Would not it be even better to remove the restraints on trade imposed by the common agricultural policy and other European Commission policies?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is entirely right. It is important that the programme of aid to eastern Europe should proceed on the basis of conditions. It should not go ahead unless the process of economic reform goes ahead, too. We believe, and others agree, that that principle should be applied to the Soviet Union. One important measure that we can take for reforming countries is to open our markets to their products, and agriculture is one such important sector.

Mr. Kaufman: When the Minister next meets European Community Foreign Ministers, many of whom were at the NATO summit last week, will he explain why last Thursday the Prime Minister said that she opposed a second round of conventional forces in Europe negotiations and on Friday she signed the communiqué agreeing to a second round of CFE negotiations? Did he agree with the Prime Minister before or after she was forced to change her mind?

Mr. Maude: As so often, the right hon. Gentleman is off beam. There has never been any difference and the same mandate continues.

South Africa

8. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on sanctions against South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our policy is unchanged. We continue to believe that pressure should be relaxed as progress is made in South Africa. We welcome the Dublin European Council's endorsement of this principle.

Mr. Carlisle: As Her Majesty's Government's attitude to sanctions, which was endorsed by my right hon. Friend the Minister this afternoon, is that they are yesterday's argument or, in the words of the Prime Minister, they have no part to play in policy towards South Africa, why do we still insist on supporting the obnoxious Gleneagles agreement which upholds sporting sanctions against that country? Does my right hon. Friend accept that the one message of encouragement for President de Klerk to pursue the path of reform that he would like would be an invitation to the Springboks to play cricket at Lord's and rugby at Twickenham?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Gleneagles agreement was an obligation which was entered into collectively and we shall honour it. That does not argue against our belief that as progress is made we should persuade our colleagues to move in step with it.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Minister aware that Labour Members have the highest respect and praise for all those in South Africa, black and white alike and in the African National Congress and outside it, who have fought and suffered all their lives, as Nelson Mandela did for more than 25 years in prison, for a democratic South Africa, but that we have the highest contempt, if that is the right expression, for people like the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) who throughout has done his best to side with the oppressors, taken free trips to South Africa and in every conceivable way opposed the progress now taking place in that country?

Mr. Waldegrave: As usual with the hon. Member, his remarks were unfair, overblown and exaggerated. My hon. Friends who have argued for many years that those who were seeking to damage the South African economy would damage all the South African people will turn out to be right. Although the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has not yet found a formula for these matters, the hon. Gentleman should accept what Mr. Mandela said—that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is an enemy of apartheid and all kinds of racism. I hope that he will accept that all Conservative Members share those views.

Sir Peter Blaker: May I reinforce the point made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies)? Has my right hon. Friend observed that those who call for the continuation of sanctions against South Africa tend to be the same people who call for economic aid to the Soviet Union? If it is right to help President Gorbachev to survive, must not it be right to help President de Klerk to survive?

Mr. Waldegrave: The analogy is apt. Mr. de Klerk faces exactly the same dangers and pressures as Mr. Gorbachev. It is no more certain that the one will survive than the other. It is surely in the interests of progress in those countries that both do so.

Cambodia

10. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will review his policy regarding voting for the recognition of the Cambodian delegation at the United Nations.

Mr. Sainsbury: With our EC partners we are reviewing our policy towards Cambodia's representation at the United Nations. In doing so, we shall be taking into account the efforts of a range of countries, notably the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to achieve a comprehensive political settlement.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister press at the United Nations for the 12-member National Supreme Council, which represents all factions in Cambodia, to go ahead, despite the veto by the Khmer Rouge? Will he call for the cessation of all arms supplies to that area, especially from China, which supplies arms to the Khmer Rouge? Will he also ensure that a high-ranking diplomat visits Cambodia so that he can report at first hand to the Government?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman has identified a number of elements that would form a necessary part of a comprehensive political settlement. We hope that that will be done by the efforts being led by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to achieve that settlement, and to resolve the problem of the seat at the United Nations, before it comes up before the credentials committee in about mid-October.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that Britain's vote on this issue should be cast not according to what other nations wish, but according to what this country thinks is right? Does he agree that our vote should not be cast in support of any organisation that has the Khmer Rouge in its membership, but should be cast for the Phnom Penh representatives, who oppose it?

Mr. Sainsbury: As my hon. Friend is aware, we are reviewing our attitude to that important issue. He will also be aware that it was not the subject of a vote at the United Nations last year.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that the Khmer Rouge troops are now 50 miles from Phnom Penh, that thousands of refugees are pouring into that city, and that all his diplomatic procrastination is playing into the hands of Pol Pot? Surely he can say now that the Government will no longer support the seating of an illegal delegation at the United Nations, that they will support urgent action to end the arms supply and get a ceasefire, and that they will work urgently to ensure that the mass murderers are not able once again to seize power in Cambodia?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman is very well aware, as he was present at the debate last Monday, of the efforts being made by the Government in the company of the other permanent members of the Security Council to bring about a comprehensive political settlement, which is the only satisfactory way forward that will give the Cambodians the opportunity to live in peace and stability and the right to choose their own Government.

St. Helena (Satellite Television)

11. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any representations about satellite television reception in St. Helena; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have not received any representations about satellite television reception in St. Helena. No television broadcasts are at present received on the island, and there are no facilities on the island for receiving satellite television signals.

Mr. Key: Precisely. Will my hon. Friend have a word with the Home Secretary about devising a post-colonial system for the representation in this House of our remaining dependent territories, along the lines of the 1955 Malta settlement? Members of the dependencies——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this have anything to do with satellite television?

Mr. Key: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is because of the representations that my right hon. and learned Friend has received and the fact that to receive representations in the first place, we need to have Members from there in this House.

Mr. Speaker: I think that that is a bit of a cheek.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend asks an ingenious question. Without satellite television reception the citizens of St. Helena would be deprived of viewing our proceedings on television—if broadcasting should continue. However, my hon. Friend will be aware that the citizens of St. Helena, like the citizens of all our dependent territories, can vote for members of their own legislative council. He will also be aware that those councils have responsibility for the full internal self-government of the territories. If we went further than that, it would be a complex issue which would require careful consideration.

BBC External Services

12. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase the funding available for the BBC external services.

Mr. Sainsbury: Funding for the BBC is set for periods of three years. In 1990-91, the final year of the present triennium, funding is 40 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979-80 and 13 per cent. higher than in 1987-88. Funding for the next such period, beginning in April 1991, will be decided during the 1990 public expenditure survey and announced following the autumn statement.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept the unique value of a world broadcasting service which regularly reaches 120 million people worldwide and which played such a positive role in the recent and continuing political developments in eastern Europe? Is he aware of the level of support in the House for the World Service? Is he further aware that if he does not secure the public financial support from the Treasury for which he has been asked to argue in the coming expenditure survey round, it will be unable to develop its services in the way that it has in the past or retain its pre-eminent position in world broadcasting services?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to have this opportunity to pay tribute to the quality and value of the BBC World Service broadcasts, particularly to those countries where closed societies make it difficult or perhaps impossible for people to obtain accurate information not only about the rest of the world but sometimes about their own country. I am well aware of the value attached to the World Service not only by those who listen to it but by hon. Members.

Dame Peggy Fenner: Will my hon. Friend look generously at the needs of the World Service in its next funding period, bearing in mind the fact that we devotees of the BBC World Service regard it as a fine example of a service whose newsmen report the news as it is, not the newscaster's view of it?

Mr. Sainsbury: I very much note what my hon. Friend says. The World Service has done well under this Government. As I said, its funding has increased by 40 per cent. in real terms since the Government came to power in 1979-80 and its current output is the highest since the 1950s.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Despite what the Minister says, the increased funds needed by the BBC external services cannot make up for the early damage done by the Government when they slashed funds to the British Council and massively increased fees for overseas students. Is not the Government's ill-thought out decision not to fund the world television service a continuation of that earlier Government policy?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not sure how the hon. Gentleman links funding for the British Council with that for the World Service. They are entirely separate. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that other English language television news services operate without a Government subsidy. I understand that the BBC is seeking to attract private sector support for a world service, and we wish it well in its efforts.

Mr. Sayeed: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Government are rightly concerned about obtaining value for money, but does he agree that the BBC World Service gives superb value for money, that it reaches a large number of people—it should reach many more—and that increased funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office would be welcome to the many people who value the service and would enjoy its greater audibility?

Mr. Sainsbury: We are conscious of the point about the importance of audibility and that is why there has been a 10-year audibility programme under this Government, involving new investment of £90 million. I am glad to say that that expenditure programme is almost complete and its results are impressive.

Romania

13. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of Romania on the development of democracy there since June 1990.

Mr. Waldegrave: We protested formally to the Romanian authorities in London and Bucharest on 15 June about President Iliescu's use of vigilantes to crush the opposition on 14 and 15 June. We invoked the Helsinki

agreement on 21 June to request information on three arrested student leaders. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and his European Community colleagues strongly condemned the violence in a statement on 18 June.

Mr. Flynn: The Minister has the support of the whole House: we join him in condemning, and expressing our outrage at, the crimes of the statesponsored and state-organised lynch mobs from the Valley of Zin. One of their victims was Mr. Leon Nica, who was a recent visitor to the House. Despite assurances given to the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and me on Monday this week in Bucharest, it appears that he is still in prison, and—according to rumours in Bucharest—has been so badly disfigured by the beating that he suffered that he is not fit to be seen.

What will be the Minister's response to the new despair, pessimism and fear in Romania? Can he assure the House that we will not desert the people of Romania, and that we will redouble our efforts to build on the links that now exist between us and them, so that the barriers do not rise again and Romania does not become isolated and indifferent to western opinion?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful for the steadfast support that the hon. Gentleman has given to the line that has, I think, been taken by the majority of hon. Members—although opinion is not unanimous; the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) takes a different view. The position of Mr. Nica is one of the matters about which we are most worried. He is one of the three people about whom we inquired. There was a rumour that he had been released, but we do not believe it: his student organisation says that he has not. We will press his case strongly.

As for the general policy, we should be building and maintaining contacts, but we should not yet be offering the prizes of economic and other support that we have made conditional, for the other countries of eastern and central Europe, on progress towards law, free markets and genuine democracy.

Sir Bernard Braine: May I strongly associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn)? Together with French and Belgian Members of Parliament, we had a meeting with the Romanian Government on Monday.

Is my right hon. Friend aware—I am sure that he is—that the sorry events of June have left the Romanian Government floundering? There is considerable fear and even despair in Romania. Will my right hon. Friend use his best endeavours—with our partners in western Europe—to bring home to the Romanian Government the fact that help will be forthcoming for that floundering, sad country only when it puts its house in order—when democracy is practised, dialogue with the people is undertaken and the atrocities referred to by the hon. Gentleman cease?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my right hon. Friend. His views and knowledge of that country are well known, and I share them. It is, however, important to recognise the steps that have been taken. It is the fact that those initial gains seem in danger of being lost which makes us so worried, angry and frustrated. That is why we thought it right to instruct Her Majesty's ambassador to attend the inauguration of the elected President—he is, after all, the first elected President, and that is a major step, although my right hon. Friend is right to say that that alone is not enough.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Minister take it from me that, having seen the democratic way in which the elections were conducted on 20 May, my Conservative colleague and I were disappointed to see what happened with the incursion into Bucharest of what I can only call Communist party vigilantes—[HON. MEMBERS: "Miners."] I call them vigilantes.

Does the Minister agree that one way in which we can influence events in Bucharest is by having talks with the appropriate Ministers, and encouraging British business men to show what can be on offer to the Romanian economy if Romanian democracy is allowed to progress in the way in which it appeared to be progressing on 20 May, when nothing sinister was clear to the observers in that country? Does he further agree that a real effort is needed by the British Government and British business to influence further progress?

Mr. Waldegrave: We believe that the election had many flaws; we also believe that it is likely that the National Salvation Front would have won a wholly fair election. We must recognise the steps that have been taken. I did not say—as I was quoted as saying by Mr. Conor Cruise O'Brien—that there is no difference between Ceausescu and Iliescu. There have been tentative steps forward, and we should encourage them, but we should not—we cannot—yet say that the conditions for general economic aid and for our know-how fund have been met. We must keep in place the carrots for further vital progress.

Mr. Onslow: Does my right hon. Friend think that democracy has any chance in Romania as long as it is up against Scargillite National Socialism?

Mr. Waldegrave: It was the very disturbing methods used by Mr. Iliescu at the first challenge that worried us so much because they were just the same methods as Ceausescu used to use. My right hon. Friend's anxieties are well founded.

British-Soviet Relations

14. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current developments in British-Soviet relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: Anglo-Soviet relations are better than ever. We are moving steadily from an era of confrontation to one of co-operation in an increasingly broad range of areas.

Mr. Winnick: I note what the Minister says. Bearing in mind the historical changes that have taken place, especially in the past year, such as the ending of the Russian empire in eastern Europe, the democratic changes in the Soviet Union and the fact that the right-wing Conservative majority—[HON MEMBERS: "Hard left."]—delegates at the party congress did not get their way, is not there a case for taking a far more favourable and flexible attitude towards the request for assistance in the immediate period? Why is there a hostile attitude towards such assistance? Surely it could be linked to the continuance of democratic changes in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am confused by the hon. Gentleman's terminology. His hon. Friends—or in his case perhaps not his friends—in the Militant Tendency would be deeply offended by being placed on the right wing, which is where they would have to be placed according to the hon. Gentleman's categorisation. The hon. Gentleman knows that we take the view, and got some support from the Opposition for saying, that simply pouring money into an economic system which would waste it would neither help the progress of reform nor do any favours for our taxpayers. Tomorrow my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be making a statement showing why the Houston summit has clearly taken the view that much more analysis must be carried out first. What is more, we must be clear about what is being requested. The hon. Gentleman may be clear, but nobody else is.

Sir John Stokes: Much as we would all like to help President Gorbachev, and bearing in mind the fact that some of the money sent to Russia might fall through their pockets, will my right hon. Friend remember that every day Russia is still producing submarines, tanks, guns and planes in undiminished numbers? Surely until that comes to an end we should be careful about how much money we lend them.

Mr. Waldegrave: I totally agree. Mr. Shevardnadze said the other day that the Soviet Union spends about a quarter of its wealth on armaments. There would be no question of giving aid to any other country that spent that proportion of its wealth on armaments. As the Prime Minister of Canada said, Russia is still wasting thousands of millions of roubles propping up Mr. Castro. Russia could make cuts in many areas.

African National Congress

16. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to meet representatives of the African National Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the historic fact that a previous British Government sowed the seeds of apartheid when the House voted for a racist constitution for South Africa in 1909, and that in more recent years the apartheid regime has been propped up by British investment and trade, would not it be better for British politicians now to maximise pressure on the South African Government to expedite the end of apartheid and the introduction of democracy, instead of attempting to lecture the ANC about the ending of sanctions? As the ANC has been in favour of a negotiated settlement since its foundation in 1912, is not it about time that we had a public apology from the Government for the statement by the Prime Minister less than three years ago in which she tried to denounce the ANC as just a typical terrorist organisation?

Mr. Waldegrave: At this distance I cannot be held responsible for the Liberal Government of 1909. It is clear that the negotiations that have now begun and to which Mr. Mandela is as committed as Mr. de Klerk need our support. If we damage the economy of South Africa the background to those negotiations will be more bitter and more polarised.

German Unification

17. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards a successful outcome of the German unification process.

Mr. Waldegrave: Progress so far is satisfactory. We look forward to the next ministerial meeting in Paris on 17 July, when the Poles will attend for a discussion of their border issue.

Mr. Carrington: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. The unification of Germany is one of the most important and symbolic events in Europe since the war. Does not the integration of the GDR into the EC and NATO lead the way for the eventual integration of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland into the European structure?

Mr. Waldegrave: That should be our objective—in the first instance, by means of association agreements with the Community. I should be among those who would welcome applications from those countries for full membership when they are ready for it, which will undoubtedly be in only a few years' time.

Mr. Ron Brown: Will the Minister make it clear that the Government oppose this German super-power expanding its boundaries by various political means, including through the common market? Is not it obvious that within Germany there is a claim that the boundary should be extended towards Poland, and that the Polish people have to be reassured? Will the Minister give an assurance on that today?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is a little confused. The chambers of the Parliaments of the Federal Republic and the GDR have already passed clear and explicit motions saying that they have no further claim to change the boundary of Poland. The Poles will be discussing that in the two plus four talks next week and the whole matter will eventually carry forward into a formal treaty in due course.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many of us were expecting a statement to be made by the Home Secretary about those who have become known as the Maguire Seven, and we came here expecting to listen to it. Now we are told that there will merely be an answer to a written question, so that we shall not have a chance to question the Minister. This is happening far too often, and the Government are taking refuge in such practices.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. No doubt you will look at this matter and carefully consider it, but would it not be wrong for the Home Secretary to make a statement about a case that was to go before the Court of Appeal and to prejudge it and give opinions about it before the judiciary had given the matter proper consideration?

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that, in January 1987, when the then Home Secretary made a statement to the House saying that the Maguires were guilty, he also placed a 22-page memorandum in the Library explaining why they were guilty. Now the present Home Secretary is taking the opposite view and is proposing to deal with it by way of a written answer.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We already know what the Director of Public Prosecutions will recommend to the Court of Appeal, and we have a precedent in the Guildford Four. But many of us who have an interest in this matter —I declare such an interest—cannot raise important matters that will come before the House and come into effect over the summer—for example, legal aid and the appointment of legal aid experts for the defence. These matters cannot be canvassed until much later in the year, and, during the course of this summer, they will affect a considerable number of criminal trials.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Most of us heard on the radio this morning a clear announcement that a statement would be made today in the House to the effect that the Home Secretary would be referring the case back to the Court of Appeal. There was even criticism of one of the judges involved. Is it not an insult to the House when the whole country is told what we shall be told but we are then not told it and all we get is a written answer?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I could pre-empt further points of order. I, too, heard that on the radio, but it is not the BBC that dictates what debates are to be held in the House of Commons. I have received no request for a statement, or even a request for a question.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to the points of order concerning the Maguires, Mr. Speaker. Can you make a ruling? If the Government choose to refer a case back to the Court of Appeal—as they did in the case of the Guildford Four, as now, apparently, they are to do in the case of the Maguires, and as I hope they will do soon in the case of the Birmingham Six—they should make a statement to the House so that hon. Members can question the Home Secretary. Otherwise there will be a series of government-by-press releases, with Parliament completely bypassed and the Home Secretary not answerable for his actions.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said that I have received no request for a statement or for a question on the matter today. I understand that there is to be an answer to a question. May I, however, point out to the House that there will be plenty of other opportunities before we rise for the summer recess to debate the matter, not least on the Adjournment motion and the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I point out that Home Office questions are to be answered tomorrow and that all these matters could be raised then?

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you, or someone else, explain why the official Front Bench spokesmen have remained silent on the issue? Surely that speaks volumes about the miscarriage of justice. They should come to the Dispatch Box to give the view, at least of the Labour party, about what is happening.

Mr. Speaker: I can say no more about the matter. I am not responsible for whether or not any Front Bench spokesman rises to his feet.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on the same point of order?

Mr. Banks: No, Sir, but it relates to it. May I ask whether you approve of what in effect is an attempt politically to discount the whole matter of the Maguire Seven? Question 220, which is set down for written answer today, is clearly the one that we are dealing with. This is not the way for it to be dealt with. Home Office questions are to be answered tomorrow. Will you assure the House now that we shall be able to raise the matter by means of supplementary questions?

Mr. Speaker: It all depends on whether there is a question that is pertinent to it. If there is, of course I shall bear that matter in mind.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is a different point of order, of course?

Mr. Walker: You, Mr. Speaker, will recollect that, during questions to Foreign Office Front-Bench spokesmen, two questions were asked about the position in Scotland. You will realise that, when read or listened to, those questions will be seen as an attack upon the House and upon representation in the House. As more than 80 per cent. of the people of Scotland voted for the retention of the Union—and that means this House—it seems to me that those questions could mislead people outside Parliament. How can we be protected against that?

Mr. Speaker: I see no question on the Order Paper that directly refers to Scotland. A Scottish Member of Parliament might have been called for a supplementary question, but if ever I were to call every Scottish Member

of Parliament whenever any matter appertaining to Scotland was raised, we should get through very few questions.

Mr. Mullin: Further to the previous point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I can say no more about it. I think that the hon. Member is one of those who wishes to participate in the debate on the charge-capping orders.

Mr. Mullin *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: Well, many of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues wish to participate in that debate. I shall have great difficulty in accommodating them all.

Mr. Mullin: Further to the previous point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may not have received a request, but may I respectfully put it to you that you ought, on behalf of the House, to make a request to the Home Office that the Home Secretary should come here to explain. I respectfully invite you also to address the point that I made earlier: that in 1987, when the Home Secretary wished to say that the conviction was satisfactory, he came here and made a statement. Now that the present Home Secretary has to say that the then Home Secretary was wrong in 1987, he does it by means of a question for written answer, No. 220. Is that not contemptuous? Will you please express a view upon it?

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that the House has ever given the Chair the responsibility for initiating questions. They come from Back Benchers.

Control of Detergent Pollution

3.39 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to protect the environment by amending the law relating to detergent composition and use; to control the use of phosphates and to require increased biodegradability of certain surface active agents; to require comprehensive labelling of detergents; and for connected purposes.

I am grateful for the opportunity to ask the permission of the House to introduce this Bill. I am happy to do so in the name of hon. Members on both sides of the House and in the presence of the Secretary of State for the Environment. He will recognise the importance of the matter, as do many hon. Members.

The long title of the Bill makes it clear that it has three prospective parts. As its general objective, it would have the task of protecting the environment, and would do so by amending the minimal current law relating to detergent composition and use. That would be achieved by three means: first, by controlling the use of phosphates; secondly, by requiring increased biodegradability of certain surface active agents; and, thirdly, by requiring comprehensive labelling of detergents.

Phosphates are food for the growth of plants and animals and, as such, they play a natural and normal part in our environment. However, excess phosphates in our water have had an unnatural effect. They have increasingly acted as a fertiliser for algae, which then use up the oxygen in the water as they grow rapidly. The lack of oxygen—it is almost the best possible illustration of the cycle of the ecosystem—decreases the activity of other micro-organisms that are necessary to break down detergents in the water. They also have a direct effect on other plant life, and we know that they can effectively kill whole areas of water. The most famous example is Lake Erie in north America.

The release of toxins from that process is now recognised to be dangerous also to human beings. It is rightfully a matter that has come increasingly to public attention and about which there is now public concern. In particular, during the past year or so in Britain there has been a rapid increase in toxic algae growth in many British waters. Where the level of nutrients is high, especially in slow-moving waters, a rapid growth of algae most noticeably occurs.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), who is a co-sponsor of the Bill. He has had the embarrassment, problem and difficulty of witnessing that phenomenon most abundantly on Rutland Water. It is a man-made lake, which I have seen, and which is environmentally important in that part of the heart of England. The hon. Gentleman secured an Adjournment debate on, and on many occasions has asked questions about, the rapid growth of blue-green algae and how that phenomenon can be explained. It has been fatal to animal life around the shores of Rutland Water: last year, 23 sheep and 15 dogs died because they had drunk at the water's edge.

More recently, it was reported in *The Sunday Times* on 24 June that 10 young soldiers who were canoeing on Rudyard lake in Staffordshire became ill after falling into the water. That water contained green algae. The article, by Christopher Ward and John Rowland, made it clear

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that there is evidence of a link between that algae and the pneumonia that two of the soldiers contracted. It could have been fatal—although, mercifully, it was not—but it could certainly be fatal for young and elderly people.

The position is now recognised by the National Rivers Authority, which is Britain's pollution watchdog. During a recent week, it had identified algae in another 33 lakes and rivers. The total is now about 132 rivers and lakes specifically identified, including 40 reservoirs supplying tap water. Some landlords, including the National Trust, have closed their water to the public. There is concern in all parts of the country, including inland on the mainland of Great Britain, at Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland, and offshore. It led to the Government issuing a warning a couple of weeks ago, when algae was forming along the east coast of Scotland and England, telling people not to eat mussels or oysters from that area as they might be affected.

The phosphate that we put into our water contributes to that environmental development. I do not pretend to be specific, but about 25 to 30 per cent. of the phosphate in our water comes from detergents. There are two other sources—human sewage and agricultural run-off—and I accept that we could also address the problem by dealing with those two sources. But detergents and washing powders are a key and easily containable source.

The Bill proposes that we should restrict to the minimum the amount of phosphate—at present not restricted—that goes into the water. Many other European countries, such as Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Holland and Austria have a total ban or a significant restriction. More recently, France has imposed a legal requirement to phase out, and parts of the United States have a similar requirement. It is therefore important that Britain should at last address the issue.

I accept that, at this late stage in the Session, the Bill is unlikely this year to become law. Nevertheless, I hope that the Government will respond positively to it. I know that they are contemplating producing a White Paper in the autumn. The sponsors of the Bill, on both sides of the House, hope that the Government will respond positively to it and that we shall be able to ensure that legislation is introduced before too long.

Those who support the Bill intend that environmentally harmful substitutes for phosphates should also be banned. We propose that these limits should be set down in legislation.

The two other proposals that I mentioned earlier are linked. The existing regulations, which date from 1978, require that detergents must be 80 per cent. biodegradable. It is now accepted that they can and should be significantly more biodegradable. We seek to increase the figure gradually over the next decade, to ensure that the products that might go into the water and cause a particular problem are biodegraded.

Petroleum-based surface agents cause the impurity that is most harmful to water. Vegetable-based surface agents are biodegradable. They are a perfectly feasible alternative and we wish them to become the most regularly used alternative. If non-biodegradable substances are put into water, a very unpleasant foaming may occur—for example, at weirs and over patches of rough water. People find that visually objectionable; and it is certainly objectionable if one is in the water.

Our third proposal concerns labelling detergents. At present the labelling required is minimal: only the name and address of the seller and the name of the product have to be displayed. We believe that part of the process of increasing environmental awareness is to educate the public. That can be done only if all the ingredients are included on the label. It is equally important to educate the public on the quantities that are required. People overuse potentially or actually harmful substances in ignorance of their effect on the water, believing, for example, that they will make it softer. If we use labelling to educate the public, the purity of our water can be substantially increased and the harm to our environment can be minimised.

I am aware that legislation is contemplated in Europe but it does not specifically deal with the control of pollution by detergents. That is why the Bill is necessary, and I hope that the House will give me leave to introduce it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Michael Latham, Mr. Peter L. Pike, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Robin Squire, Mr. Andrew Welsh, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones, Sir George Young, and Mr. David Clelland.

Control of Detergent Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to protect the environment by amending the law relating to detergent composition and use; to control the use of phosphates and to require increased biodegradability of certain surface-active agents; to require comprehensive labelling of detergents; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 July and to be printed. [Bill 184.]

Community Charge

[FIRST DAY'S DEBATE]

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that many right hon. and hon. Members of all parties wish to participate in the debate, which will last until midnight. I have decided not to put the 10-minute limit on speeches this evening because that would be unfair to those hon. Members who are called in that two-hour period. I do, however, urge all hon. Members to limit their speeches to 10 minutes whatever time they are called as that will enable most—I hope all—hon. Members to be called in this important debate.

3.50 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move,

That the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 6th June, be approved.

With this it will perhaps be convenient to consider the following motions:

That the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) (No. 2) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 18th June, be approved.

That the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) (No. 3) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 2nd July, be approved.

The debate is the culmination of a process that began on 3 April when I announced my decision to designate 20 authorities for charge capping. Subsequently, on 10 April, I added Lambeth to that list. The three draft orders state the caps that I propose should be set, if the House agrees, for 20 of the 21 authorities. Camden accepted the cap that I proposed. I formally set that cap by serving notice on Camden on 26 April. Therefore, Camden does not feature in any of the draft orders—nor need it do so.

The first draft order deals with Hillingdon, to the affairs of which I shall return later. The second draft order refers to those authorities that did not respond to my proposed caps within the statutory 28-day period: Basildon, Bristol and Doncaster. The third draft order deals, under section 104 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, with the other 16 authorities which responded to my proposals and put forward alternatives of their own. Again, I shall come to that issue later.

If the House approves the draft orders, I shall make them. The statutory notice with the final cap figures will then be served on the designated local authorities as soon as is reasonably practical after that. The local authorities concerned will then have 21 days in which they can set lower budgets which will, in due course, feed through to lower community charges for their citizens.

Many hon. Members will be familiar with such debates, especially those who represent inner-London constituencies. The issues that we are covering today are not novel; we have visited these shores before. The limitation of local authority rates and the debate of that limitation has been a fairly regular feature of the parliamentary calendar in the past few years. The difference on this occasion is that we are acting under different legislation and spending longer debating these matters. In view of the number of hon. Members who wish to speak, I understand why that is the case.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Patten: I suppose so.

Mrs. Mahon: Before the Secretary of State announced the capping, does he recall saying:

"The best place to resolve these issues is in the local government ballot box"?

Does he recall an article in *The House Magazine* on 18 June in which he said:

"Councils will have to answer to local voters for their performance. That's what accountability is all about"?

Will he explain what he meant by those statements?

Mr. Patten: I shall certainly come to local accountability and democracy later in my remarks.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Answer the question.

Mr. Patten: I shall make my speech in my own way, and I shall allow interventions as frequently as seems reasonable. If I have not answered the point raised by the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) by the end of my speech, the hon. Gentleman may intervene and I shall seek to respond then. I am desperately trying to be accommodating to Opposition Members. At this point I shall abandon what was clearly an ill-starred endeavour.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): As the matter has been raised, perhaps I should draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the fact that the unlamented Ealing Labour council inherited balances of £28 million. In four years it raised the rates and the community charge by 264 per cent. and left debts of £460 million to the people of Ealing. It is no wonder that the council was thrown out on its ear by the electorate. Was that not a good form of accountability?

Mr. Patten: It was a good form of accountability. We are delighted that one of the main beneficiaries in the House was the Leader of the Opposition, and that a first-class council has been elected to look after his affairs and those of Ealing.

If this occasion is fairly familiar to the House, so are some of the matters of principle to which I shall come shortly. So, too, are some of the issues that will be raised on the way in which those principles are applied in practice. Before coming to the principle and the application of the principle in practice to the designated authorities, I wish to deal briefly with the law.

Most of us would concede that, for the past three months, questions of legality have featured significantly in discussions of local government affairs. If one is to believe what one reads in the press, those questions of legality have already consumed more than £1 million in legal costs and a good deal of time and effort on the part of officers of the designated authorities which have pursued action through the courts.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): They were entitled to do so.

Mr. Patten: Absolutely. The authorities were represented by a galaxy of five senior counsel and eight junior counsel. The number of councils fell from 20 to 19 when Hillingdon withdrew. Twenty authorities applied to the Divisional court, the court of first instance, to have my designation decisions overturned.

The Brent law centre, representing two school governors and the National Union of Teachers—both parties were represented by senior counsel—also joined in the court hearings. In the Divisional court, the applicants'

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case was dismissed. The applicants then appealed to the Court of Appeal, and again their appeal was dismissed. When I made my initial statement on 3 April, I said that the designation criteria that I had chosen were legally robust. Six judges have arrived at the unanimous decision that my action was lawful. Nevertheless, 16 authorities are still pursuing the matter legally in another place. That raises three issues on which the House would want me to comment.

First, the role of the courts and the concerns of this House are different. The courts are concerned with the law —that is, whether or not I am entitled to take the decisions that I do. The Master of the Rolls made the point extremely clearly in his judgment in the Court of Appeal by using a metaphor. He said that the court's role was similar to that of a referee in ensuring compliance with the rules. I seek to make this point in a non-partisan way, hoping that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House will accept it. The courts are not concerned whether my decisions—that is, if I am entitled to take them—are appropriate. That is a matter for me and for the House, and is the subject of our debate this afternoon. I want to make that distinction clear.

Secondly, the legality of my decisions are the subject of legal proceedings in another place. Obviously it would not be proper for me to comment extensively on them, but while those proceedings cannot and will not be influenced by any debate in this House, there is no impediment to this House now considering fully, in relation to the draft orders, all the matters that are rightly and properly matters for this House.

Setting the caps is a matter of considerable urgency and it is in the interests of all the local authorities and charge payers concerned that that should be done as soon as is practicable, ending uncertainty and bringing relief to about 4 million charge payers. It is right for the House to consider the draft orders now, so that, if it approves them, local authorities will be able to revise their budgets and to set lower community charges.

Thirdly, if the designation were to be deemed unlawful, my decisions and the orders could be quashed. If before such a judgment I had served the statutory notices that set the caps for designated authorities, those caps also could be quashed. I want to make clear the distinction between the issues which have been discussed in the courts and those which we are debating now, because it is no part of my argument that, because the courts found my action to be legal, they necessarily found it to be appropriate. Appropriateness is a matter for this House.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I thank the Secretary of State for spelling out that distinction, but will he confirm, and place on the record for the benefit of the millions of people affected by the action that he is now taking of his own volition, that, although the courts may have taken their time to examine his decision, just as the House will take time today and tomorrow to do so, when the House was considering the legislation, it was never allowed fully to debate the Government's proposals because the Government introduced a guillotine? So although the powers that the Secretary of State is exercising may be lawful, they were never fully debated by this House. That is why the action that the right hon. Gentleman seeks to take today and tomorrow is totally undemocratic.

Mr. Patten: Although I have not been a Member of Parliament for as long as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), it is within my recollection that a previous Labour Government frequently and enthusiastically used their powers to guillotine legislation. I believe that it was a former leader of the Labour party who, as Leader of the House, broke the record for the number of Bills that he guillotined in a day.

Over the years, we have debated capping powers. In particular, we have debated the designation criteria which I have used on this occasion. Indeed, we debated them a few months ago, and I dare say that we will debate them in future. I hope that nothing the hon. Member for Perry Barr said—I do not think that anything he said would bear this interpretation—would suggest to people outside this place that the amount of time taken to debate issues in the House justified people witholding payment of their community charge. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman or any other hon. Member would sensibly say that.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Secretary of State appeared to be mildly criticising the local authorities which together have taken the legal action that they are still pursuing. Does he not agree that they may have felt justified—many Opposition Members believe that they were justified—in taking that action? While the Government's decisions may be lawful, the authorities are entitled to point out to the courts and to the country that the decisions of local government finance distribution this year, upon which the Secretary of State's policy is based, owe a great deal to erroneous assumption and outdated fact. If the courts cannot understand what that means, the House must.

Mr. Patten: In due course it will be for those local authorities which have taken the matter through the courts and spent a good deal of their community charge payers' money in doing so in an attempt to ensure that those same community charge payers have a higher community charge to defend their actions to their local electors. I very much hope that the amount of legal attention that those matters have received this year will ensure in future that we can proceed more expeditiously when we need to do so should I be required in future to exercise the powers that I have from Parliament to cap local authority expenditure.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Patten: The more I give way, the more I eat into the time available to hon. Members to make contributions about their local authorities.

Mr. Fraser: It is crystal clear that the orders limit the level of expenditure of specified local authorities. The Secretary of State said that that would feed through to local poll tax or community charges. Is he saying that the effect of the orders is a specific enforceable lower level of poll tax? Because of the delay and uncertainty over the past few months, the income of many of those local authorities, particularly my own, will be much lower over the year and the expenditure, because of the cost of recalculation, will be much higher. Does the Secretary of

State appreciate that the irony is that it may be necessary to set a higher poll tax to pay for the even lower expenditure because of the level of non-payment as a result of the long delays and the confusion created by the orders?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on a matter of politics and on a matter of law. When local authorities set new budgets where a cap has been designated, they will have to apply precisely the same criteria and considerations that they applied when they set their original budgets. They will be determining how the same number of community charge payers should meet a lower level of spending. That will mean a lower community charge for their citizens. The law is perfectly plain about that.

With regard to the matter of politics, it has of course been the choice of those local authorities to pursue their cases through the courts. That choice has not been exercised by every local authority. For example, Camden did not choose to do that. It accepted the cap that I proposed and the statutory notice on 26 April. That is not the case with Hillingdon. I shall return to its affairs in a moment, but I wanted to deal with those legal points at the outset.

The principle that we should debate in the House is whether it is right for central Government to take the power and, having taken that power, to use it to constrain local authority spending and hence constrain local authority tax-raising powers. This is not a new issue, but something of an old chestnut. At the heart of debates in this House for about 15 years has been the relationship between local and central Government.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): No.

Mr. Patten: With great respect to the hon. Lady, that matter has been at the heart of debate for the past 15 years.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way; he has been especially generous to Opposition Members, who now dispute what he tells the House. Those in local government before 1979 will recall the action of the then Government when they introduced primary and secondary clawback. Perhaps there was less squealing then from Labour Members who were part of a Government who were trying to curb local government and who said that the party was over.

Mr. Patten: It is fair to say that, in the late 1970s, local authorities were predominantly controlled by Conservatives. When two successive Secretaries of State for the Environment tried to end the party, they were dealing with local authorities that accepted the role of central Government in establishing national economic priorities and implementing a national economic strategy. I should remind the House that the only cut in current local authority expenditure was made in 1976-77, when local authority expenditure fell by 6 per cent.

I do not believe that anyone on either side of the House has ever made the case, at least theoretically, that local authorities should be treated as independent fiefdoms whose actions and spending are of no concern to the House or central Government. Local authorities were created by Parliament and their powers and duties are laid down by it. We prescribe, for example, in detail how local authorities should regulate tattooing parlours. We prescribe in detail how local authorities monitor the operation of every ear-piercing establishment and the qualifications required for local authority meat inspectors. As we prescribe such detailed matters and many others, it would be illogical if we came to the conclusion that the amount of money that local authorities spend and the amount of taxes that they raise are of no concern to us.

Ms. Armstrong: This House has also prescribed local authorities' duties in terms of education. There has been an increase in their duties as a result of the Education Reform Act 1988. The Secretary of State's actions are making it impossible for some local education authorities to carry out their statutory responsibilities.

Mr. Patten: Ninety education authorities which are not capped are carrying out their statutory responsibilities. I believe that that is an adequate answer to the hon. Lady's observation—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that what is objected to is not just the simple fact of the cap, although it is bad enough, but the highly selective way in which it has been imposed? My local authority has spent only 4 per cent. over its target, which is closer to its target than 90 per cent. of all other local authorities, including Conservative ones, yet it is Labour authorities that we are discussing. That is not fair, and this action has brought his office into disrepute.

Mr. Patten: I must disagree with the hon. Gentleman by referring to the facts. His local authority is spending 16·1 per cent., or £178, per adult above its SSA. If he says, "The SSA is jolly unfair"——

Mr. Boateng: Exactly.

Mr. Patten: Let me finish the point, because I am anxious to help the hon. Gentleman. It is spending 27·3 per cent. above its rescaled GRE. It is overspending more under the old grant formula than under the SSA. The hon. Gentleman's argument does not hold up.

Mr. Boateng: Let us consider the figures. Brent's notional poll tax target was £481. It set a poll tax of £498—4 per cent. higher. The reality is that the average for all councils is 31 per cent. over target, so Brent is closer to its target than 90 per cent. of all local authorities. That is the fact.

Mr. Patten: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the assumed community charge, not the standard spending assessment. As he is a shadow Treasury spokesman, I am sure that, should he become the real thing in due course, he will want to know the difference between the assumed charge and the SSA.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my hon. Friend be kind enough to bear in mind that the spending of several Conservative councils has been 16 to 32 per cent. higher over the past two years? Many Conservative community charge payers wonder why those authorities have not been capped. Will he bear in mind in future the fact that increases in expenditure by local authorities, of whatever political complexion, should be subject to the same capping?

Mr. Patten: I shall come, with enthusiasm—at least on my part; I do not know whether it will be matched on the part of others—to our ability in law to constrain year-on-year increases in spending.

[Mr. Patten]

The total amount of local government expenditure, and therefore the amount spent by local authorities, which in aggregate makes up that total, is and must be a matter of concern to any Government who wish to manage the nation's economic affairs prudently. Equally, the total amount of local authority spending and the spending decisions made by local authorities are certainly of concern to this Government—I hope that they would be of concern to any Government—because of their repercussions for local community charge payers. That is an important argument for the community charge, the principle of which is that virtually everyone should make some—I repeat, some—direct contribution to the cost of local government services, from which everyone benefits.

I have no doubt that the introduction of the community charge is already starting to have an effect on attitudes to local government spending and that the community charge will introduce a more direct translation mechanism between local authority spending and local electors. I very much hope that, as a result, in due course it will be unnecessary for the holder of my office to exercise powers under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to constrain local authority spending. Unfortunately, that happy state of affairs has not yet arrived. I certainly do not think that it arrived this year, when several local authorities plainly increased spending thinking that they could blame the consequences on the introduction of the community charge.

I used my powers seriously—I did not take my decisions lightly—and I have no doubt that it was right and proper to use them.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: Yes, but then I should like to make some progress.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend will no doubt be aware, and the public must be made aware, that the community charge will be used as a political tool in the approach to a general election by parties that wish unscrupulously to advance their parliamentary representation. Therefore, I hope that he will carefully watch Labour-controlled Lancashire county council and other councils, which will have no hesitation in unnecessarily increasing the community charge for political gain during a general election campaign.

Mr. Patten: I can well understand my hon. Friend's concern. The whole House will want to be assured that, when I make a statement about the local government settlement for next year—I hope that it will be later this month—and about the outcome of our review of the community charge, I shall give the House my intentions in broad terms, about charge capping for the future. I hope that I shall be able to satisfy my hon. Friend on that occasion.

I repeat that this central issue—the relationship between this House, central Government's responsibility for managing the economy, and the totality of local authority spending—is one on which the Government have made their position plain, even if the Opposition do not like it. The Opposition's views on the matter are less than crystal clear.

We begin with the attitude of the Opposition to the principle and practice of community charge capping. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), the shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, was interviewed by John Humphrys on the "Today" programme on 27 March. The exchange went like this:

Mr. Humphrys asked:

"But if councils are profligate with rate-payers or Charge-payers', money, then what is wrong with Charge capping?"

The hon. Member for Dagenham:

"Well of course there must always be in extremis that reserve power."

Mr. Humphrys:

"Would a Labour Government accept the principle—the very broad principle—of rate-capping, Charge-capping, whatever you want to call it?"

The hon. Member for Dagenham:

"Well, as I have already said, in extremis, there must always be that reserve power, but the Government's going well beyond that reserve power."

Mr. Humphrys:

"You say a Labour Government would have to do it in extremis—any Government would have to do it in extremis —how would you describe 'in extremis'?"

The hon. Member for Dagenham:

"Well, it's not our problem at the moment".

Mr. Humphrys—he did not give up—said:

"It's going to be, if you're in power".

The hon. Member for Dagenham:

"Well, yes, of course ... But ... it's really just a hypothetical question to ask us to define what would be extreme circumstances. What I am saying to you is—I am not ducking your question in any sense"—

I do not think that belief in that observation will outlast the end of the sentence—

"I am saying in extremis that reserve power would have to be reserved, but it's impossible to say in advance what those circumstances would be."

We have waited four months since the interview to hear a definition of what "in extremis" means, and of when the reserve powers that would be reserved would be used. We have had no clarification from the shadow Cabinet, or from the Leader of the Opposition or—I am working in ascending order—from Mr. Peter Mandelson. Nor have we had any clarification from the hon. Gentleman.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: We are waiting for that clarification to be given any second now. As I said when I last debated these matters, we know that the hon. Gentleman believes that such reserve powers should be used in extremis, but not in Lambeth or in Basildon.

Ms. Harman: The Secretary of State has been speaking for 30 minutes and he has not justified, or sought to justify, the poll tax capping which will have such a devastating effect on the services upon which our constituents depend. Will he address himself to the issues that concern people, instead of this disgraceful political knockabout, which is an insult to the services that we are discussing? It is shameful.

Mr. Patten: I hope that the hon. Lady will be able to make her own speech in her own time. One reason why I have spoken for such an inordinate time is that I have given way to a large number of hon. Members.

I want—I am sure that it is an important issue for both sides of the House—to deal with the principle behind charge capping and the extent to which the Government should try to constrain the totality of local authority

spending and individual spending decisions by local authorities. That must be an issue of great significance and importance to the shadow Chancellor and to his Gladstonian team of shadow Treasury Ministers, one of whom I see on the Back Benches. When I look at what Labour spokesmen have said on the issue, I am aware once again, to quote from the nautical log books, that they are afloat on a high and confused sea.

When we consider what Labour spokesmen have said, it is extremely difficult to find any observation on the matter from the hon. Member for Dagenham, but I have found what I guess is the kernel of the Opposition's case—put not by the hon. Gentleman but by his predecessor, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in the rate limitation debate two years ago. I shall set out the views of the hon. Gentleman and the Opposition reasonably extensively.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): What are the Secretary of State's views?

Mr. Patten: I shall come to my views.

I begin with my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), who is with us today. He is always an incisive and informed contributor to these debates. Intervening in a speech by the hon. Member for Copeland, my hon. Friend said:

"Nobody will dispute the needs of many London boroughs and inner cities throughout Britain, but the theme of the hon. Gentleman's speech so far seems to give a clear message from the Opposition Benches that local authority spending should not be restrained or limited. Is it the Labour party's policy that, in the totality of national spending, the one area which is not the business of the House and should in no way be constrained is local authority spending? That seems to have been the message for the past 10 minutes.

Dr. Cunningham: Of course that is not the message. The hon. Gentleman is a regular attender of these debates and often contributes. He knows very well that that is not Labour party policy, because I have had the opportunity to tell him so on several occasions. But since his memory seems to be as defective as his political reasoning, let me put it on the record again.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Charming.

Dr. Cunningham: I took the trouble to re-read the previous two debates on this subject last year and the year before." So did I. The hon. Member for Copeland continued:

"If the hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble to do that, he would have known the answer that I am about to give. It is simply that the Labour party's policy makes it clear that what the Government provide to local authorities would, of necessity, be controlled and limited—

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): How?

Dr. Cunningham: Because the Government and the Chancellor of the Exchequer would come to a decision. That is how, fathead.

The difference between us and the Government is simply that we do not believe that local government's revenue-raising powers should be subject to Government control. Whatever revenue-raising powers local government has, it should be free to determine how to use them."—*[Official Report,* 18 February 1988; Vol. 127, c. 1217-18.]

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith) *rose*—

Mr. John Evans *rose*—

Mr. Patten: Let me finish the point. Let me summarise for fatheads and non-fatheads the Labour party's position.

The Labour party's position is that it is appropriate for the House and central Government to take a view, to consider, and presumably to attempt to constrain the totality of local authority spending—

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): If the Secretary of State wants to discuss Labour party policy, the Government should call a general election and let the people decide.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Debates in the Chamber are about comparisons between policies.

Mr. Patten: The Opposition's position on this central point of principle is that it is reasonable for Parliament and central Government to have a view about the totality of local authority spending, and that to exercise that constraint they will determine—this is good news for all of us—what Government will provide for local authorities; however, at the end of the day local authorities can raise whatever funds they want, and can spend whatever they want.

There is a flaw in that argument. Let me make the obvious point by means of a metaphor. If we are concerned about the level of water in the bath, we must take account of the fact that there are invariably two taps, and that it is not enough to control only one of them. Similarly, if we want to control local authority expenditure, it is important not only to constrain the amount of money that goes from central Government to local authorities, but, if necessary, to constrain the total amount that they raise themselves through rates or through the community charge.

Mr. Soley: I intervene reluctantly, Mr. Speaker, in view of your comments about time. However, the Secretary of State is abusing the House. The three orders laid by the Government are complex, and he should address them. So far he has given us a basic lecture on constitutional law that could only be described as a painful elaboration of the obvious. We then had a bit of political knockabout. The Secretary of State has not addressed the issues of why and what is involved.

The right hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that the cuts in Wandsworth—according to an independent assessment report—led to the death of a child. That is not something to laugh about. What we are talking about today could lead to similar events in other areas: and that is what not only hon. Members but people outside want to know about. What effect, in the Government's view, will the charges have on services?

Mr. Patten: I have been attempting to deal with the principle that lies behind any attempt to constrain local authority expenditure. I have pointed out that the Labour party is passing muddled on the issue—

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Patten: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman—and twice in an afternoon would be too much.

I do not think that anyone could say airily to local authorities, "Go for it: borrow what you can and tax what you can."

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): No one has said that.

Mr. Patten: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is not accurate. He should listen for a change. That was said not by me but by the hon. Member for Dagenham in an interview in *Tribune*. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman

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no longer reads that publication. He makes comments, but he presents us with no arguments or proposals relating to how local authorities can be stopped from borrowing whatever they can and taxing whatever they can.

Let me now deal with the application of the principle to the designated authorities. The Local Government Finance Act 1988 gives me power to cap authorities on two bases. First, it says that I am entitled to cap authorities on the basis of excessive spending. Secondly, it says that I am entitled to cap authorities if the increase in their spending from one year to the next is excessive. I mentioned that earlier. I have not been able to pursue that second approach in the first year of the community charge, mainly because so many other charges have been taking place in local authority expenditure. For example, the housing revenue account has been ring-fenced and changes have been made in the capital rules.

If I had wished to use the second approach—capping on the basis of excessive increases from year to year—I would have had to construct for all local authorities a notional budget for 1989-90 in order to be able to compare like with like. The view that I was legally advised to take was that that would have led to far too imprecise a foundation for designation criteria this year. I based my criteria on the first approach, and those criteria were debated when I made my statement a few weeks ago. They have also been widely discussed outside the House and in the courts.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): My right hon. Friend is talking about the criteria by which he selects authorities for capping. Many authorities have set the charge too high, and even though the majority of our constituents accept the principle of the community charge, they cannot take any action against the amount of the charge if expenditure by the authority is below a certain limit, which from memory is about £15 million. Will my right hon. Friend comment on the excessive charges that my constituents and others have to pay because of that limitation?

Mr. Patten: As I said in my statement on the local government financial settlement for next year, I hope to be able to make clear in outline my views on charge capping should it be necessary in future. It should be possible to take either of the two approaches that I have mentioned in relation to excessive spending or in relation to excessive increases year on year.

As I have said, we have discussed the criteria in the House and outside. Camden was one of the designated authorities. It concluded that it could accept the cap even though it disagreed with it and I issued a statutory notice for Camden on 26 April. Three authorities—Basildon, Bristol and Doncaster—did not respond to my designation by putting forward an alternative within the statutory 28 days. I assume that if they had thought that my proposals were unachievable they would have responded and put forward other proposals. I would be astonished if any local authority which thought that my proposals were unachievable failed to respond.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the reasons, or perhaps the main reason, for Bristol not responding to the order was that it was scared stiff that if his Department had a look at Bristol's books it would have imposed a larger cap?

Mr. Patten: I understand why many of my hon. Friend's constituents and others in Bristol take that view. Bristol's spending record of 96·3 per cent. over standard spending assessment, or £108 per adult, speaks volumes.

After dealing with Camden and the three authorities which did not respond, we were left with 17. I shall deal with Hillingdon, which is one of the 17, in a moment. Representatives from the other 16 authorities were seen by my hon. Friends in the Department. As a result of those representations, we adjusted the caps on Brent, Southwark and Wigan, and I have confirmed the cap for the other 13 authorities.

Our proposed budgets are achievable and reasonable. If the House approves the order, it will be for the authorities to decide how to reduce their budgets to conform with the caps. It is for those authorities to set their own spending priorities within those caps; it is not for me.

Mr. Livingstone: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: No. I have given way already to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Livingstone: The Secretary of State is giving way to his hon. Friends.

Mr. Patten: I have three points to make about the application of this principle and these criteria to those local authorities. First, year after year, we have had debates on rate limitation. In all those debates there has been a lot of theoretical argument about whether the Secretary of State for the Environment is behaving in a reasonable and appropriate way. There have been assertions and counter-assertions. This year, we have something more substantial—we have direct evidence to hand, in the case of Hillingdon.

Hillingdon was one of the local authorities that I designated for capping. It had set a budget of £151 million —20 per cent. above the SSA, or £143 per adult. That led to a community charge of £367. I proposed a cap on Hillingdon, in early April, of £141·7. Hillingdon responded at the end of the month by saying that that budget was inadequate to meet its needs. It said that it needed £151 million and not a penny less.

Three days later, the political control of Hillingdon changed. The new council proposed a new budget, below the level of my cap, which implied a community charge of £290—£77 below the community charge that had been set by its predecessor and £25 below the community charge that would have resulted from my cap. It has set a budget below the level of the cap that still allows for an increase in expenditure on schools. After all the assertions and counter-assertions, it is not unreasonable for me to say that, if it is possible for Hillingdon, it should be possible for others.

Mr. Bernie Grant: What services did Hillingdon cut?

Mr. Patten: I can tell the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I hope that, if I am successful in catching your eye, Mr. Speaker, I shall be able to tell the House exactly how the new Hillingdon council achieved those cuts.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that, as Labour Members are only too keen to take the good news back to their local authorities, they will be all ears when my hon. Friend speaks.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Secretary of State is aware that this is a key issue. Is he saying that the new Conservative administration in Hillingdon has cut no services in any department as a result of its new budget? If not, he is conceding the point that capping means cutting. That is the simple implication.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) will, I hope, shortly be able to tell the House in detail where Hillingdon is making the cuts. It will be making cuts in administration—for example, in the number of people who administer rather than teach in schools. I will leave the details to my hon. Friend.

Secondly, throughout these debates in the past there has been a roll call of horror stories. Disaster has been advertised as just around the corner. Disaster is about to arrive on the next train, but the next train has drawn into the station and disaster has failed to disembark. That point got through to Opposition Front Bench spokesmen, so that four years ago——

Mr. Wareing: Not this again.

Mr. Patten: Yes, because we are all agog to hear the Labour party's views on these matters.

Four years ago, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said:

"Much has been made of the fact that some of the dire warnings of the rate-capped authorities last year of the effect of rate capping upon jobs and services have not come to pass. My answer to that is, 'not yet'."—[*Official Report*, 25 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 894.]

We had rate capping in 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90, and the answer of the hon. Gentleman year after year was the same—"not yet". Local authorities had to constrain their growth in manpower and public expenditure, but Armageddon has not so far put in an appearance.

Mr. Tony Banks: Everything is getting tacky.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is a world famous expert on that subject.

Thirdly, I accept that it is difficult to run local authorities' affairs prudently. It is not an easy job, it is a challenging job, but it is not an impossible one. When I look at some of the figures that have been presented to us over the past few weeks, I wonder about some of the arguments of Labour Members. I find it difficult to believe that in Derbyshire, where school meal charges have not been raised since 1981, it is impossible to provide better value for money. I heard one of Derbyshire's local authority leaders say the other day that the price of school meals in Derbyshire had not increased over the past nine years. That is not true. The price has increased, but the price is paid by community charge payers and ratepayers, who are subsidising school meals to the tune of £15 million.

It is difficult to believe that there is no room for economy in Basildon, which is spending at 194·3 per cent. above its SSA, or that there is no room for economy or better value for money in Haringey, which increased its rates by 61 per cent. in 1989-90 and which is 30 per cent. above the SSA. I have also the example of my own sweet Avon county council. It is proposing to spend 18·4 per cent., or £117 per head, above SSA. It is proposing a budget for this year that is 20 per cent. greater than last year's budget.

If one compares Avon with the Audit Commission's comparable local authorities—the Audit Commission family——

Mr. John Evans: Will the right hon. Gentleman say a word about St. Helens?

Mr. Patten: I shall make my own speech.

Avon is spending 18 per cent. over SSA while a directly comparable authority—Kent—is spending below SSA. With the best will in the world, my constituents do not believe that they are getting 18 per cent. better quality services than people in Kent are getting.

Mr. Tony Banks: What complaints has the Secretary of State received at his advice surgeries? What do people complain about? What are their problems? Does he have the experience that I have in a so-called high-spending authority? Some 80 per cent. of my cases are about people looking for a decent place in which to live.

Mr. Patten: I should be only too happy to share the experience of my advice centres with the hon. Gentleman. My constituents have been vociferous about two issues in the past few months. One is the level of the community charge, which is in part a consequence of the spending decisions taken by the Avon county council. The second issue that they have drawn to my attention on a number of occasions relates to the attempts that the county council has made, again and again, to prevent one of the many good schools in my constituency from opting out and taking grant-maintained status. Avon county council spent a large amount of community charge payers' money on trying to stop it opting out. My constituents have raised that issue with me.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, after it was told that it was likely to be capped, Avon county council said to all and sundry that capping would mean that all nursery schools would have to be closed? Is it not the case that the Conservatives' budget, which is below the capped level, would preserve nursery education in Avon?

Mr. Patten: Yes. There is plenty of scope in Avon for better value for money and for the improvement of services. I know that my hon. Friend is one of the Members of Parliament for the county who has pressed continually and vociferously for those objectives.

Before I close my speech, may I point out to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans)—who may listen to me now, since he was shouting at me a few moments ago about St. Helens, a subject in which I know he is interested—that, with a budget that is 16·2 per cent. or £130 per adult, above the standard spending assessment, he should not be surprised that St. Helens has been charge capped. However, I very much hope that that will be unnecessary in the future.

Mr. John Evans: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman hardly listened to my reply. I shall leave him to make his point when he speaks.

Although I realise that these matters have angered and annoyed the Opposition, at least superficially, I have

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attempted to set out the legal background to the debate. I have set out the principles that lie behind charge capping and the inordinate muddle in the Labour party on the issue. I accept that to run local authorities is difficult. If certain local authorities are represented by hon. Members who think that the job is impossible, I suggest that they should make way for people such as Councillor Mallom in Ealing, who would do the job admirably. I am delighted that for the many years that the Leader of the Opposition will spend in Ealing he will have an extremely good council to look after his affairs.

Since last April I have been accused of acting illegally and have been pursued both in the courts and outside them. The courts have made their view plain. It is now for the House to decide whether I acted rightly and appropriately. Without hesitation, I commend the draft orders to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker: Order. I ask hon. Members to bear in mind Mr. Speaker's appeal at the outset of the debate, in view of the large number of hon. Members who have a direct interest in these matters, for speeches to be brief. I believe that he intended that request to apply to Front-Bench spokesmen as well as to Back Benchers.

4.53 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): The Secretary of State has just spoken for over an hour—[HON. MEMBERS: "With interruptions."]—in a debate in which many Back-Benchers know already that they are likely to be squeezed out, on a speech in which he had so little confidence in his case that he did not even try to justify the orders for which he is seeking approval. It must have been a speech that he wrote and believed he would never have to make. But he did make it.

As the Secretary of State has supported and embraced the principle of charge capping, that raises the question: why is it that, according to reports which I shall be interested to hear whether he denies, he opposed any extension of that principle when conducting his review of the operation of the poll tax? I suspect that I know the answer. The right hon. Gentleman is at least an honest and intelligent, if somewhat pliant, politician. He knows perfectly well that the speech that he has just made, and his announcement on charge capping, is a confession of failure and the final denial and renunciation of the underlying principle that was claimed for the poll tax.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr . Gould: No, I shall not. I have only just begun my speech. Perhaps I should say that, although I shall not refuse to take interventions, I have no intention of delaying the House to the extent that the Secretary of State delayed it.

Mr. Chris Patten: With respect, as all lawyers would say to the hon. Gentleman, a major reason for the length of my speech was that I tried to give way to as many Opposition Members as possible. When we last held a similar debate I gave way about 20 times. On this occasion I have given way almost as many times. The hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members would have criticised me if I had not given way.

Mr. Gould: We could have borne the length of the Secretary of State's speech if we had thought that it contained any substance and measured up to the seriousness of the issue.

The case for the poll tax was always, and only, that it would encourage and confirm accountability. In 1987 the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), who, like so many other poll tax Ministers, seems to have moved on, said in a speech to the Associaton of District Councils:

> "The Government has chosen the path of accountability. I personally believe that accountability is the key to any reform of local government finance. The first priority must be to restore the link between those who vote in local elections, those who use the local services provided and those who pay for those services."

We see there immediately a powerful hint of the true raison d'etre of the poll tax. It was meant to compel local authorities to load any supposedly additional spending on to the poll tax payer, who was then confidently expected to round on the local authority, when confronted with that high bill, and demand, without Government intervention, that local authority services should be cut. That was the theory and the principle. On the basis of that principle, it is hard to see why a power to cap should have been required.

In the early stages of the debate, the power was explained in the Green Paper as a purely transitional measure that was needed while the poll tax was running in parallel with the rates. It was only subsequently, in Committee, that the right hon. and learned Gentleman made it clear that he saw that such a power would be required to deal with local authorities which he described as reckless and irrational and out to prove some sort of distorted political point. It would be interesting to hear during the debate how many or how few authorities are believed to fall within that description.

Because of their confidence in accountability—that the poll tax payer would insist, when bills emerged hugely above the levels that had been promised, on a reduction in services—many members of the Conservative party remained pretty relaxed. There is a suspicion that some of them—I do not know why the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) comes to mind—welcomed the prospect of very high poll tax bills and saw them as yet another turn of the screw on recalcitrant local government. In their view, local government would again be cut down to size without direct Government intervention.

The script was not, however, followed by everybody. To their eternal credit, many Conservative councillors, as well as councillors of other political parties, refused to play their part. They became alarmed by what they understood to be the significance of the poll tax for local authority services. Conservative Back-Bench Members of Parliament also became alarmed. That is why, in an amazing volte face, accountability was suddenly no longer the name of the game. What was urgently required was a measure to try to salvage something from the political wreckage. That is why accountability was thrown out of the window. There was no more talk of accountability; what was required was a political rescue act.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

The Secretary of State, who had always understood the contradiction between capping and accountability, could not even wait for the local elections which, by then, were just one month away. The urgency was so great that he had to find some political culprits; he had to identify them on the basis of political criteria. That is the exercise that we are now debating.

Mr. Oppenheim: Bearing in mind the hon. Gentleman's clear opposition to capping, will he categorically rule out the possibility of any future Labour Government capping, or in any way limiting, local government spending?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman must bear with me. Like the Secretary of State, I intend to make my own speech. I make the hon. Gentleman the same offer that the Secretary of State made to other hon. Members—I shall deal with that point, but if he is dissatisfied with the answer he might try again.

The objective of the poll tax-capping exercise is not to save poll tax payers from large bills. If that were the case, a quite different set of criteria would have been adopted. Indeed, one paradox of the whole episode is the degree to which people resent being faced with high poll tax bills, but because they have Tory-controlled authorities no one appears to be riding to their rescue. If the aim had been to reduce bills, the Government would have had to suffer the political embarrassment of charge-capping Tory local authorities. It would have been impossible to draw up a list on the basis of any sensible criteria, such as the size of the bill or the sharpest increase in expenditure, which did not include Tory authorities.

How was it possible to exclude from the list a Tory authority such as Windsor and Maidenhead, which set a charge of £449; or Kensington and Chelsea, which was £189 per head above the target figure; or Milton Keynes, which was 98 per cent. above the target figure? In drawing up a list that omitted authorities that fell into those categories, the Secretary of State abandoned any pretence that he was trying to help poll tax payers. The exercise became simply an attempt to shift the political blame. The Government wanted to duck out from under. It was essential to round up a group of politically identifiable culprits that could be saddled with the blame. That is what the charge-capping exercise is all about.

Throughout the whole saga of rate capping and poll tax capping, the Opposition have always made clear their objection in principle to the whole business of capping local authorities in their revenue-raising capacity. But we pay more than lip service to the principle of accountability. The proper remedy for a local authority that is overspending, or thought to be overspending, is that it should submit what it has done to the judgment of the local electorate. A further remedy, which we believe is infinitely preferable to the practice of charge capping, is to increase that element of democratic accountability by introducing the requirement of annual elections. That is where we stand.

Mr. Maples: One of the authorities which in no circumstances would need to be capped is the hon. Gentleman's authority of Barking and Dagenham. If the system of grants and local authority finance that the Government have introduced is so unreasonable, how has the Labour-controlled authority of Barking and Dagenham managed to set its community charge at just £3 above the Government's suggested budget figure?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is correct to point out that my local authority, having fixed a poll tax level within a few pounds of the assumed or target level, naturally felt confident that it would escape any attempt at charge capping. Unfortunately, other local authorities which had, in some senses, performed even better, found that they were not similarly exempt from that attack.

All question of principle, including the principle that is said to underlie the poll tax, has been swept out of the window. We now confront a cynical exercise in finding political scapegoats. That is why, in drawing up his list of charge-capped authorities, the Secretary of State refused to tell local authorities in advance what criteria he would apply. What a stupid and ludicrous way to run a country. The Government warn of penalties if certain rules are broken, but refuse to reveal to those who may be subject to the penalties what rules will be set. There is an important difference between the old rate-capping power —which was objectionable enough, but at least applied to the forthcoming financial year—and the way in which the charge capping operates, which means that the rules in the football game, to which a learned judge referred, are set after half time.

How much confusion, delay, hardship and cost could have been avoided had the Secretary of State simply told local authorities—local authorities that were keen to apply the rules—in advance what they should do? Had he done so, the vast majority of charge-capped authorities would have had no difficulty avoiding the disruption with which they are now faced.

The Secretary of State wanted to reap the political advantage, as he saw it, of some vague and ill-defined threat which he hoped would bring down the level of poll tax bills in general. He was not concerned about the disruption and confusion that he eventually caused to authorities that have been charge-capped.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): The hon. Gentleman keeps urging my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to explain his criteria. Could he explain his criteria and tell us what "in extremis" is?

Mr. Gould: As anyone who understands local government knows, the phrase "in extremis" applies to cases of illegality and fraud. On the occasion that I used that phrase, I was explaining that local authorities were not free from legal constraints.

Mr. Chris Patten: I want to be clear about that, because the hon. Gentleman appears to be stretching words a little generously. Is he saying that when he used that phrase, all that he meant was that local authorities should be capped only if they were guilty of fraud? Is that what the power that should be reserved is all about? It is an astonishing reinterpretation of what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State took more than an hour to make his speech, yet he still seeks to intervene. If he had spent that hour explaining why he wishes to impose charge capping, he would have done a better job.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Nothing out of order has taken place so far.

Mr. Gould: The obligation of local authorities to comply with the law must always be supported by the power to intervene. I shall restate the points of principle that I made clear a moment ago. We have always opposed in principle rate capping and charge capping. We believe that the right remedy for any supposed overspending is for authorities to submit what they have done to the judgment of the local electorate.

It is because this is a political exercise that the list ignored all the obvious criteria: which authorities presented the highest bills which showed the sharpest increases, and which most departed from target. Instead, the list relies on tortuously selected criteria that can be explained only in terms of producing that precise list. Of course, it does not include a single Conservative authority.

When it comes to targets, the Secretary of State sweeps away those criteria as though they were of no relevance. There is a paradox, which was described by the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), who has now departed to the Welsh Office, at the last Conservative conference as defining the sensible level of spending. The assumed or target level of poll tax bills was to be the sensible level of spending on the basis of which transitional relief would be calculated. I suspect that many thousands of people now understand all too well that transitional relief was a confidence trick.

They will also understand why the Secretary of State is so keen to sweep it aside as of no consequence. Although it was regarded as irrelevant to excessive spending, it might have been thought that a council which met its target—very few did—might be safe from charge capping. Not a bit. The list includes Haringey, which set a poll tax level lower than its target figure. It includes four further authorities—Brent, Calderdale, Hammersmith and Hillingdon—which have been charge-capped to a level that brings their poll tax lower than the assumed or targeted level.

Because it is a political list, it does not even take into account what was spent. It is a list that ignores spending from the reserves; it conveniently overlooks Tory-controlled authorities, such as Wandsworth and Merton, which have dipped heavily into their reserves. All that is disregarded. If Merton had been forced to count the spending that it has financed from the reserve, its bill would not have been £279; it would have been £457·32.

Because it is a political list, it includes boroughs which are major contributors to the safety net and which are deemed to have overspent by less than the amount that they are required to contribute to the safety net. Camden is told that it must contribute £75 to the safety net and, at the same time, that it has overspent by £41 per head. We are told that Islington has overspent by £30 per head and it has been forced to contribute £41 per head to the safety net. Basildon is forced to contribute £38 per head to the safety net and is regarded as overspending by £35 per head.

Because it is a political list, it includes Calderdale, one of the lowest-spending authorities in the country. Even before it was charge-capped, Calderdale ranked as the 47th lowest spender out of more than 400 local authorities. After charge capping, Calderdale will be the fourth lowest spender in the country.

Because it is a political list, it includes authorities such as Wigan, Doncaster, Rotherham, St. Helens and Barnsley. Does anyone seriously argue that those authorities are extravagant or that they are anything other than prudent managers of their budgets?

Because it is a political list, it includes Brent, whose budget would have meant, had the rates system continued, a lower rate than it had previously charged.

Because it is a political list, it includes Greenwich. I was impressed by the work that Greenwich had done in preparing such a careful and detailed explanation of its circumstances. That authority has been recognised by Ministers and by the Audit Commission as an efficient authority that manages its affairs well.

Because it is a political list, it includes authorities such as Basildon, which has already lost £4·9 million as a consequence of the business rate—it has earned 8 per cent. less in revenue from the business rate than in the previous year, and that is without taking into account inflation.

The list is based on the convenient criterion that it excludes all authorities that have budgets below £15 million. That is included in the Act because it means that all the high-spending Tory districts are exempt from charge capping. It also means that only 20 out of nearly 300 districts can be brought within the net.

In other words, the list is a political fix. The only defence that the Secretary of State could make was that he had so far persuaded the courts that he had provided himself with the legal power to do as he did. That is scarcely surprising. But that is rather different—as I think the right hon. Gentleman conceded—from the issue of fairness and common sense. In the court of informed opinion, and on the test of fairness and common sense, the Secretary of State must be found guilty.

Mr. Chris Patten: At the risk of incurring the hon. Gentleman's wrath, I invite him to name a single class of authorities—metropolitan districts, county councils or shire districts—in which Conservative local authorities are spending more and setting higher charges than Labour local authorities.

Mr. Gould: That is a red herring, given that we are talking about charge capping. But let me put on record the fact that in the shire districts, the poll tax bills fixed by Labour-controlled district authorities are lower than those set by Tory-controlled authorities. That is true whether the county is controlled by the Tories or by the Labour party. If the Secretary of State wants to contest that, let him produce figures to show that it is wrong.

One of the further embarrassments to emerge from the charge-capping exercise is the spotlight that it casts on standard spending assessments—the criteria chosen by the Secretary of State. We have the testimony of the former Minister for Housing and Planning, now the Secretary of State for Employment. In the speech to which I referred, he said:

> "From 1990 we wish to have a presumption against annual changes to the distribution formula. To assist that, we propose that there should be no requirement for these matters to be considered every year. But although the method of assessing need may not change, we shall of course use up-to-date statistics each year, when making the calculations. Our plans will ensure stability, accountability and a great deal more simplicity."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman was speaking in the earlier halcyon days before we saw the full horror of the poll tax.

By the beginning of this year, the Secretary of State was singing a rather different tune. On 18 January, he said:

"I want to make it clear to my right hon. and hon. Friends . . . that the SSA methodology is not cast in stone . . . If my hon. Friends, the local authorities in their constituencies or the local authority associations wish to come to us with fresh evidence in support of a new methodology for SSAs, we shall be quite prepared to consider changes that we can put in place for next year."—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. 435.]

It is not surprising that the Secretary of State should so rapidly have moved his ground. It is not surprising, either, that, having recognised the fallibility of the SSAs that he had put in place, he nevertheless insisted that that was the criterion on which he would base his charge capping. Notwithstanding the powerful arguments put to him about the errors made in the calculations of those SSAs, he was not to be deterred. It must be said that those powerful arguments came not just from charge-capped authorities but from a large range of authorities throughout the country—authorities which were, and remain, under Tory control, as well as authorities controlled by Labour and other political groups.

The Secretary of State insisted on using those SSAs as the basis of his criterion for charge capping, notwithstanding the powerful arguments of Brent that it had been wrongly treated and notwithstanding the persuasive evidence that charge capping of a group of similar authorities, Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, St. Helens and Wigan, which are by no means extravagant, suggested that something was wrong with their SSAs.

The Secretary of State insisted, notwithstanding the fact that Basildon was fixed with an SSA that gave it a lower spending level than it had enjoyed 10 years earlier, and notwithstanding the cuts that the SSA had meant in the case of Haringey, for example. The Secretary of State looked forward to those cuts, which he described so charmingly as a "parade of bleeding stumps".

The Secretary of State insisted, notwithstanding the problems that he created for the Secretary of State for Education and Science—for example, when Avon wanted to reorganise its education arrangements to save money but was prevented from doing so—and in the local management of schools.

The Secretary of State insisted, notwithstanding the evidence from Islington that it was charge-capped because two minor changes were made in the "other services" block of the SSA. Those changes were made between November and January and were made up by the introduction of a visitors' right criterion and by the reduction of the days of snow lying on London. On account of those two minor changes, Islington was charge-capped but, at the same time, it was prejudiced by a mistake in the number of children in education—a mistake that involved 3,670 children, at an average cost of £2,000 each.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall not seek to intervene again, but I would like to come back on something that the hon. Gentleman said. He said that Labour shire districts were spending less than Conservative shire districts. I have the figures. Conservative shire districts have spent, on average, 9 per cent. over SSA; Labour shire districts have spent, on average, 45 per cent. above SSA. Conservative shire districts have spent £8 per head over SSA; Labour shire districts, £47 per head over SSA. Conservative districts hve spent about one third above the average rate bills per adult with their community charge bill this year. The hon. Gentleman should not believe everything that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) tells him.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that intervention. He has illustrated just how difficult he finds it to follow such matters. His answer is not relevant to my contention, which was that Labour-controlled shire districts had set lower poll tax bills than Tory-controlled shire districts. That is and will remain the fact until the Secretary of State can produce more relevant information than he has just produced.

I intend to make progress with my speech and to bring it to a close shortly. However, I cannot leave this issue without asking one question. Given the nature of that list, and the cynicism behind this whole political exercise, did it achieve anything, even in terms of the Government's stated objectives? Politically, it has been a failure. The people of this country well understand that the poll tax is the Government's responsibility. Paradoxically, charge capping has reinforced that impression because people now know that every element of local government finance is under the direct control of central Government. More predictably, the exercise has brought precious little benefit to poll tax payers, even in the authorities that were led to believe that they might face lower bills and gain some advantage.

The truth is that many people's bills will remain high—they will be reduced by very little—but, in addition, those people will have to bear the extra burden of seeing their services cut and their facilities reduced so that the authority can fund the extra costs of lower collection and the administrative costs of imposing the charge capping. That is because the costs of capping have proved much higher than was envisaged. I am not talking about the direct administrative costs which, of course, the local authorities have to bear, although cuts must be made to meet those administrative costs; the real impact is in terms of collection, which is already frighteningly lower than was forecast, but which is even lower in prospect because of the delays and confusions that have been engendered by charge capping.

The unpreparedness of the right hon. Gentleman's Department in terms of those issues is well demonstrated in the report made to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities by a local authority treasurer after a discussion with civil servants. The report states:

"When 'capping' was mentioned the D.O.E representative was shocked when informed that replacement bills would take three months to issue with no cash coming in in the meantime. He obviously didn't realise that paper needs to be ordered, stationery designed, software amended, rebates and transition re-calculated, bills printed, folded, collated and enveloped. I'm sure he thought that some magician would appear overnight to resolve these problems."

Local authorities are now having those problems. They have cash flow problems, with the additional borrowing requirements. They also face lower collection levels.

That is why, as I have been informed, every one of the capped authorities will be forced to rebill its local charge payers at levels higher than those suggested by the Secretary of State. In other words, the price that they pay is not only in that parade of bleeding stumps; it is in bills that are still much higher than he promised. Where the cap has been put in place and because those cuts have been necessary, the local electors will get the worst possible deal.

[Mr. Gould]

They will not get any real reduction in their poll tax bills; but they must take a substantial cut in services and facilities.

The orders are the latest instalment in a sorry saga. In introducing the poll tax, the Government have created a monster that attacks and damages everything that it touches. It has damaged local government finance and autonomy and the level of local government services. It has damaged family budets and the prosperity of millions of people. It has damaged the electoral prospects of the Conservative party and the reputation and political prospects of the Secretary of State himself. It has ended by destroying the very reason for its own existence. The Government have been compelled to take responsibility for a measure that they thought would improve accountability, but the accountability of local government to the electors has now disappeared from the scene.

Some limit must be placed on the destructive progress of the poll tax. We intend to do what we can in Opposition to stop its progress. That is why we shall vote against the orders, and we cannot wait for the day when we can sweep away the poll tax.

5·24 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): All hon. Members should congratulate the Government on providing two days for this debate, instead of trying to get the provisions through secretly. It is not often that we are given two days to debate a local government issue, and if Opposition Members have any generosity left at all, I shall expect them to agree with me on that point, if not with anything else that I shall say.

I shall speak particularly about what is happening in Brent. The Labour authority decided on a community charge of £498, when the Conservatives believed that they could provide good services with a charge of £470. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State then capped it at £459. A delegation from Brent went to see my right hon. Friend and we saw how reasonable my right hon. Friend is when he increased the charge allowed to £472. He listened to the arguments and decided that that was the amount of money that was required.

As the Member of Parliament for Brent, North over the past years, I have received hundreds if not thousands of letters objecting to the massive expenditure of the Labour republic of Brent. Many people have put their houses up for sale. At times, some roads looked like refugee camps with people leaving because they could not afford to stay. Many people were brought into penury by the heavy rates and community charge levied in Brent. Some people have gained considerably from the introduction of the community charge, but before its introduction, I can remember people—especially old ladies—having to sell up and leave although they wanted to keep their own houses and to have their children and grandchildren visit them there from time to time.

I do not need to go into the Maureen McGoldrick case or nuclear-free zones. For many years, Brent has been a reason-free zone. I have no doubt that many people welcomed the introduction of the community charge. Of course, I am speaking only for the people of Brent, North. Other hon. Members from Brent may agree with me in the secrecy of their hearts, but cannot do so in public, when I say that there was every sort of trendy expenditure in Brent.

Having said that, it is with some reservations that I support the Government. I do not want the destruction of local government. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will agree that we do not want so much power to pass to central Government—whether Labour or Conservative—that the balance with local government is destroyed. No Government should give themselves more power than they would be prepared to give to an alternative party if it was to come to power. No Government must ever forget that—even one who have been in power for as long as our Conservative Government.

The question is, therefore, what should we do in both the short term and the long term? In the short term, I believe that we should reintroduce annual elections. That is the one point on which I agree with the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). For a long time, London has suffered from four-year elections. When councillors are elected, they think they are there for ever and get carried away with what they are doing. Nothing is more salutary to councillors than to know that one quarter of them face election every year. I should like to see that return——

Mr. Shersby: My right hon. Friend is making an important point. Does he recall that the extension to four years was made by the late Anthony Crosland when he was Secretary of State for the Environment under the powers then available to him? Parliament had decided that elections should take place triennially instead of annually but the late Anthony Crosland extended that to once every four years. My right hon. Friend is right to raise this matter in a non-partisan way. The House should consider it.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention because I had forgotten that point. It was fortuitous that my hon. Friend was sitting next to me and could remind me of it. This is a non-party issue. I am talking about annual elections for a quarter of the council. That would mean that we could have both continuity and change. Until that is introduced, there should be annual referendums.

Fortunately, we have had a referendum in Brent. The four-yearly election came round this year and we gained nine seats. There was a swing of 6·4 per cent. to the Conservatives in Brent, North. The electorate in Brent said, "We do not want the community charge set by the Labour party. It is too much." If Opposition Members are democrats—I do not doubt that they are—they should be in favour of annual referendums. The Government would not be saying that local authorities' policies are nonsense. They would give the local electorate a chance to have second thoughts. The Government could say, "Do you really want to do that?" The Government would not destroy local power but would ask people whether the Government or the council was right.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I share the right hon. Gentleman's views. My local authority has always had a third of its councillors re-elected each year. That provides a balance and influences the direction in which the council moves. This year Labour increased its majority and its number of seats.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I had better go and speak in that constituency some time, although I have great respect for the hon. Gentleman.

Let us consider the long-term issues. We would prefer it if charge capping was unnecessary. I approve of the orders, and I shall certainly vote for them tomorrow. My enthusiasm is such that I wished to vote for them tonight. The problem with local government is that in most cases local elections are a referendum on the popularity of the Government—Brent, North was an exception, as was Hillingdon and other parts of London. In 1968 when the Labour party was in government, one council—it may have been Hackney or Islington—which previously had had no Conservative councillor, passed into the control of the Conservatives. It was the biggest-ever swing in a local government election. Local elections have ceased to be an opportunity to vote on local issues and have become a referendum on whether the Government are popular.

The only way in which we can return to true local elections is by separating national and local government powers and finance. If they overlap, national and local government will continually wrestle with each other. Conservative Governments will wrestle with Labour authorities and Labour Governments will wrestle with Conservative authorities. Housing is no longer mainly a local government responsibility. By creating grant-maintained schools—I would prefer a voucher system—education could be taken away from local government entirely. The police have been mentioned. Then there is planning and social services.

If we could take all those responsibilities away from local government, in local elections we could vote on local matters such as parks, libraries and other services which are traditionally controlled by the local authority. Expenditure on such services could be covered totally by the community charge. In that way we could separate local and national government. In Scandinavia and West Germany, where the two are separate, there are no battles between central and local government.

There should also be smaller units of local government. The Conservative party destroyed the small boroughs in London in 1964. I opposed that then and I oppose it now. The small councils throughout the country were destroyed in 1972. With no disrespect to the hon. Members for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), if one draws a map of Brent it looks like a single unit. But it is cut in two by the North Circular road. The North Circular road is as effective as the Berlin wall. One cannot cross it. If one attempted to do so, one would not make a habit of it. Only at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning can one try to cross. The two areas have little in common.

Many people in Brent cannot serve local government: it is too large. They can give one or two evenings a week at most. Most people cannot give four or five nights. That causes the politicisation of local government. If local government was made truly local again, the community charge could be fixed locally without any bother from national Government. We could have one third annual elections to determine whether people agreed with the level set by the council.

In the 19th century, what was called permissive legislation was introduced. It was not intended for certain activities that we call permissive legislation now. It was adoptive in legislation. One could take it or not. In 1834, when the Poor Law Reform Act was passed, commissioners divided up the country, just as the local government reorganisation did. It did not work. In 1871 the arrangements had to be changed. In 1835, they learned their lesson. I hope that we have learnt our lessons from 1964 and 1972.

Under the Municipal Corporations Act 1835, local authorities were allowed to opt in. If an authority had a population of 50,000 it could say, "This is our area and this is what we want to do." If we return to smaller units of local government, we should not divide areas up here in Westminster or in Whitehall. We should let people sort it out themselves, according to the natural alignments. It may be untidy, but freedom is untidy. I prefer freedom and untidiness to tidiness and disaster, which occurs so often now.

We gained nine seats on the council in Brent this year. In Brent we need help, advice and careful thought from the Department of the Environment from time to time. The electoral balance in Brent is now 31 Conservative, 29 Labour and 6 Liberal councillors. There is a mayor and a deputy mayor but no chairmen of committees. We play musical chairs. Those who arrive first elect the chair. It is the nearest thing to amateur dramatic anarchy that I have ever seen. Brent is always on the map and it has managed to put itself on the map again.

I accept that there are political differences in local areas. When an election creates a hung council there should be a method of appeal. When the Labour Government won in 1964 with a small majority, they held another election in January 1966. In 1974, when I was privileged to become a Member of Parliament, we had a fresh election in the autumn.

In Brent no one is in charge. The council should be able to turn to someone such as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are an ideal candidate. You have great wisdom and experience. The council should be allowed to ask for a fresh election in Brent because it does not have a majority. Perhaps we could persuade the Labour and Conservative leaders on the council to ask Mr. Deputy Speaker for a new election.

Mr. Livingstone: As it is disastrous to seek any decision from the council—nothing has been decided since the election—I will urge the Labour councillors to resign if the Conservative councillors will also resign so that we can have another election. After the disaster of having no overall control, both sides could appeal for a new election in Brent.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: That is an interesting suggestion. I am sure that it will be noted in Brent council chamber with great delight. With the sense of self-sacrifice that all local councillors have, the councillors will immediately take up the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

The Conservative party is the majority party on the council in Brent. It has resolved not to cut front-line services, to sell land, property and houses and to collect the rent and rate arrears. Brent has the largest rent and rate arrears per head in the United Kingdom. It is £55 million —*[Interruption.]* It seems that another council has even greater arrears. We are reading the Guinness Book of Records.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Both Lambeth and Southwark surpass those rent and rate arrears. They have arrears of over £60 million. Yet Labour councillors in Lambeth and Southwark plead that they can control their authorities properly.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: My hon. Friend has taken the words out of my mouth. In Brent, under the reasonable cap proposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, we shall have to cut only £5·1 million. That could be made up by collecting one tenth of the rate and rent debt. I do not see how any member of the Labour or Liberal party can complain. That saving could be made. The council should be sensible.

Brent has difficulties because it is a hung council, with the Conservatives as the largest party. The first difficulty, which was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, is the appeal against charge capping. The appeal went ahead with the support of the Labour and Liberal members on the council, but the Conservatives voted against it. The other 19 councils have already spent £2 million, and thus £100,000 more was wasted by Brent. If the council goes on to appeal further, more money will be wasted.

The Conservatives on the council are trying to control the budget, but they have had to pay for legal proceedings out of that budget even though they voted against taking legal action. Before the May elections, the previous Labour council budgeted to save £0·5 million by putting services out to tender. The Conservative group wanted to put domestic waste collection out to tender. The Labour and Liberal councillors would not agree to that, saying that only the labour involved could be put out to tender, not the necessary machinery. Therefore, the £500,000 budgeted saving by the Labour councillors cannot be used, and the nine contractors willing to tender withdrew when they found that they could do so only in respect of labour. Those are two illustrations of the difficulties confronting Conservative councillors in Brent.

I will vote for the orders tomorrow, knowing that people in other areas as well as Brent who have suffered as a consequence of excessive Labour expenditure will be dancing in the streets tomorrow night when they learn that the orders have been passed. I also say this to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. From what I hear, he has some influence on the contents of the Queen's Speech, and I should like the next one to include a short Bill to provide for a referendum to be held if a council is to be capped.

I am informed that there is likely to be a general election during the next two years. I hope that our manifesto will include an undertaking to reassess local government structure with a view to separating national and local government powers and finance, so that we do not have continual all-in wrestling. Local government can then get on with its job of spending money raised locally, and national Government can similarly get on with their job. There should also be smaller units so that more people can be involved, there can be a return to real local government, and there will be less politicisation in the council chambers of this country.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind right hon. and hon. Members of Mr. Speaker's earlier appeal for short speeches.

5.41 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): When the Government decided to abolish domestic rates in favour of a poll tax, we were told that it would be fairer and easier to understand, and, even more importantly, would increase the democratic accountability of local councils. After the cynical bribery in Wandsworth and Westminster, no one can pretend that the poll tax is fairer. Given the differences in Government grant to broadly similar local authorities, it is no easier to understand than the rating system.

The Secretary of State killed stone dead the proposition that the poll tax will increase accountability when, on 3 April, he capped 20 authorities whose poll tax demands outstripped the misleadingly named standard spending assessment. There is nothing standard or consistent about the rules that the right hon. Gentleman applies to local authority finance. The Secretary of State for the Environment also introduced spending restrictions without discussing with local authorities how he arrived at his figures.

If accountability means anything at all, a local council should be permitted to fix its poll tax on the basis of the services that it wants to offer the community. It would then await the verdict of the tax payers at the polls.

On 2 March, St Helens council set a poll tax rate of £410. The Secretary of State did not wait for the electorate to pass its verdict, but on 3 April said that that demand was too high and capped it. The people of St. Helens went to the polls with the Secretary of State's message ringing in their ears. What happened? Not only did they return a Labour council but the Tories lost two of the three seats that they were defending.

When one examines the standard spending assessment in any detail, the tawdry nature of the Government's whole exercise and their political motivation are exposed. If every council had been assessed on a level playing field for grant purposes, St. Helens would not have been capped. There could be only two reasons for any council, if all councils were treated equally, exceeding the SSA—inefficiency or an excessive level of services. I can demonstrate that St. Helens council is both efficient and prudent.

I will quote first Mr. J.F. Milstead, the district auditor, who, in his council audit for 1988-89, said:

"In conclusion, based on evidence seen during the audit, I should like to take this opportunity to commend the Council on the action it has taken to try to improve service delivery and on the difficult decisions it has taken to meet the challenges posed by new legislation. This bodes well for the future."

I emphasise that those were the words of the Government's own auditor.

My next witness is Mr. John Banham, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry. Mr. Banham was quoted by the *St. Helens Reporter* on 2 February as saying during a visit to the area that the difference in the town since his last visit in 1985 was "striking". He added:

"So much has changed since I was last here and all of it for the better . . . Everyone is looking to St. Helens."

Those two comments clearly demonstrate that St. Helens has an efficient council which enjoys the esteem and co-operation of the private sector.

I also pray in aid the Secretary of State himself and the awarding of two city grants. The first, in 1989, was for reclamation and redevelopment in what is know as the Green Bank project. That £6·3 million award was the largest city grant ever made by the Department of the Environment. The second grant, of £3·05 million, was made in April this year for the Pilkington hotel project. The Secretary of State visited St. Helens on 2 April to see

that project, and he praised the work being done—yet the following day he capped the local authority. St. Helens would surely not have received those substantial grants if the Department had not regarded the council as efficient and responsible.

As the council is well run, one must examine the logic behind the SSA to understand the extraordinary gap between that figure and the council's original poll tax demand. In 1985-86, St. Helens had the second highest rate on Merseyside. As a result of considerable efforts to streamline and improve the efficiency of the council's performance, by 1989-90 the rate had dropped to the second lowest on Merseyside. Nevertheless, as a result of the Secretary of State's poll tax regime, St. Helens's demand had to be set at £410—the second highest on Merseyside.

Much of St. Helens's expenditure funds spending bodies over which the council has virtually no control—such as the police, fire brigade, waste disposal, and the passenger transport authority in particular. Merseyside transport authority receives a massive £9·9 million from St. Helens, which is one of the biggest charges placed on the council. According to the Secretary of State, £2·4 million of that £9·9 million is overspent. That represents almost 65 per cent. of St. Helens total overspending, yet it has no control over the way that the transport authority allocates the money available to it.

In addition, St. Helens poll tax payers have to shell out £1·08 million—or £9 per head—to pay off the loan debts of the Mersey tunnels. Official figures show that the people of St. Helens enjoy just 1 per cent. of the economic benefit of those tunnels. If tunnel usage was the basis of its payments, the council would have to budget for just £83,000 in 1990-91. Charging the people of St. Helens for the Mersey tunnels to such an extent is an outrage, and the Secretary of State and the Department of Transport should do something about that situation.

St. Helens council budgeted for only a 7·7 per cent. increase in spending for 1990-91, which is less than the rate of inflation. It was not rate-capped last year, and indeed has never been remotely at risk of being capped. Despite that record and St. Helens' below-inflation budget, the council is to be charge-capped for 1990-91. It appears that someone has moved the goal posts.

If St. Helens' SSA had been increased by the national average grant-related expenditure assessment increase of 11 per cent., the council would have £6·5 million more to spend on services and would not have been capped. The SSA increased allowable spending by just 7·7 per cent.—half the general rate of inflation. If the Secretary of State had allowed St. Helens just to keep pace with price rises, it would have £3·4 million more to devote to services and, again, would not have been capped. By comparison with both inflation and the GREA, St. Helens has been badly mistreated.

Clearly, the goal posts were not only moved, they were placed on the field next door. The Secretary of State cannot deny that, because his figures show it to be true. Nor can he deny that a new basis was drawn up to restrict council spending decisions in comparison to previous years. The effect of high unemployment and other economic factors, which are so important to St. Helens, have been dropped from those decisions. That is unfortunate for my council and other northern metropolitan capped authorities because they score poorly on some of the new factors such as ethnic minorities and density of population.

If St. Helens had received the same level of grant per head as Wandsworth, a borough in which I have a flat and which is demonstrably more affluent than St. Helens, the poll tax in St. Helens would have been £165 to £245 less than it is. If St. Helens had received the same grant per head as Westminster, an infinitely more affluent borough than anywhere on Merseyside, it would have been able to send every poll tax payer a cheque for £138. Tory Westminster has the same population as Labour St. Helens. Its high level of grant reflects the fact that it scores highly on all the factors used to distribute SSAs while economically depressed St. Helens and the other northern metropolitan capped authorities do not. Is the formula that was set just before the council elections coincidence or political corruption?

According to the Secretary of State's SSAs, St. Helens is overspending on education and social services. The council apparently cares too much for its children and its elderly. Presumably, those are the areas in which the Secretary of State expects the council to reduce its expenditure by about £4 million. If the council were forced to accept either of the alternative budgets, which would have avoided capping placed before it in March by the Conservative and the SLD groups, there would be substantial cuts in education and social services. Under those budgets between 500 and 700 jobs would be lost, including teaching and carer posts.

It would be a bit rich for a member of the Cabinet who might spend £3,400 a year educating a child on an assisted place in a private school—most of the Cabinet send their children to private schools—to tell a council like St. Helens which spends just £2,000 a year to educate a secondary school child that it is spending too much on education.

Another option facing St. Helens council is not to open its brand new day centre for the mentally handicapped. Is that what the country is being reduced to? Should we make the mentally handicapped and their families suffer by allowing a desperately needed amenity to stand empty?

St. Helens is a caring, efficient and well-run council which will stand comparison with any authority in the country. I challenge the Secretary of State to examine the books of all the Merseyside metropolitan authorities and justify and explain to the bewildered council and people of St. Helens why only St. Helens of the five authorities has been capped.

5.52 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I support the Government's determination to cap the county authority in my constituency—Derbyshire county council—where my family and I live. In other words, I support the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to bring some of the last of the left-wing loonies in Great Britain to their senses.

To use the words of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) who has now left the Chamber, the sparing use of these reserve powers seems to me to be wise and helpful. When Stoke-on-Trent next door has a community charge of £313 and when Burton on Trent, which is a little closer, has a community charge of £335, there is no reason why residents in my district should pay a community charge of £438 and those in Derby pay £458. The latter is

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

the 10th highest community charge in the country. The proposed capping will be of enormous assistance to my constituents and will knock £112 off the bill for most households. That will be a 13 per cent. reduction, and I support it.

Strictly speaking, Derbyshire should not need capping. It is a lovely county and those of us who live there feel fortunate. We have a high level of home ownership and we have low and falling unemployment. We are successfully coping with major economic change from the traditional industries such as coal mining to high-tech modern manufacturing with companies such as Toyota. If Derbyshire county council had had its way—and it continues to back Mr. Scargill—our pits would still be open. However, the south Derbyshire miners voted and decided to work and they now have a chance to participate in modern industries in the 21st century. *[Interruption.]* There are many red faces in Matlock among those who supported Arthur Scargill. We are glad to see him brought down to the level at which he should be.

We should have one of the lowest community charges in the country, not one of the highest. Why is the charge so high? Either Derbyshire's Labour councillors are fools or they are knaves.

Mr. Oppenheim: Both.

Mrs. Currie: As my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has just hinted, there is evidence that they are both.

It is foolish to hold parties and party political activities on the rates. It is foolish to lobby hon. Members at the House on every kind of loony left-wing Labour activity and to charge the expenses to the council. For example, a conference was held a couple of weeks ago on community care. That conference was held at public expense even before the National Health Service and Community Care Bill had passed through both Houses of Parliament. The conference was held on the day that we debated the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill in the House. The Labour council issued a press release demanding to know why my hon. Friend the Minister for Health could not attend its little activity in Derbyshire. Obviously she could not do that because she was in the House doing something more important. The Labour council then had the nerve to complain that up in Derbyshire they did not know enough about the National Health Service and Community Care Bill and that not enough information had been issued and they could not take any decisions about it.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the hon. Lady explain why that terrible council always defeats the Tories in elections?

Mrs. Currie: With all due respect, if the hon. Gentleman had visited Derby in May, he would have discovered that we held on to control in Derby quite easily. The main issue was the community charge and involved the issues that I am raising today.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the council was foolish to peg prices for school meals at 1981 levels. That does not help the poorest children whose families are on income support, because they get their meals free anyway. By pegging the price of school meals at that level, the children of the better-off families get subsidised food. It is as if those idiots up in Matlock thought that none of my constituents would ever feed their children unless they received help from the community charge.

It is extravagant to have a completely free home help service. Nottinghamshire county council next door, which is also Labour controlled, does not have a completely free home help service. In Nottinghamshire it is free for people on income support. That is a good idea, and it has a test for people on higher income levels. That prevents abuse. In Derbyshire, one of the results of the free service is that my poorest constituents who pay their community charge, as many are determined to do, are subsidising Derbyshire county council services for some of my richest constituents. That is what is happening in that socialist authority.

My county is the fifth highest spending authority out of 39 for spending per head on secondary school children. It is 36th out of the 39 in terms of results at O-level, GCSE and A-level. As a result, fewer than half the young constituents in areas like mine obtain a GCSE in English; three quarters of them have no mathematics and nine tenths of them have no modern languages. That is the result of spending the money in the way that my council spends it; but we have subsidised chips and baked beans for lunch. That is the way in which Derbyshire education committee chooses to spend its money.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Since Labour got control of Derbyshire and introduced free school meals, we have had this argument many times. Those free meals were later scrapped, but the council kept the price at the 1981 level. The hon. Lady and fellow Tory Members are constantly talking about the money spent, the rates and the level of the poll tax. They have been challenged several times about where the cuts would be made. We have challenged them to say whether they would sack 8,000 teachers, double the price of school meals or reduce the meals-on-wheels service, and which areas of the social services they would be prepared to cut. On every occasion they have gone running, but the electorate have not. They have returned Labour twice, with increased majorities.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that I am not running. I have just given him two examples where I believe money has been mispent.

Earlier I suggested that Derbyshire Labour councillors are not just foolish, that perhaps they are also knaves, but that implies that they have more brains up at county hall in Matlock than may well be the case.

Why does the council advertise its services through programmes that cost hundreds of thousands of pounds when it says that it cannot meet the level of demand that it faces? Why does it ask for more money at the drop of a hat when the level of capital reserves has gone up in three years from £10 million to £25 million? Why does the council need a huge publicity department? What is it trying to publicise? Why does it need an enormous budget for legal services? Perhaps that is some reflection on the county council leader who has boasted that he has issued 21 writs. That smacks to me either of increased sensitivity or an attempt to intimidate his opponents. It is all paid for out of the county council's budget.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Is the hon. Lady aware of the letter of apology sent by the leader of

the Conservatives on Derbyshire county council to the leader of the council? It touched on how much is spent on publicity and whether it was valuable. In that letter Councillor Wilson spelt out his apology for the incorrect public allegations he had made. He also applauded the work of Derbyshire county council in its transactions to attract Toyota and on the amount spent on publicity. Councillor Wilson acknowledged that that was something which the council should do in partnership.

Mrs. Currie: I shall not bore the House by reading out exactly what Councillor Norman Wilson said in that letter, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that I had words with him about it.

When Derbyshire county council is capped, a lot of the nonsense I have described will have to stop. Some of Derbyshire county council's activities can be put down tosome of the personalities in Derbyshire who want to play on a wider stage. They want to lead the world from the county headquarters in Matlock. That is why by far the most famous Derbyshire resident, Mr. Nelson Mandela, was invited to Derby following his release from 27 years imprisonment in South Africa. He could not, of course, accept, but the council still had a party to celebrate his release, at a reported cost of more than £2,000 to the charge payer.

As the nations of eastern Europe, even the Soviet Union, abandon May day as a celebration of socialism —that failed and fatuous philosophy—Derbyshire county council still has an open day at the American adventure theme park. The invitation was open to anyone who wanted to go along, at a reported cost of £39,000. That is why Derbyshire county council has set such a wildly high community charge. It has taken the legal challenge on the Secretary of State to the bitter end in the House of Lords instead of seeing sense early on.

The county's leader has said:

"We are spending more than we need to, but I believe that is what people want."

I have news for him—that is not what people in Derbyshire want. In my area most people would say that they understand the community charge. They agree that everybody uses local services and everybody wants those services, so everybody should pay for them, with a rebate system for those who cannot pay as much as the rest of us. They would say that they believe that the new system is fair, but that the charge in Derbyshire is too high. It will now be lower by £56 per head. The capping will help everyone in my constituency, and I am delighted to welcome it.

6.4 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I should like to quote from that excellent publication *The House Magazine* of 18 June 1990. The Secretary of State for the Environment concluded an article he had written on local government, entitled "Accountability to the People" by saying:

"A strong, responsive and healthy local democracy is good for local communities and good for Britain. I will do everything I can do to ensure we get it".

I whole-heartedly agree with such sentiments, but, unfortunately, when they are uttered by a Minister of a Government who, in the past 10 years, have determinedly and systematically eroded the powers of local authorities and, therefore, the right of local people to self-determination, they are less than convincing.

Such sentiments are merely empty rhetoric, characteristic of a Government who have presided over a policy of increasing central control never before seen. That policy has been pursued in the interests of a Prime Minister who has no truck with local government of whatever shade. That policy of undermining local government has not been pursued in the interests of local people, despite the many words to the contrary uttered by Ministers.

When the iniquitous poll tax system was first brought before the House, it was justified on the ground that it would make local authorities more accountable. Where is the accountability in a system in which 75 per cent. of local expenditure is provided from the centre with strings attached? The remaining 25 per cent. is raised directly from the pockets of local residents, but that money is now subject to further control from central Government despite the fact that local people have had an opportunity to vote on their authority's poll tax level.

I know that Ministers argue that people were aware of the capping proposals before the elections in May, but I am afraid that that will not wash. Most campaigns were run on the actual budgets and tax amounts set by the authorities and the alternative budgets set by other parties. Local people voted for their respective councillors on that basis.

I do not pretend that our present electoral system is fair or gives the majority of people in Britain the national and local government that they seek. However, until we have a fairer system, it is difficult to see how the Government can ignore the ballot box. They are only too happy to call it into being when claiming that they have a mandate to carry out their increasingly unpopular policies. They should therefore have the guts to stand by their promises and claims.

The Government should let the people decide whether their poll tax is too high for the services they receive. It appears that that is how the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), when Secretary of State for Wales, understood that the system should work. In a press notice issued from his office on 3 April, he said that it was up to Welsh charge payers to ask for explanations from

"Councils which have imposed unnecessarily high charges . . . to judge whether the explanations they are given are acceptable".

Unfortunately, we know only too well how such eminently sensible pronouncements from the right hon. Gentleman often brought him into conflict with his boss.

There is much argument about whether reserved powers to cap are ever justified and, although I am in danger of contradicting myself, I suppose I must come down in favour of such powers. My contradiction is not as great as the Secretary of State's, because I have never claimed that the poll tax system is the way in which to make local government accountable. It is only when we have a system of proportional representation and true local democracy that councils will be accountable. Until we have such a system, reserved powers may be necessary to curb the excesses of a very few—it is important to stress that—authoritarian regimes elected by a minority of people, the likes of which we experienced in the 1970s.

Capping powers should not be used, as they are today, under a formula that appears to all concerned to be arbitrary figures plucked out of the air or, as the cynics may say, carefully selected for political purposes. Nor should they be used to take effect in the same financial year

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

that the budget is set, particularly as local councils are not informed of the magic formula that puts them over the top and ripe for capping.

I sincerely hope that the rumours and predictions about the extent of next year's capping do not materialise and that the Government will have come to their senses by then. It is wrong for them to introduce capping this year, when on their own admission the standard spending assessments are not right. The Government's ability to assess the needs of a local authority or community is abysmal. I am surprised that, in those circumstances, they have the gall to introduce capping. Until the standard spending assessments are correct and the many anomalies of the system ironed out, no form of capping can be justified.

I am aware that a few councils have set budgets way in excess of their requirements. In St. Helens, about which we have already heard, the local Liberal Democrats group, which, in principle, rejects poll tax capping, cannot but help welcoming the cap for its area as it sets the poll tax at the amount almost to the penny that it suggested in its alternative budget. Basildon is another of the capped councils where Liberal Democrats put forward a lower, alternative and realistic budget that would have reduced the poll tax by £12. Under the Government's formula, that would still have attracted a cap, but it was a far more realistic amount than the demands of the Conservative group on the council, which wanted to defer the decision on the budget until ways could be found to set the poll tax at £415. That figure is even more austere than the £443 that the proposed cap sets.

I mention that case because it highlights the differing views on how much expenditure an area requires. Surely the best people to decide are local residents. On 3 May, the Liberal Democrats gained seats in St. Helens and held them in Basildon, where the outlook for gains is promising. The electorate are not fools; they know what they want and vote for it.

I see that the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) believes that too, because in his recent speech to the Association of District Councils he condemned small shire districts for setting too high budgets. He said:

"I can only say that in due course the electorate will find them out."

That is the key, but it is what the Government are frightened of.

The chaos created by the Government's handling of the poll tax is a disgrace. It smacks of incompetence, inefficiency and waste—attributes of which they accuse local government when justifying the poll tax capping exercise. It smells of panic and short-termism in the face of local and national elections. They cannot wait for their claim of accountability to bear fruit because they know that they are on a downturn.

To introduce capping in the first year, when local councils are struggling to implement a system that is already administratively top-heavy, does not make sense. There were bound to be difficulties and teething problems with a major system change such as this, but no allowance was made for them, nor for the effects of non-payment, which has multiplied in the capped authorities. A report in this week's *Municipal Journal* estimates that the capped councils have already lost £327 million in only the first quarter, which is far more than the £216·7 million that the Secretary of State requires. Cash flow problems in those areas result in higher debts and much more expense.

Councils that are threatened with capping are in a state of limbo while they pursue their cases through the higher courts. I know that my party's group in St. Helens would like to see the ruling group accept the decision and get on with the business of providing services. It believes that it can provide the same level of service for the lower amount. This issue may not be so clear cut in Basildon and other areas, but I await with much interest the outcome of the legal challenge on constitutional grounds.

Many of the areas that are capped are where community services needs are the highest, and cuts are likely to be made in education and social services. As those two sectors account for the highest spending, it tends to make sense that that should be so, particularly for councils that must make the largest savings.

The hon. Member for Southgate seems to think that all councils suffer from what he calls "leisure-centre-itis", and that it is a bad thing. I do not want to comment on the specific case to which he was referring, but as I was a guest speaker at the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management conference in Brighton yesterday I feel obliged to point out to the Minister his total misunderstanding of the advantages that leisure activities can bring to an area. Properly handled, they can generate jobs, attract income to the area and contribute to the general health and well-being of the community.

A few capped councils will make a political point from the current shambles and will cut services where they hurt most, even when savings could be made elsewhere. I understand from my colleagues in St. Helens that that is expected to happen there. If so, it is irresponsible and should not be condoned. I know that Liberal Democrats will fight such cuts all the way.

Poll tax capping, in the year that many councils are planning to be ready to meet their obligations under legislation passed by the House such as the Children Act 1989 and the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, is not necessarily justified. It is even more difficult to justify when council services are already over-stretched trying to cope with the effects of Thatcher's Britain. If, as we now read, community care plans are to be delayed, I can say only that that is highly irresponsible and will be a false economy.

There must be a limit on how much the system can take before reaching breaking point and grinding to a halt. I should not be surprised if many authorities are close to that breaking point. The capping exercise will add to that burden. In its present form, and given the way that it is being applied, it will create inefficiency and waste. Residents' poll tax bills may be reduced this year together with the reductions in services, but in the long term they will pay for the consequences. They will foot the bill or do without. The Government would be better employed finding ways of relieving the burden of this most unfair tax on people who are suffering the most from its preliminary implementation. They should leave the local electorate to deal with local authorities, giving local people a full part in the decision making process.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Despite my repeated appeals, only one speech has lasted less than 10 minutes.

6.17 pm

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak in this charge-capping debate. I am in the possibly unique position of living in Southwark, which is charge-capped, and in my constituency in Bristol, which is charge-capped, under a a county council that is charge-capped. I have some expertise therefore of three of the charge-capped authorities.

I do not want to make any detailed comments on Southwark, other than to echo the comment by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). I intervened and pointed out that Southwark has a rent debt of more than £60 million, whereas its capping figure is only £14 million—one fifth of its rent debt. If it is pleading that it can administer the council extremely well, why on earth is its rent debt so high?

Much has been made of the length of the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and of the political decision taken on the authorities that were chosen for capping. As far as I can calculate, my right hon. Friend gave way to 14 Labour Members and many Conservative Members, which is why he spoke for so long. He was generous in giving way.

I would not have minded if some Conservative authorities had been capped, and I think that most of my right hon. and hon. Friends agree with that. I have a photocopy of an article by the public administration correspondent of *The Times*; I apologise to hon. Members for being unable to provide the date because I did not make a note of it when I photocopied it. Before the announcememt of charge capping, he listed the four different options that the Government could pursue, and the authorities most likely to be caught by them. He listed 40 councils—10 in each option. Of the 40, only one is Conservative-controlled. The other 39 authorities are either Labour controlled or have no overall control. Therefore, I echo my right hon. Friend's view that, whichever formula had been adopted, it is certain that the overwhelming majority of charge-capped authorities would have been Labour-controlled. In Bristol we understand that, because we have two authorities—Bristol and Avon—which are profligate beyond belief.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said that Derbyshire is an attractive county with falling unemployment rates, but it is positively impoverished compared with Avon, which has unemployment way below that of Derbyshire. In Avon, there is no need to provide the type of services needed in some other parts of the country, where I recognise that the unemployment argument could apply.

Avon is a potentially wealthy authority, but it is also the second highest spending shire county in the country after Derbyshire. No one has yet explained to me why that is so. Every time I challenge the leader of the Labour group on Avon county council, I am told that capping will mean cuts and that there are reasons for Labour's figures and for employment levels. There are all sorts of excuses, but that is precisely what they are—a series of excuses.

Councillor Roger Berry, the leader of the Labour group, fails to realise that the charge-capping proposals that we are debating would result in the average married couple in Bristol benefiting by £126 a year—more than £2 a week. That is a substantial benefit which the overwhelming majority of Bristolians would welcome.

The first discussions that hon. Members had with various leaders and officials from Avon county about the community charge took place on 7 February. Four Conservative Members had a meeting with them—the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) met them separately, so I am not criticising her. What did Avon do? It sent 10 people to London for the meeting at the charge payers' expense; all I believe, travelling first class, all with reserved seats and all on attendance allowance. That attitude of mind runs from top to bottom in Avon county council.

Mrs. Currie: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Labour leader of Derbyshire county council has said that he would resign if charge capping meant that he had to cut any essential services? We reckon that he is perfectly safe as he knows perfectly well that all he has to cut are such outings.

Mr. Hayward: I thank my hon. Friend for that comment. I wish that we were so lucky, and that our Labour councillors were willing to resign under those circumstances and would stick to their promises. I echo the view of the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn): we know that the targets of cuts will be areas where the cuts will hurt most. We know that that is what the Labour party intends.

At the meeting on 7 February, I identified a series of costings that I found excessive. For example, I do not understand why 34 education authorities have better pupil/teacher ratios than Avon, yet we have the 14th most expensive secondary school education.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayward: No. Mr. Deputy Speaker has appealed regularly for brief speeches, and I accept that ruling.

I have already identified that we are one of the wealthiest counties in the country. The Audit Commission figures for group 5—the category within which Avon falls—show that we have the highest expenditure of any county council. The county treasurer, the Labour group leader and the Liberal Democratic group leader have tried to explain those figures, but they have not explained why Avon does not get value for money.

At the meeting on 7 February, they asked whether was not unjust for them to have to wait for the charge-capping announcement until some time in March. I had sympathy with that view, as the minutes of the meeting record. Since then there has been prevarication after prevarication—building up legal costs, which will ultimately cost people's jobs, just to prove that Avon county council is right. It has gone all the way to the House of Lords, while some other authorities never even started legal action; that is unacceptable to the charge payers of Avon.

The important issue relating to Avon's budget is that, when the original council meeting took place, the budget proposals from the Conservative group were, as my right hon. Friend said, below the charge-capped level. So it is not responsible to say that the figures were unachievable. They were easily achievable—there was headroom of £2 million between the Conservative budget and the capped level of charge.

Over and over again, I have identified that, when the council was threatened with charge capping, it was guilty of scaremongering of the worst order, suggesting cuts in nursery and other schools. When I was in industry and

[Mr. Hayward]

redundancies were threatened, we cancelled advertisements for vacancies immediately. That is standard industrial policy—advertisements are cancelled and the people who are threatened with redundancy are given the first choice of applying for alternative jobs.

What do we find in Avon? Page after page of job vacancies. I have here the Bristol *Evening Post* for last week and it contains page after page of vacancies. That is absolutely disgraceful. Most trade union officials would be furious with any company that adopted a policy of continuing to advertise for vacancies while redundancies were threatened.

It is also interesting that when I looked into the problem of job vacancies, I found that there were 762 in Avon as of 1 May 1990, excluding schools, colleges, cleaning and catering, and 215 of the posts had been vacant for more than 12 months. What organisation would allow a vacancy to remain unfilled for more than 12 months, and would not realise that the departments involved could clearly cope without the posts being filled? It is absolute kidology, and it is costing the charge payers a lot of money.

I also pointed out the Audit Commission figures to the county authorities, and I received a detailed response outlining some of the contradictions which might apply. However, the total number of jobs that are in excess of need within the county, as identified by the district auditor, is about 3,000. I wrote back relatively recently, and I await a reply explaining why Avon is unable to operate at the same level as other similar counties. I believe that I am a reasonable man, so perhaps I should accept that the answers that come back from the councils are right—but I do not.

This week I received the *Gazette*. from the Association of County Councils, which contains its breakdown and analysis of support services: it lists a total of 998 jobs in Avon. How does Avon compare on those figures? Per 100,000 people, Avon employs just under 105 people. The English average is 93, and the audit family average is 90·98, which means that 140 jobs out of Avon's 998 are in excess of what one would expect in a similar audit family county. Every time one considers the position in Avon, it compares badly. Avon compares badly when it comes to providing value for money and in its excessive expenditure. I and the vast majority of community charge payers in Avon welcome these orders.

6.29 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): A number of hon. Members spend many years in local government before entering Parliament. Some of us held senior positions and some had roles that were equal in importance and stature to the present-day leaders and deputy leaders of the various poll tax-capped authorities.

I represent north Tyneside, along with the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter). I am rather disappointed that he is not here tonight, because I am sure that, given the opportunity, he would have contributed to the debate. My council refutes any suggestion, as do the people of north Tyneside, that it is a loony council. It is not. The leader and the deputy leader are responsible people.

Mr. Corbyn: It was the same with the GLC.

Mr. Garrett: My hon. Friend is tempting me to talk about the GLC, but I will not. I have strong views on that, so it would be better if I were to remain silent.

The council's record on education equals that of any authority in the country. We are among the top 10 education authorities. Bearing in mind the industrial and economic legacy of the past two centuries, that is no mean achievement. Authorities such as mine still have to bear the burden of mine closures, shipyard closures and steel closures and the consequent long-term ill health of those who once worked in them, often in the most obnoxious conditions. Those people look to the local authority for some alleviation of the distress that they suffer from time to time.

I am completely saturated with statistics on this issue. The House is exhausted by them and so is the public, so I shall not talk about them tonight. We think that we have a responsibility for providing technical education in our region. We still have manufacturing bases which we want to be provided with the right skills. However, I regret that the cuts are beginning to affect the provision of that type of education.

History would have been different if coal had been found in Sussex, Surrey and Dorset, but it was found in the north-east. Our coal reserves have now been exhausted but we still have to live with the consequences.

It is not uncommon to have 10 per cent. unemployment in the north. In some areas, it is higher than 10 per cent. Again, the local authority feels that it is under an obligation to provide some of the fringe activities that the unemployed need to stop them going insane with the effects of long-term unemployment. Those are the issues that are not dealt with in the statistics that are bandied around.

The only statistics I want to quote relate to the collection of the poll tax. I am indebted to the director of finance of North Tyneside council for telling me:

"It is roughly estimated that in order to provide poll tax bills, instalment booklets, benefit letters and direct debit information, seven tonnes of paper is required which, when stacked, would be approximately 450 feet high. This is equal to approximately 250 miles of paper, almost sufficient to stretch from North Tyneside to Marsham Street"—

the Secretary of State's office. That is a simple statistic which means something to the ordinary people; I regret that the rest are often above their heads.

If I misquote the Minister, I apologise, but I think that he said that we are now going beyond the principles of the tax. I submit that those principles have not yet been argued. They must be argued now, not in deputations to the Minister's office or, in my case, his predecessor's office. The House might be interested to know that we had two cups of tea that morning, which I found flattering.

The Minister must now tell us how he will put into effect the latter part of the court's judgment, which says:

"The answer is that the consequences flow from the legislation. Our role has been to interpret it. In operating the statutory process of charge-capping the Secretary of State has not acted unlawfully and so warranted the intervention of the court."

That is well established; we cannot challenge that. The judgment continues:

"That local authorities which have been designated will be adversely affected by the requirement to reduce budgets in-year is a consequence inherent in the statutory process."

The next sentence is the key one:

"It is still open to the Secretary of State, or in default the House of Commons, to relieve against any apprehended hardship or unfairness."

That is the next stage which we must argue. It is no good getting involved in sterile statistics; we—Ministers and Members—should be applying our minds to how the Minister should define what is fair.

When the Minister replies tomorrow, I hope that he will say how he intends to make the system fair and to recognise the regional differences. Each borough has its own problems arising from its constitution and its boundaries. The human factor must be introduced. If the Secretary of State can do that, he will be doing a service not only to the Conservative party but to the nation.

6.37 pm

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me now.

I strongly support the orders. The community charge in Lambeth is outrageously high—£548 per adult. When capped, it will, unhappily, only drop to £497 per adult. All the letters that I have received about capping have asked why the Government cannot help by further capping.

I am conscious of the difficulties that many of my constituents face. I was talking the other day to a postman whose wife does not work. He earns about £10,000 a year. His rates were about £370, but the community charge that he and his wife have to pay is more than £1,000—10 per cent. of their gross wage. Thank heavens the capping will reduce that——

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): That is the poll tax.

Sir William Shelton: I have only 10 minutes. Why does not the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) wait until I deal with Wandsworth next door, where the "poll tax"—to use his expression—is £148? If the hon. Gentleman lived in Lambeth, with Wandsworth next door, he would not be sitting there shouting at me; he would be shouting at the members of Lambeth council. The problem is not the poll tax, but the level of the poll tax in Lambeth.

Mr. O'Brien: It is the poll tax.

Sir William Shelton: Although its poll tax is only £148, Wandsworth receives less from central Government than does Lambeth.

Mr. O'Brien: It is the poll tax.

Sir William Shelton: If the hon. Gentleman does not wish to hear, will he leave the Chamber, rather than shouting?

Lambeth receives £324 more—31 per cent.—per adult from central Government than does Wandsworth.

Lambeth has the highest level of Government finance in south London, but the second highest community charge in the country. There are reasons for that. Lambeth has rate arrears of £40 million—equivalent to a loss of interest of nearly £5 million a year; it has rent arrears of more than £26 million—equivalent to a loss of interest of more than £3 million; over the past two years it has incurred creative accounting debts of £27 million, which must be repaid over the next two years—equivalent to a loss of interest of more than £3 million; it has more than 2,000 void properties, including more than 1,000 squatted properties, and has incurred a rent loss of nearly £2·5 million; sickness and absenteeism among council workers is four to five times the national average, at a cost of about £10 million or £11 million.

The distress of my constituents is made still greater by the fact that the council is not only loony but incredibly inefficient. Many poll tax bills—to use the expression of the hon. Member for Normanton—have still not even been sent out.

Ms. Armstrong: They cannot be.

Sir William Shelton: It is no good saying that they cannot be; that is the case. Some of my constituents have received bills with the payment book, but most have received them without it. Some have received the payment book without the bills. Many have been granted rebates that were not included in the bill or in the payment book; some had the rebate in the bill, but not the payment book. There is a community charge hotline to ring, but there is no answer. Therefore, my constituents have come to me.

Mr. Corbyn: They must be desperate.

Sir William Shelton: They are desperate—desperate with Lambeth council—and I feel desperate on their behalf.

We find ourselves on the wilder shores of the council's inefficient lunacy. I have a list of 20 or 30 outrageous things that are going on there, and if I had time I would read them all out to the House. Lambeth has 118 children on the "at risk" register, without a social worker; one of the councillors claimed £50,000 in expenses over three years. An ex-Labour Member of Parliament was fortunate enough to be paid more than £50,000 to review town hall bureaucracy—and was honest enough to put in a damning report. The Lambeth town hall social club banned ploughman's lunches until they were renamed "ploughperson's lunches".

In 1988, the council received the second highest number of findings of maladministration with injustice from the local government ombudsman. In January 1990, the district auditor found, in a sample of council repair jobs, that 40 per cent. were unsatisfactory. Lambeth has nearly 300 planning-breach enforcement decisions pending, and a 1987 internal audit report showed that 70 cases of fraud within the council had been investigated. Those are just half a dozen examples: there are 30 or 40 similar instances. My poor constituents!

The House will not be surprised that, in the local elections, the Conservatives were able to pledge without any difficulty to take at least £200 per adult off the Lambeth community charge within a year of taking office—reducing it from £548 to £348 without cutting any essential services. Despite the opinion polls, the result was more or less no change in Lambeth.

The Lambeth reaction to charge capping was typical. Page 2 of the *South London Press* said, on 19 June:

"as a result of the Court decision to uphold the charge-capping of Lambeth Council, nurseries, under-fives, and youth provision, adult education, meals on wheels and homes for the elderly are all threatened."

On page 5, it continued:

"Lambeth Labour councillors rejected a report of their Finance chiefs and 'refused to agree recommendations to save money by freezing the recruitment of staff and measures to track down people not paying Poll Tax'."

What hypocrisy it is to seek to damage the most vulnerable sectors of the community for political purposes. the whole House must agree that that is outrageous. Yet the charge capping in question is only £8 million. It would reduce a budget of £294 million to £286 million—a reduction of only 3 per cent. And there will still be

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accountability, because the Conservatives would have reduced the Lambeth community charge to £150 per adult below the capped level.

This is a sad indictment, and it distresses me on behalf of my constituents. I am grateful for the presence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Let me make it clear that I am glad that we are to have capping, and glad that we have the community charge. What I am outraged about is the level of the community charge in Lambeth, and the irony that Wandsworth next door has a community charge of £148.

6.46 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I apologise if I exceed the time limit, but the case of Haringey is serious.

The unfairness of charge capping falls into three categories: first, the setting of the standard spending assessments; secondly, the way in which local authorities were selected for capping; and, thirdly, the fact that authorities were treated differently. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) pointed out, charge capping defies logic, and acts against the accountability that the Government said that the poll tax was there to ensure. Charge capping takes no account of the need in local authority areas, and I believe that it will destroy inner-city communities. It will bankrupt councils. In my council, only 40 per cent. of the moneys have been collected so far. I believe that the Government will be forced to install commissioners in local authorities, and that they may gain control of authorities as they were unable to do through the ballot box last May.

In the May elections, despite the highest poll tax in the land, the people of Haringey returned a Labour council with an increased majority. The previous figures were as follows: 39 Labour councillors; 19 Tories; one Liberal. Now there are 42 Labour councillors; 17 Tories and no Liberals. Despite offering a bribe—promising to cut the poll tax by £100 if they were elected—the Tories were practically driven out of Tottenham. Out of 29 seats in Tottenham, there is now only a solitary Tory councillor left, and it is just a matter of time before that person goes.

Haringey had to set a standstill budget for 1990-91 because it had no balance. The budget was set at £216·5 million. The Secretary of State decided that the maximum budget for Haringey services should be £206·5 million and as a result of the capping he required a reduction of £10·03 million. Why was the cap set at that level? Haringey set its poll tax at £572·89 which was below the level that was assumed by the Government who thought that Haringey would set a poll tax of £573·17. To meet Government targets Haringey reduced its budget by some £3 million. However, it was still penalised.

Why should a council be penalised for setting a charge that is lower than the Government target? Perhaps the Secretary of State will explain that to the people of Haringey. In this respect, Haringey is unique among charge-capped authorities. It behaved itself and did what it could to play fair according to the rules. It is one of only seven local authorities which have kept within the Government limits, and it is the only one that has been capped.

Local authorities were asked to play a bizarre game in which only the Government knew the rules. It was only after Haringey had made its move that the Government showed their hand. It is shocking that the courts have failed to uphold such a basic principle of natural justice.

The standard assessments set by the Government are so arbitrary that they cannot be related to what is happening on the ground. The Department of the Environment uses only indicative factors, when it should be looking at the real needs of local authorities and what they need to spend. The SSA for capital in Haringey was calculated assuming a non-housing debt of £90 million. The real debt at March this year was £200 million and that arose because of capital allocations by the Government. The council was told for years that it could accumulate money because local authorities can borrow money for capital projects only after the Government have given permission. Haringey borrowed and now has a debt of £200 million, but that is the amount that the Government said it could borrow. They then disregarded that amount and said that Haringey had a debt of only £90 million. If the true debt had been taken into account, the poll tax could have been reduced by £100.

Interest can accrue from money balances. The Government know the precise balance of each local authority. Any reasonable Government would use that figure to calculate the interest for the council. However, the Government did not do that. They made a pro rata calculation based on the SAA, which is the Government's own figure. The Government assumed that Haringey had a balance of £30 million which would give it an interest income of £4 million. The council had no such amount and the interest on its balance was a mere £1 million. Such situations arise when the Government do not listen to local authorities, do not take account of the true figures and work purely on the basis of political dogma.

The Government have played a few tricks. They massaged the education and social services element of the SSA so that any attack would focus on local rather than on central Government. Charge capping defeats its own object. Let us look at some of the information that has been around for a few weeks. Mr. Paul Rowsell is an assistant secretary at the Department of the Environment. He is head of the finance, local authority expenditure and revenue division. He is probably in the Officials' Box and will wave to me if I ask him to do so, but I shall not. He prepared an affidavit which was used by the Government in a recent court case. Writing about the Government's objectives, he stated:

> "The Government is concerned that it should . . . seek powers which would enable it to take rapid action to secure a reduction in . . . excessive budgets, and to bring rapid relief to those charge-payers burdened with high charges as a result of excessive budgets."

Mr. Rowsell is saying that the Government want to take action to reduce excessive budgets and that they will relieve charge payers "burdened with high charges".

Why are the budgets excessive? It is because the Government's SSA made inadequate provision for what local authorities are expected to do. For example, the Government allowed only 3·8 per cent. for inflation, and inflation is currently running at about 10 per cent. Secondly, the Government say that they want to bring rapid relief to charge payers. Because of the Government's transitional relief system, half Haringey's poll tax payers will get no reduction in their bills and the other half will get

a minimal reduction. Of course, all Haringey's people will get a reduction in council services. The real Government target is the excellent service provided by the council.

Mr. Rowsell also wrote about

"a reduction which on the basis on the information available the Secretary of State considered achievable for the authority concerned without disruption to service delivery or causing financial difficulties."

That was the Government's objective in charge capping. That has manifestly not happened because there has been massive disruption of services and charge capping has caused tremendous financial difficulties. I shall mention some of them. In his statement, the Secretary of State talked about horror stories. He should be careful, because he is responsible for such stories. He should remember that one of the people responsible for horror stories in the past was Count Dracula, and he got a stake in his heart.

Mr. Tony Banks: First we will have to find the Secretary of State's heart.

Mr. Grant: My hon. Friend is right. Perhaps the Secretary of State does not have a heart. We shall certainly put a political stake in the heart of the Secretary of State and the Government at the next election.

I want the Secretary of State to listen to some of these horror stories and then tell me how the people of Haringey will live with his policies. I shall outline some of the proposed reductions. In community affairs, six libraries, two advice bureaux and an arts and entertainments section are to be closed. Two sports centres and a swimming pool are being closed, and there will be major cuts in park maintenance, including bowling greens. The crematorium charges will be increased. In housing, there will be no advice or private sector work.

Grants for voluntary organisations will be cut from next April by about £2 million. That will affect organisations such as Age Concern, Relate, the Arts Council, Haringey emergency corps, the black people over 60 pensioners group and the Open Door drug counselling service for young people and will result in the closure of community centres.

On the environment, the ability to implement the Government's new regulations on pollution and food safety will be cut to a minimum. There will be about 600 to 700 job losses, with 500 compulsory redundancies.

In education, there will be no new discretionary awards, and clothing grants will be scrapped. These are important to the 6,000 children who receive them because, when their parents have been means-tested, it has been found that they cannot afford to clothe their children properly. Adult education will be cut by 50 per cent. There will be no subsidised lettings. The youth service will be cut by half, in an area where, five years ago, there were disturbances among young people. Since that time, the local authority has tried to ensure that young people can find something to do, but all these schemes will be scrapped because of the way in which the Government are operating.

In social services, one old people's home and one home for children with special needs will have to be closed. For the first time, home help charges will be £1·50 a week. Day nursery charges for children in an at-risk category will go up from £6 to £10 a week and day nursery charges for other children will go up to £40 a week.

It is clear that the Government are trying to destroy local government. There are no two ways about it. It is just a matter of time before unelected commissioners doing the bidding of the Government will come and tell local authorities what to do.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grant: No. The hon. Gentleman has plenty of money. He should save his speeches for the party conference.

In a year's time, when local authorities are unable to collect their poll taxes, the Government will send in commissioners because the council will be bankrupt. The Government will use the commissioners to ensure that the policies on which they cannot win at the ballot box are implemented.

In my maiden speech, I said that in the inner cities we were living on a powder keg. Given what has happened, and what will happen if the Government keep cutting local services and do not allow young people opportunities, there will be an explosion the like of which we have not seen before. This is a further attack on the lives of the poorest people, who are already struggling to manage with poor housing and on disgracefully low incomes. The Government are attacking the fabric of the society of inner cities and are now taking away the few things that local authorities—particularly Haringey—have been able to do to make life tolerable. The Government are causing an alienation that will rebound on them at the next general election. I hope that that comes sooner rather than later.

7.2 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): The charge capping of Hammersmith and Fulham council has been greatly welcomed by my constituents. They are pleased that they are no longer subjected to the outrageous community charge of £424 that the Labour-controlled Hammersmith and Fulham council tried to impose on them. Their appreciation was shown clearly in the local elections in May, when there was a swing of 7·8 per cent. against the Labour party in my constituency and, in the borough as a whole, a swing of 5 per cent. against the Labour party. We took 13 council seats from Labour and although, regrettably, we did not take control, the Labour party is controlled by an effective Conservative opposition.

I am extremely glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment did not mess around with a small reduction. The reduction of £99 made charge capping much more welcome and effective, and my constituents are grateful to my right hon. Friend.

That a small reduction would have been pointless is shown by the numbers that make up the community charge. The Hammersmith and Fulham council received a special grant from the Government of the same amount as Wandsworth council. These are made up of a combination of the safety net and the special grants that are given to inner London authorities to help them to cope with the transition from ILEA to local education. The Hammersmith and Fulham council and Wandsworth council both received £169 a head.

We often hear claims of gerrymandering, and are told that Wandsworth council was given extra grants to enable the Conservatives to retain control, when the Labour council of Hammersmith and Fulham received the same

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amount. The difference was that the Labour council wanted to impose a community charge of £424 while Wandsworth has a community charge of £148.

The community charge in Hammersmith and Fulham was not £424, because over the four years of the council the special grants will be gradually removed. If there had been no grants this year, the community charge before charge capping would have been £593 a head, and that would be the charge in four years' time, assuming, somewhat improbably, that the Labour council did not increase its expenditure. Therefore, in four years' time, the citizens of Hammersmith and Fulham will be faced not with a charge of £593 but with a monstrous and very high charge which will cause yet more suffering to the poorest in the community who will not have that increased charge reflected in their benefits.

For all the £99 reduction—nearly 25 per cent.—in the community charge, the cap is still only 7 per cent. of the council's budget, 7 per cent. on a budget that has been increased in the four years since 1986 by 80 per cent. in cash terms or 50 per cent. in real terms, after allowing for inflation. That budget was increased in 1989-90 by 30 per cent. alone. This year, it would have been increased by a further 12 per cent. had it not been for charge capping. We are talking about a 7 per cent. reduction on a year-on-year increase of 42 per cent.

It beggars belief that the council should claim that it is not able to make minor reductions, without cuts in services and without major pain and no effect on the front-line services, which we should all wish to maintain. We hear a lot from Labour Members with bleeding hearts about the destruction that capping will cause to front-line services, but for most councils that are being charge-capped, the percentages that they are being asked to cut in their budgets are extremely small.

I have an example of what the Labour council has done over the past four years that has led to increased spending. It has increased staff by 1,000. This has produced an estimated employment cost of £25 million a year. That in itself, given the high cost of office space in London, almost explains the vast bulk of the increased expenditure over and above the generous extra grants that the council has received from the Government to help it to deal with the problems of an inner city area. These extra staff were taken on before the council took over control of education from ILEA, so there is no education element in the increases.

The council has also gone in for all the lunatic things that Labour councils in London go in for—women's committees, police monitoring committees and ethnic minorities committees. None of them has an enormous budget. Each runs a budget of about £1 million, which, in terms of what the council is spending, is not vast. The real cost of the committees is the knock-on cost on other departments.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carrington: The hon. Gentleman would not give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), so I see no reason to give way to him.

The ethnic minority committee imposes such strains on the time of members of staff in other departments such as the planning department that——

Mr. Bernie Grant: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said that the Hammersmith and Fulham council committees each have a budget of £1 million. That is untrue. He should retract that statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is a matter for debate, not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Carrington: I am amused by the fact that the hon. Gentleman is clearly incapable of understanding the Hammersmith and Fulham council budget, if he has taken the trouble to read it, because that is indeed what the committees cost.

The knock-on cost is the time that it takes for people from other departments—the planning department is a case in point—to attend race orientation classes. At one point 40 per cent. of the staff were not available to do their proper job. Their work had to be carried out by someone else. Therefore, other staff had to be employed to do it.

Another major cost that is rapidly mounting up for the Hammersmith and Fulham council is legal bills. The council happily enjoyed running up enormous legal bills in contesting the community charge-capping orders. My right hon. Friend mentioned that all the bills amount to £1 million. My guess, however, is that when we see the final bills for Hammersmith and Fulham council, they alone will amount to nearly £1 million. The costs of its leading counsel amount to £1,000 a day. The council has employed the same leading counsel to defend its swaps business. Hammersmith and Fulham indulged in gambling on the money markets and lost, according to the council's own conservative estimate, £200 million. That means a loss of £2,000 for each community charge payer.

Having lost that money, the council is trying to recover it through the courts. The case has gone through the Divisional court and the Court of Appeal and it is now on its way to the House of Lords. I do not know what the result of that appeal will be and whether Hammersmith and Fulham council will have to pay the full £200 million. It looks as though it will have to pay some of it, at the very least. What I do know is that the council will have to pay its legal bills, which, it is estimated, will come to £2 million. That amounts to nearly £200 for each community charge payer. It is probable, however, that the legal bills will amount not to £2 million but to £4 million, which comes to £400 for each community charge payer.

We can see, therefore, where the money goes and that Hammersmith and Fulham council's tendency to indulge in litigation is leading community charge payers into having to pay far more than they need to pay. The leader of the Labour group on Hammersmith and Fulham council is a failed barrister. Therefore, it is very tempting for him to play out his Walter Mitty fantasies by going to court when he does not have to pay the bills himself.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carrington: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. My time is nearly up, and I am sure that he wants to make his own speech.

The council's real problem is that it is completely out of control. Recently it received a report from the housing department which showed, to the council's great surprise, that the repair budget has bust through all its budgetary figures, to the tune of £4·4 million. One could make out the case that the council is spending a lot of money on repairs, although most council tenants would deny that it is doing

so. The reality is that, whether it was or was not spending that money, it did not know whether it was spending it. Apparently, the council was horrified to learn that both officers and politicians did not know about it. One hears the same story in practically every department; the council does not know what it is doing. It is inefficient and badly run. That is why its finances are out of control and why it has had to impose such a high community charge.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for having charge capped Hammersmith and Fulham council. However, the problems for the charge payers will go from bad to worse during the next three years. The council needs to be charge-capped every year for the next four years. The charge capping must become even more severe until such time as the council learns to run itself efficiently, keep within its budget and control its legal expenses.

7.14 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I do not intend to refer to the poll tax figures for Doncaster. All that I would say is that more than 15 schools are likely to close as a result of poll tax capping.

I intend to refer to accountability. The Secretary of State has often made it clear that he strongly favours the principle of accountability. He believes that those who elect a council hold, by means of their votes, a weapon with which to punish the controlling party that imposes high poll tax levels and to show their approval of the party that sets or, if in opposition, advocates and promises a low poll tax.

The Opposition are also very much in favour of the principle of accountability. Moreover—here, it seems, we part company with the Secretary of State—we are in favour of the practice of accountability. If accountability is to become a reality and not just some airy-fairy armchair reform group theory, local decision making has to be taken seriously. The most effective way to destroy belief in the value of accountability is to take away the right of decision making from elected councillors and the people who elect them.

We believe that the principle of accountability was at work in the council elections in May. Without going into the dubious reasons why certain Tory councils were able to set their poll tax so low, it is nevertheless clear that the poll tax was a central issue and dominated the thoughts of the electors during the May elections. Apart from the fact that the parties had to make a stand on this issue, although most Conservatives obviously cursed having been stuck with it, the electorate chose to make it the big issue.

As for the elections to Doncaster metropolitan borough council as they relate to accountability, the poll tax and poll tax capping, Doncaster Labour party's election manifesto and the election addresses of the Labour candidates, which went to every house in the borough, made quite clear the budgetary and poll tax implications for Doncaster metropolitan borough council.

If time permitted, I could deal in detail with the election manifesto and the election leaflets that we distributed, but that would not be fair to the many other hon. Members who wish to speak in the debate. However, the election manifesto spelt out clearly the budgetary consequences. The full manifesto also addressed clearly, even at a late stage, the poll tax capping question. Both the manifesto and the election leaflets were produced after Doncaster metropolitan borough council had fixed its budget and set its poll tax at £334·53 at a special meeting of the council on 8 March.

For its part, the Conservative opposition in Doncaster unsuccessfully moved an amendment,

"that the Council net community charge be set at £264."

Hon. Members will be amazed to learn that that figure is very nearly the assumed poll tax set for Doncaster by the Secretary of State. There may have been a leak. However, local Conservatives, to show their zeal and loyalty beyond the call of duty, proposed that that figure should be reduced by a further 6p. Hon. Members will therefore appreciate that for a month, from 8 March, the fact that Doncaster's declared poll tax was more than that proposed by the Conservative group was well aired and widely known about in Doncaster as the local election campaign approached.

If the Doncaster public were in any danger of forgetting or downgrading the poll tax issue, the Secretary of State ensured that that did not happen. On 3 April, Doncaster metropolitan borough council—as one of the 20 councils being capped—had its poll tax on the front page of the local newspapers and it also received widespread local radio and television coverage. There was no doubt that the electorate of Doncaster knew that they could have a reduction of £53 on their poll tax bills if they voted Conservative. There was a clear sign that they wanted that reduction.

The real issue was the reduction in budget, but I will not go into the figures because of lack of time. I stress that again and again, in the run-up to the local elections, the whole issue of poll tax and charge capping was discussed. Leaflets were produced by all political parties and were sent to every household. Hon. Members will appreciate that the party campaigns for the 3 May elections were well under way. The district Labour party made clear where it stood on the issue, but again there is no time to discuss that. Labour candidates put the issues of charge capping and accountability squarely before the electorate, which was already well aware of the position. The Conservative party backed and welcomed the Government's intervention in Doncaster's budget and the prospect of a reduced poll tax. Conservative sources spoke of, but did not quantify, waste and unnecessary spending. The Conservative group leader was at the forefront of that attack on the Labour-controlled council and its resistance to capping.

The two major parties joined battle on the issue of Doncaster's spending and funding and on the justification for the Secretary of State's poll capping. Both parties invited the electorate to judge favourably or unfavourably, first, the size of Doncaster's poll tax and, secondly, the prospect of a reduced budget and a poll tax reduced by £53. Hon. Members should know that, before the 3 May elections, the state of the parties in Doncaster was 54 seats for Labour and nine for Conservative. The latter nine seats were all held in three of the 21 wards. One Labour seat was unopposed. There was a double election in one ward. Labour was therefore defending 18 seats and the Conservatives three. It was an opportunity for the electorate of Doncaster to make what I shall call the parliamentary by-election response.

What happened on 3 May? When those specific seats were last contested in 1986, the Labour party took 61·9 per cent. of the votes cast, and the Conservatives 22·5 per cent. In the elections on 3 May, with an increased turnout, the

[Mr. Martin Redmond]

Labour share of the vote rose to 67·8 per cent. while the Tory share dropped to 19·4 per cent. In Bessacarr ward, which has returned Conservative councillors at every election since the council was created in 1974, the Conservative candidate lost his seat. It was the leader of the Conservative group, with 16 years' service—the Secretary of State's most vocal ally in Doncaster.

In another traditionally Conservative ward—where, by a whisker, the Labour party gained three seats in 1986, 1987 and 1988, and where there was a double election this year—Labour candidates took 59 per cent. of the vote. That was an improvement of more than 10 per cent. for Labour, and a decline in the Tory vote of 12 per cent. on its 1988 performance. I do not know of a more convincing endorsement of a council's position on poll tax and poll tax capping by the people whom it represents and those who could be reasonably expected to pay.

Reasonable people, assessing the circumstances and the outcome of the May elections, will conclude that the people of Doncaster massively backed the council's opposition to the poll tax and did not rise to the charge-capping bait offered by the Secretary of State. The council's decisions, its budget and the issue of capping were clearly judged by the people of Doncaster. The Secretary of State has now gone against the wishes of the great majority of those people. Through their decision at the ballot box, the Secretary of State's action has been decisively rebuffed. If he is truly committed to accountability, he should leave Doncaster alone. Value for money and quality of service is what the people of Doncaster expect. They have been getting that from their council and they have returned a Labour council to endorse that policy. I ask the Secretary of State to withdraw the order against Doncaster.

7.26 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Nothing more symbolises some of the problems of inefficiency at the centre of much of local government in England than the incredible sterile debate that takes place, year in and year out, on the subject of contracting out. Such a debate happens only in England. In France, the socialists and the communists control many of the municipalities and much of local government, but there is no debate about contracting out and whether in-house work forces should run certain services or whether they should be contracted-out to the private sector. French councils do not allow ideology to get in the way of providing a good service. They allow the private sector to provide those services that it can best provide. In those areas where a directly controlled work force can best provide the service, it is allowed to do so.

Local government in Britain appears to be for ever embroiled in this idiotic and sterile argument about whether to contract out services. For example, in Derbyshire recently, the county council, which consistently attempts to avoid contracting out its services, rejected a low-cost tender for one service because it arrived in the wrong-coloured envelope. Another example is that the county council recently structured its school cleaning contract in such a way that no private contractor would bid for it. The only bid was from the in-house team. The contract was drawn up in such an incompetent way that, for example, the county council delivered large cleaning machines to tiny schools that had only one cleaner who could not use the machines because they were too large and not suitable for the schools.

It is crazy to have all those arguments about contracting out. Surely the priority of local government should be the provision of efficient services at a reasonable cost. If those services can be provided better by the private sector, what earthly reason could there be for preventing the private sector from providing them? By the same token, where those services can best be provided by in-house work forces, I should be the last to stand in their way. The priority should be not who provides the service, but that it is provided efficiently, effectively and at a reasonable cost.

Much of the recent press comment on the community charge and on charge capping has concentrated on the possibility of cuts in educational budgets. Indeed, I have not seen a single news item this year that has said anything other than that educational services would have to be cut. That is a great shame. Those reports have pointedly ignored the fact that there are huge areas of waste, profligacy and inefficiency in local government that could be cut long before there is any need to make savings on education. In Derbyshire, huge savings could be made in the budget that would more than account for the charge capping without sacking a teacher or closing a single school.

Let me give the House some examples. The county council's budget for this year includes £34 million for a contingency fund. Why does Derbyshire—in this year of all years—need a £34 million contingency fund, when neighbouring Staffordshire, a county of roughly the same size, can get by with £14 million? Could it be that Derbyshire county council spent most of its contingency fund last year to enable it to cut the rates and ensure that it was re-elected? And could it be that it has now jacked up its contingency fund as high as possible to give it a nice war chest for the next local election, ensuring that the community charge is as painful as possible because it knows that, in the first year of the charge, the Government will get the blame? The county council argues that it needs the contingency fund to budget for pay rises in the next year. What organisation does not include the possibility of pay rises and cost increases in its basic budget? That is not what a contingency fund is for; such extra items should be included in the basic budget.

The county council spends more than £1 million on its bloated information department and its Insight newspaper, which is an insult to most people's intelligence. It spends £600,000 on its equal opportunities and race relations department. It has doubled its subsidy to something called the Northern college in Barnsley to £188,000. Incidentally, the college is extremely dubious, as it specialises in left-wing and trade union causes. It is not even in the county and I do not see why the charge payers of Derbyshire should pay for such nonsense. The council spends £111,000 on giving councillors free trips abroad to sponsor twinning arrangements.

Mr. Corbyn: How many free trips have you had?

Mr. Oppenheim: None, actually.

In addition, the council has consistently refused to cost its nuclear-free zone policy. Then there is community education, which is a relatively new policy. Community

education in Derbyshire is budgeted at nearly £15 million this year. I accept that, in an ideal world, county councils would be able to provide community education, but it is a very costly policy and it strikes me that the council should be concentrating its efforts on general education. Neighbouring Labour-controlled Nottinghamshire has no separate community education section. Many people in Derbyshire feel that the policy is bloated, inefficient and unnecessary, especially as cake decoration and yoga are included among the courses.

It seems extraordinary to me that, at a time when the council is complaining about underfunding, it should be spending so much on its community education programme, which I regard as of limited benefit. Certainly, courses in cake decoration and yoga could be cut and some of the more sensible courses could be financed by charging people who could afford to pay, thus enabling huge savings to be made on the programme.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) pointed out, Derbyshire county council has the extraordinary policy of freezing school meal prices at their 1981 level. As my hon. Friend said, that subsidy does not help poor people because less-well-off people already receive income support and free school meals. The county council is asking every charge payer in Derbyshire, regardless of his means, to subsidise school meals, and much of that subsidy goes to parents who are very well off. That is ludicrous, especially as the policy costs about £15 million. The council could cut that spending by half and concentrate the subsidy on those who really need it rather than subsidising everyone, willy-nilly, from the Duke of Devonshire downwards.

It is the county council's policy to provide free home help, regardless of the recipient's means. As a result, the service is 62 per cent. more expensive in Derbyshire than in similar areas. The cost of the subsidy in Derbyshire is £17 million—£25 for every charge payer—but it could be halved if those who could afford to pay were asked to contribute towards the cost of home helps.

The county council has increased its staff by no less than 8,000 since it came to power in 1981. That is an increase of 20 per cent. and the largest increase in any county council in England and Wales. As much as £40 million could be saved if the council reduced staffing levels, used employees more efficiently and cut out staff who are not really needed.

When the county council announced its community charge earlier this year, a group of local borough, city and district council leaders got together to produce an alternative budget which cut subsidies in some areas and targeted subsidies in others to those who really needed them, as well as cutting out a lot of wasteful spending. It was found that the county council could easily save about £86 million—the equivalent of £121 per charge payer. That is twice as much as the Government are asking the county council to save under the charge cap.

I assert that there is not a single reason for any school teacher in Derbyshire to be sacked or for any school in Derbyshire to be closed. Savings could be made, and the district and borough council leaders have produced an excellent alternative budget. If the county council goes ahead and cuts services such as education, it will be doing so as a political gesture and to wind up still further its posture of confrontation with the Government. That will show the people of Derbyshire that the county council is interested not in providing reasonable services at a fair cost but in taking on the Government, making political points and handing the bill to the charge payers.

The county council leader and Labour councillors in Derbyshire often claim that they are committed to providing a high quality of service and that that is the core of their policy. They say that their policies of providing cheap school meals and free home helps regardless of people's means are part of their fundamental belief and that there is no way that they will ever throw them over.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned such policies earlier, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said that they were brilliant. If Labour county councillors and county council chiefs are so happy and so eager to boast about the services and if they say that they are part of their central beliefs, they should at least have the honesty and the guts to admit that the services are way in excess of those offered by other county councils, and that they cost a great deal. They should have the honesty and the guts to admit their responsibility for the high community charge in Derbyshire.

The problem is that, all too often, socialist councillors fall into the utopian trap of trying to provide a huge range of services. In an ideal world, we should all want to provide some of those services, but unfortunately we live in the real world, in which services have to be paid for and provided efficiently at a cost that the area can afford. I want local government to provide high-quality services but they must be provided at a reasonable cost in line with what the area can afford. Unfortunately, Labour's priorities are often very different. The Labour party's priorities are geared towards keeping its friends in the trade unions sweet, and that is especially so in respect of National Union of Public Employees, which sponsors so many Labour councillors.

The Labour party's priorities are also too often geared to providing jobs for its political friends. An ex-Labour Member of Parliament, Mr. Reg Race was recently appointed chief executive of Derbyshire county council at a huge salary. It does not strike me that he was necessarily the best man for the job. It has always been a tradition in local government that council officers should be independent, and I do not see how a left-wing former Labour Member of Parliament who previously worked for the GLC can be politically independent.

I will say this for Mr. Race: apparently, he was so disgusted by what he found when he arrived at the county council that he left after six months. At least he had the integrity to do that, even if he did not have the integrity not to accept hush money, in the form of a golden handshake, to keep his mouth shut about what was going on at the county council. [HON. MEMBERS: "How much?"] My hon. Friends ask me how much. The county council, which is supposedly a great believer in freedom of information, unfortunately omitted to reveal how big that golden handshake was.

Let me give some more examples of jobs for the boys. The chairman of Derbyshire Labour party was appointed at a salary of £15,000 as a minder for Japanese business men visiting the county. That same person had been sacked from the council for corruption 11 years previously. He was reinstated by the Labour council in the post that I have described. It just so happened that he was the chairman of Derbyshire Labour party.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): What is his name?

Mr. Oppenheim: My hon. Friend asks me that gentleman's name. For the moment, I forget, but I believe that it was something along the lines of Skinner. I am not sure whether he was related to an hon. Member of the same name.

As I have said, education is one of local government's most important responsibilities. It is a fact that education in Derbyshire costs more per head than in almost any other county in England, yet the education results in Derbyshire are worse than those in almost any other county in England. The reason is——

Mr. Ted Garrett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Oppenheim: I shall give way in a moment.

The reason is that educational excellence is not the main priority of Derbyshire county council. Instead, it chases around after the false ideal of egalitarianism. There is too much political interference and too much bureaucracy. As evidence of that bureaucracy, I can tell the House that, under local management of schools, the county council is proposing to keep no less than 26 per cent. of educational spending centrally. That is the highest level——

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): The proportion is 40 per cent. in my area.

Mr. Oppenheim: My hon. Friend corrects me. I had understood that Derbyshire's retention was the highest of any county council, but it may well be the second highest —*[Interruption.]* I give way to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett).

Mr. Garrett: I am reluctant to rise on this matter, but I must take the hon. Gentleman back to some of his remarks about certain members of the Labour party. I stress that I do not know those people personally and I do not even know what they look like. But the hon. Gentleman should use his privilege much more carefully. Perhaps he would care to reflect on whether some of his remarks would stand up outside this House in a court of law.

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I am sure that he will be delighted to learn that I have made exactly those same comments outside the Chamber, and I stand by them. It is not a question of hiding behind privilege. Everything that I have said in this and previous speeches about Derbyshire county council, I have also said in the local press outside this House— *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) want to intervene?

Mrs. Mahon: The vitriol of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who also spoke about Derbyshire county council, has been quite extraordinary, given that the electorate overwhelmingly return that council every time. Somebody does not believe the hon. Gentleman—the majority of the electorate.

Mr. Oppenheim: I correct the hon. Lady on one point. Derbyshire county council has benefited from council elections being held during the mid-term of the national Government when the Government tend to be somewhat unpopular. Even so——

Mrs. Mahon *rose*——

Mr. Oppenheim: Perhaps the hon. Lady will let me finish.

Even so, at every election since 1981, the Labour-controlled county council has lost seats—sometimes against the national average. The Labour group on Derbyshire county council has consistently achieved results far worse than the national average. Indeed, on both occasions when the leader of the county council has stood for election in what was supposed to be a safe Labour seat, he has lost by a substantial majority.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Who was he?

Mr. Oppenheim: I cannot think.

I refer again to education, which I accept is an important responsibility. I am deeply concerned about the state of education in Derbyshire. The county council spends far more per head than most other county councils, yet we get far worse results. Opposition Members should reflect on the fact that, although they often complain about educational standards in Britain and are ready to attack the Government about them, it is the local education authorities, which are run by the county councils—many of which are Labour—which have the primary responsibility for providing education. They have all received more money per head under this Government, allowing for inflation, than ever before. However, in many areas, especially in Labour areas, the results leave a lot to be desired. Opposition Members should accept some of the responsibility for the poor educational standards in some parts of Britain.

So far, the Opposition have been incredibly lucky. They have managed to get away with criticising the Government, but have not come up with any policies of their own on local government finance. Four years ago, they promised that they would come up "very soon" with a policy on local government finance. Three months ago, during a debate on local government finance, they said that they would come up with a policy at the end of May, but we are still waiting. Earlier today, when the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) the Opposition's chief spokesman on this subject, was asked whether there were any circumstances under which any future Labour Government would cap or limit local government spending, he was completely unable——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. These matters are outside the scope of the debate

Mr. Oppenheim: It was in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I challenged the Opposition spokesman——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It does not matter whether it was in this debate. As long as I am in the Chair, I shall seek to ensure that the debate is confined——

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall seek to ensure that the debate is confined to the motion. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will confine his remarks accordingly.

Mr. Oppenheim: I had thought that this debate was about charge capping, Mr. Deputy Speaker and I was referring to the fact that, earlier in the debate, the Opposition spokesman refused to say whether a future Labour Government would limit or cap local government spending. It strikes me——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not seek to debate my ruling. I very much hope that he will have regard to it.

Mr. Oppenheim: Of course I shall pay regard to it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I always do.

Finally, local government is not about providing jobs for the friends of the Labour party. It is not primarily about providing jobs at all—*[Interruption.]* Local government is about providing reasonable services at a reasonable cost. It has become patently clear in recent years that many Labour councillors have completely lost sight of that fundamental and central aim of local government. That is particularly true in Derbyshire. That is why, from the point of view of my constituents, I am pleased that Derbyshire county council has been charge-capped.

7.46 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I have the unenviable task of representing an area in which both local authorities were poll tax-capped. The district council—Bristol city council—was poll tax-capped, as was Avon county council.

Although I do not want to rehearse the principles of poll tax capping, it is worth noting that the Government have been two-faced, although they may have taken the precaution of putting the contradictions into the legislation. First, they established an arbitrary formula which paid no regard to the circumstances of individual local authorities and took no account of the unique factors that may affect them. They simply took a mathematical formula for the national cake of expenditure and sought to scale it down. The process of setting the standard spending assessments followed the Government's normal procedure. The Government allow themselves to live in cloud cuckoo land in terms of what they believe that local authorities should spend and pay no regard to their actual expenditure and commitments. We saw that with the grant-related expenditure assessment arrangements and under the previous funding arrangements.

That led the Government to conclude that Avon county, which had set its budget at £533 million, should have a standard spending assessment of £450 million. The Government said that the authority was overspending on education to the tune of £57·8 million, and spending £14 million too much on social services. The county was spending £83 million more than the Government thought it should.

Despite the many criticisms and snipes that have been directed at the county council, every Tory Member—there are nine among the 10 hon. Members who represent the county—has failed to identify where the cuts could be made. Avon is a hung authority. The Conservative group on Avon county council proposed an annual budget of only £5 million less than the final agreed budget of £533 million. Bristol city council set a budget of £56·6 million. The Secretary of State believed that it should spend only £49·2 million. That requires a cut of £7·6 million. The poll tax capping proposal for Avon is that it should cut £27 million in the first stage from its budget.

The standard spending assessment failed to take into account certain considerations. In Bristol the cost of collecting the poll tax has escalated to £8·5 million, an increase of £6·5 million over the cost of collecting the rates. The reason for the high cost is that Bristol is one of the largest authorities in the country. Only six other authorities in England and Wales are comparable in size. Bristol has to collect the poll tax from a vast population, which costs a lot of money.

When the Government compare Bristol with other authorities, they fail to take into account the fact that the total figure includes money for administering the rebate system. That costs about £2 million a year. Bristol has provided for collection through Girobank and local shops. It covers the cost of that collection because it believes that it makes it easier for charge payers to pay their poll tax.

A vast expansion in the number of staff to administer collection of the poll tax was needed, so new offices had to be found. Many of the administrative costs are out of political control because the registration officer has the power to decide what resources are needed to collect the money. The increase of £6·5 million in the cost of collection costs each poll tax payer in Bristol £24 a year. Yet the Government poll tax-capped us for £26 a year. It is crazy.

Bristol also has its own dock and a capital debt to be serviced. Under the previous arrangements, under GREA and revenue support grant, the Government agreed a forward funding restructured debt and the entire debt would have been paid off at the end of the debt period. The Government have refused to allow that consideration to continue under the new poll tax legislation. That has added £7·2 million to Bristol's bill as a direct result of Government legislation.

The Government's legislation has directly increased the charge to poll tax payers in Bristol by failing to recognise its continuing commitment to restructuring the debt for the dock, which is municipally owned. The Government also refuse to recognise the cost of collection.

The Government failed to recognise that Avon's precept for the joint Somerset and Avon police authority is considerably higher than the SSA allowed for. The Government assumed that the county council received income of £12 million a year in interest from its investments. That is not the case. The county council has increased costs of £6 million for implementing the Government's Education Reform Act 1988 and of £2·9 million for implementing the new community care provisions. The Government are forcing up expenditure and penalising local authorities for spending more. They came up with an incredible formula which poll tax-capped 19 Labour authorities and one hung authority on which Labour is the largest political group.

The Conservative group on Avon county council came up with various suggestions to reduce the cost of its services. I shall give one example because it illustrates my point about the true cost of services. It echoes some of the points of the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) when he criticised Derbyshire county council. The Avon Conservative group proposed that the council should charge £3 a week for home care, which is free at present, 50p a week for transport to day care centres, and 10p more for meals on wheels. An elderly person who has home help, receives meals on wheels five days a week and goes to a day care centre once a week would pay £208 per year for services which are currently provided free. Such people are already on a severely reduced income. That reveals what the poll tax is about. It is about making the poor pay so that the rich can have more money to spend. It is not about supporting local services.

[Ms. Dawn Primarolo]

The Government gave notice of the SSAs in November, and the measure went through the House in January. Local authorities did not have enough time to respond to the criteria. When they met the Department of the Environment and attempted to have their SSAs changed, they were told that they could not negotiate their SSA because Parliament had already agreed the formula. The Government told councils that they would be poll tax-capped from the beginning of the financial year, but that they had a right to appeal.

The Government created a conflict between two principles for local authorities. Members elected to a local authority must spend the authority's money in the best possible way under the duties laid on them and regulated through the Audit Commission. They must bear in mind the best expenditure for their local authority. They also have the right to appeal. They exercised that right to appeal, but limited though their right was under the poll tax legislation, Conservative Members castigated them for doing so.

I ask any Conservative Member of Parliament for a constituency in Avon or anyone outside the House to tell us where £57 million can be cut from Avon's education budget and why Bristol should be penalised because its expenditure has increased as a result of the Government's legislation. The arrangements are profoundly unfair and undemocratic and should be challenged in the highest court in the land. The legislation is inappropriate, unfair and discriminatory and the Government should be ashamed of themselves for claiming that they introduced it in the name of democracy.

7.58 pm

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Within the last few weeks, Mr. Speaker was gracious enough to grant me an Adjournment debate, when I spoke at some length about the effect of charge capping, and especially of mismanagement, on education. I was not consulted by the local authority when it set a community charge of £450. I was not consulted about the safety net and the low rate assessment that reduced its community charge to £290. Nor was I consulted by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench at any stage before capping was imposed. I delivered messages on behalf of my local authority, pointing out to Ministers that there was and still is a budget on the table that would bring Calder Valley's expenditure down to a figure below the charge-capped rate with no loss of services or jobs. According to an extensive survey by the *Halifax Evening Courier*, 75 per cent. of Calderdale people want charge-capping.

Mrs. Mahon: As the hon. Gentleman and I share the same local authority, will he spell out where £7·5 million of cuts can be made? I have seen only an exercise involving secondary heads of expenditure, which involves picking off other people's jobs, not those of the individuals making the proposals. The hon. Gentleman is short on detail.

Mr. Thompson: If the hon. Lady will refer to the minutes of the meeting of Calderdale council held in March, she will see the proposed cuts set out exactly. If she does not have that information, that is her fault, because it has been available since March. It is the responsibility of the local council to make reasonable and sensible cuts of 5 per cent. from the total budget of £1,020 per head. It is required to make a saving of only £52, and most of my constituents are eager to see charge capping, believing that is a correct and reasonable method of control. Some are already demanding that local councillors be surcharged for the £50,000 that they have wasted in pursuing their arguments through the courts.

There is some question whether the Government could be more generous in respect of highways, but that is a matter of priorities and has nothing to do with the overall figure of £1,020. Calder Valley is the most prosperous manufacturing area of West Yorkshire. Unemployment there is down to 3·5 per cent. It has some tourism, but it is mostly concerned with manufacturing industries that are increasingly more sophisticated. "Business in the Community" and other programmes have revitalised the area. However, there has been a sea change, in that Labour has rejected all that has occurred over the past 10 years. The party's official spokesman says:

"In the last 10 years the destiny of our district has been largely dictated to us by people from outside".

Those are the words of a begging bowl councillor who is after every penny that he can get. He goes on:

"We have been available to anybody with a few bob to take their pleasure of us when it suited them."

Inward investment is now despised. He continues:

"The coming of tourism may have brought cleaner buildings and the much vaunted Business in the Community partnership has created interest from speculative developers".

What an arrogant load of nonsense. And having seen employment increase to nearly 97 per cent., that Labour spokesman says:

"Our need is not just jobs".

That sea change has manifested itself after many years of a Lib-Lab pact involving rate rises year in, year out, at a figure way above inflation. This year, it has manifested itself in a community charge of £450, alleviated by the Government's £160 safety net. At the time of the world cup, and of the remarks by a High Court judge about refereeing, it also manifested itself as Halifax Town 5, children 0, and as Indigenous Voluntary Groups and artistic endeavours 0, somebody else's ballet 4.

There is now a threat that Calderdale schools will be put on a four-day week and a proposal to take all the children down to the Shay. I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are a great football supporter. If you want a free ticket for the stand, come and join the other 800. I am a shareholder. It has been suggested that the children should be taken down to the football ground once a week to be taught, or to Springhall, which we are giving away.

The local authority is appalling. It persuaded a ballet company to come to Calderdale when Manchester could not afford it. The ballet company had a deficit of £250,000. I enjoy ballet, but not at a cost to the community charge and to my children's education. The council's priorities are wrong. Of course there should be equal opportunities, but they should not cost £250,000. We do not want a budget that includes another £500,000 and involves 109 new jobs since community charge capping was introduced. A budget is available that will meet all the requirements. It is not for me to spell it out.

Mrs. Mahon: The hon. Gentleman has not done so.

Mr. Thompson: The budget is available for the hon. Lady to scrutinise if she wants to. There is none so blind as she who will not see.

An appalling, unreasonable and unnecessary threat is being posed to Calderdale schoolchildren and voluntary groups. The suggested budget still puts Calderdale's charge £110 above the standard spending assessment, and it cannot be that far out. Calderdale council and the Labour group have entirely changed direction. They have slipped back into something circa 1972. They should not be allowed to get away with it, and they will not be allowed to get away with it.

8.6 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): As there was some question at the beginning of the debate about Labour's position, I make it clear that I speak as someone who spent 37 years serving on borough councils, the greater London council and the Inner London education authority under both Labour and Conservative Governments, both as a member of the majority and minority groups. The principle that I followed throughout that period was to support the rights of local authorities to conduct the business that they had been elected to conduct by their electorate, without central Government intervention or interference.

When, in 1972, a Conservative Government under the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) introduced the Housing Finance Act, which forced local councils to increase rents, I opposed it. I consistently opposed central Government's stranglehold on the rights and responsibilities of local government. That process accelerated with each passing year. But for all my complaints about the actions of the Government of Jim Callaghan, who imposed a major series of cuts in local government support and spending, together with increasing controls under section 106 of the Housing Act 1974, that all pales into insignificance compared with the vicious series of measures taken year after year by the present Administration.

We have reached the point where local government has almost been squeezed to death. The options open to councillors, be they Labour or Conservative, are minuscule. They are caught between a Government who have taken dramatic new powers and made massive cuts in central Government support for local government and their local electors, who want an improved quality of life. I have noticed among Labour and Conservative authorities a continuing falling off among the best and brightest local authority members. It is increasingly difficult for all political parties to find people prepared to stand for election, given that Britain is increasingly being run from Whitehall.

The point has almost been reached when the only decision left to councillors is whether they should have hard or soft toilet paper on council premises. It is an absolute disgrace. While the rest of the world is moving towards decentralisation and devolution, the Government end up controlling almost everything. It is an obsessive form of centralisation that has more in common with the regimes now being swept away in eastern Europe than with a modern western democracy.

Over the past 11 years, we have seen a series of new measures as central Government sought to tie local authorities down. There has been absolutely disgraceful contempt for democracy. When councils are elected committed to improving services, the first thing the Government do is to claw back the various grants given to them.

The Labour-controlled Greater London council was elected in 1981 with a clear commitment to reduce fares, but within a month the then Secretary of State for the Environment said that all the remaining rate support grant would be withdrawn from the GLC if it carried out the policy for which the people had voted. The Government have dragged in more and more complicated, ludicrous and damaging measures as councils have fought to defend the services for which they are responsible. I am not surprised that, over the past year, increasing numbers of Conservative councillors have resigned the whip to express their disgust. This capping is the final straw.

I yield to no one in criticism of Brent council when it has been wrong, when its services have been inadequate and when it has made mistakes. I do not believe that I should be a public relations mouthpiece for a council simply because it has a Labour majority. My job is to represent the views of the people of Brent to the council and when it made mistakes, that is what I sought to do. However, many of the Government's charges are wide of the mark. I complained about Brent's cuts, not because it has not made enough cuts.

Two years ago, when Brent council finally gave in to Government pressure to restrict its spending, it made devastating cuts. I remind the House of the cuts that have already been made as we consider whether we should pass orders that will demand another £5 million-worth of cuts which, because they must be made in little more than half a year, will effectively be cuts of about £10 million.

Two years ago, £17 million was cut from Brent's budget under Government threats of surcharge. Two thousand jobs were lost. Four years ago, the council employed 13,476 staff. Today, it employs 9,785. That is a 25 per cent. cut—one job in four has been lost. How many more jobs do the Government want to see lost? We cannot deal with a further cut by a little administration or central bureaucracy. All that is left is to cut teachers' and social workers' jobs and the jobs of those wonderful people who provide home help and the direct support services. That is the scale of the cuts that Brent has already made by complying with the Government's demands.

As well as the 2,000 jobs that were lost two years ago and those that have been lost since, seven day nurseries have been closed and there was a £7 a week rent increase. There was a massive increase in rent arrears because many people could not afford another £7 a week. There were also reductions in refuse collections and street sweeping. All the public conveniences were closed in the borough. There were cuts in home helps for the elderly and residential homes were closed. There were major reductions in the grants to voluntary organisations, and 300 teachers left schools following the cuts in school budgets.

Discretionary grants are vital to an inner-city area. They were cut back and back. Last year and this year, while Brent received applications from 1,500 young people for those grants, it has made only about 150 grants. Only about one in 10 people are receiving grants in an area in which many people have missed their first educational opportunity and therefore desperately require a chance to catch up.

The Government should not tell us that the problem will be solved if we no longer declare Brent a nuclear-free zone. It does not cost anything to administer a nuclear-free

[Mr. Ken Livingstone]

zone. We do not have to employ people to take away nuclear missiles or trundle through the nuclear waste. The nuclear-free zone is a propaganda ploy against the Government's nuclear policies. It does not cost anything.

The Government should not tell us that we can save the necessary amount of money by closing down and getting rid of the remaining one and a half staff working in the ethnic minorities unit. It is no good telling us to close the women's unit, because that was closed two years ago. If the Government press ahead with the £5 million cut, they will cut into the key services upon which the most deprived and disadvantaged sections of the community depend.

I have a feeling that Brent was included among the capped authorities simply because it is an easy target after four years of rubbishing by the media. In real terms, Brent's budget four years ago was £174 million. At constant prices, it is £158 million this year. Were it not for the change to the poll tax system, if we had retained the rates, the rate in Brent would have been reduced this year. I would not have been in favour of that, given the need for services.

Brent is the eighth most deprived borough in the country. It is being forced to make a contribution of more than £17 for each of its residents to the national safety net. The eighth most deprived borough is supporting and subsidising people in Westminster and Wandsworth to provide the bribe which paid off so well for the Government. That is a disgrace.

It is estimated that it will cost £400,000—nearly half a million pounds—to recalculate the new poll tax.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman say that Brent was subsidising Westminster through the safety net. Can he square that with the fact that Westminster is paying £75 to the safety net?

Mr. Livingstone: The hon. Gentleman is right. I should have stuck to Wandsworth. Westminster got its bribe almost directly from central Government. I wish that we had had the same level of bribes in Brent. Anyone can win an election if £27 million or £29 million is poured into a small area.

If a limited company in Britain operated on the principles adopted by the Government in allocating grants, the people running that company would be inside for fraud for a very long time. If a Labour Government had operated the system in that corrupt way, the *Daily Express*, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* would be screaming that we were turning Britain into a corrupt banana republic and that that sort of thing happens only in the third world. We can imagine the abuse.

No one in local government can plan. No one can know from one year to the next how the system will be changed. Many of the best people in finance departments are leaving because they are not prepared to work under those conditions. However, there is an alternative. The Labour party is still discussing the matter, but I can tell the House what it should be arguing for. It should not be arguing for this poll tax nonsense with its capping and other paraphernalia. We should give local government real independence. There should be a shift of power away from Whitehall down to local government. Local government should have a taxing power. I should be much happier if we could sweep the poll tax away and return to the old rates system in which central Government support for local government was adequate to the task. Or, and this would be my real preference, we should have a local income tax with a redistribution element organised by central Government.

There are alternatives. The poll tax is just about the worst possible system that anyone could devise. Given the unpopularity that the Labour administration in Brent managed to achieve two years ago, we all expected that Labour Brent would be swept away. I do not think that we expected to win 20 seats. We won 29 seats and had a hung council in Brent because the poll tax became even more unpopular for the Government than the mismanagement of the administration at Brent town hall.

The election in Brent was a race between the unpopularity of the council and the unpopularity of the Government. Everyone canvassing in the area was aware that people did not know who to vote against. They wanted to vote against almost everyone. I should like central Government to pull back so that local government —whether Labour or Conservative—can be judged on what it does and on its abilities, given the resources that it takes from people.

Over the past decade of increasing central Government control, no one has been responsible or accountable. How can we blame councillors for the poll tax mess? They cannot control the resources and they often know what is happening only at the last minute. I was leader of the GLC when we saw the earlier example of this sort of nonsense, in the form of rate capping. At least with rate capping we were told in December what the cap would be. We had time to launch a legal challenge and to get a budget through. By the time the decisions are reached on poll tax capping, we will be almost halfway through the financial year.

The Government are rushing this through for the most venal of electoral reasons. At the end of the day, they will reap the whirlwind as the most deprived areas erupt. Everything is cut to the bone and there is nothing left to cut that will not cause the most acute pain to the most deprived sections of our communities. The Government must know what they are doing before they insist on this.

8.19 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): The council of the London borough of Hillingdon has been under Conservative control since my party won the election on 3 May. The Conservatives now control that council with a small majority and they have taken over from the hung council that was responsible for the administration of the borough's affairs for the past four years.

I have great sympathy with my right hon. Friend for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) who described the problems that the London borough of Brent faces with a hung council. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) is also aware of those problems. During the four years that Hillingdon was run by a hung council, the mayor and the deputy mayor chaired all the committees of the council, but they did not vote. That arrangement enabled the hung council to operate in a reasonable way, but it was a difficult time.

The community charge set by the former hung council of Hillingdon was £366. After the debate has been concluded tomorrow, that charge will be reduced, not just

to the cap level of £314 set by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State but to £289—a reduction of £77 per person. That is equivalent to a total expenditure revenue of £136 million this year instead of the £141·7 million that would have been collected from the charge of £314.

I congratulate the leader of the council, Andrew Boff, and his colleagues on what they are trying to do. Tonight I shall explain their plans in a quiet, non-partisan manner. I believe that all who serve in local government do a difficult job and they need to carry out their duties not only with courage, but with sensitivity and consideration. That is the hallmark of a good local authority.

I am in no doubt that the election result in the borough of Hillingdon was due in large part to the promise of the Conservative group to reduce the community charge by £77 per head. That observation is based on my experience of knocking on many doors on the group's behalf during the election campaign. I am in no doubt that when the people of Hillingdon voted they had in mind the level of community charge with which they might have been faced and the level of charge offered to them by the Conservatives.

It is important to note how Hillingdon is achieving the savings to enable it to reduce its community charge by £77. It is carrying through a new management philosophy which gives the managers freedom to manage without political interference. It also gives them a budget target that is under their control. The council has also streamlined the entire decision-making machinery and abolished more than 50 working parties and sub-committees set up by the former hung council. In short, it is cutting bureaucracy. It will have fewer committees, produce fewer reports and it will get on with the job. The new council agendas are punchy and slim and they do not need half a Brazilian rain forest.

By introducing performance management—a major exercise designed to tease out what is needed to deliver a quality service at a price Hillingdon residents are prepared to pay—the new council is determined to succeed.

What people can afford to pay is an important consideration. Whatever level of service individuals may like, at the end of the day they must pay for it. There is a limit to what people can be expected to pay through the community charge, the rates or any other system that the House cares to devise. It should be a high priority of every local authority to deliver its services at a price that people can afford to pay.

Ms. Primarolo: I am sure that we all agree that services should be delivered in the most efficient way, at minimum cost, to maximise service delivery. The hon. Gentleman has mentioned bureaucracy, and it is worth considering Avon county council, which has been poll tax-capped. Its education department's staff complement is 15·7 per cent. below the average for its family of local authorities. That council has done just what the hon. Gentleman has suggested, but it has ended up being poll tax-capped on its service delivery. It has cut its bureaucracy, but it has still been capped.

Mr. Shersby: It is not easy to compare one local authority with another. My local authority may operate on a different base from that of the authority that the hon. Lady represents.

In the past four years in the borough of Hillingdon there has been a proliferation of committees and working parties of one kind or another, which all cost money in office work and time. It is legitimate for a new council to address such arrangements if it is seeking to achieve economies.

Under the present standard spending assessment for Hillingdon, it will not be possible for the council to reduce the community charge without changing the level of services provided to its residents. I am in no doubt that, when people voted in the elections on 3 May they realised that a lower community charge would mean a change in the level of some of the services provided. With a more realistic standard spending assessment for Hillingdon and other outer-London boroughs it would be possible to avoid further service cuts in the future. *[Interruption.]* I do not know whether Opposition Members are having difficulty hearing me, but I am certainly having difficulty in making myself heard. I hope that they will have the courtesy to listen to me as I listened to them. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Shersby: It is important to describe to the House the problems that borough councillors face when dealing with the sensitive matter of education. My borough of Hillingdon has decided to seek quality in education because that is what parents want above all else. Councillors have decided that, where there is an over-provision of school places due to the demographic changes in London, it will be necessary for them to face up squarely to the issue of school closures, but only after the widest possible consultation. The council will then plough the savings back into the provision of quality education. Despite the reduction in the community charge, the borough intends to spend another £1 million on education to raise quality provision. I am sure that my colleagues will note that with interest. That policy may lead to job reductions, but it will not lead to the loss of teaching posts in the front line. Hillingdon is pursuing quality education, and an additional £1 million is being spent on the service without making teachers in the front line redundant. I am told that sixth-form sizes are insufficient to make possible the teaching of a cost-effective range of subjects.

The council is exploring the idea of setting up self-managing community trusts, to be managed by managers and the local community. Hillingdon has comprehensive social services provision. The budget for the social services department will be reduced by £2·5 million and the council expects to hold expenditure at that lower level next year. It has undertaken this difficult task with much care and sensitivity, but it will become more difficult if Parliament continues to lay additional burdens on local government without providing additional resources. There will probably be some job losses in social services, but such facts must be faced if the community charge is to be set at a level that people can afford.

Administration services in the leisure department are being organised on an internal market principle similar to the local management of schools. Managers will decide what services they need, and they will be able to use their budgets to decide how to achieve the best value for money. Some people say to me, "I am quite sure that Hillingdon must be slashing library services," but there will be no change in library provision. Throughout a range of services, competition and streamlined management are

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being applied and income is being increased to make as many services as possible self-financing; car parking is one example.

As with other London local authorities, the future spending plans of Hillingdon, which is an outer-London borough, will depend on the level of the standard spending assessment. The standard spending assessment for Hillingdon is £718 per head. Other London boroughs did much better than Hillingdon, despite the fact that they are similar in character. For example, the London borough of Ealing receives £969, Waltham Forest £1,002, the London borough of Brent, which is represented by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), £1,008. Haringey £1,181 and Newham £1,223.

They are all outer-London boroughs, and when my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate I hope that he will explain why there should be such a discrepancy between the standard spending assessments of outer-London boroughs that are similar in character and which, in several cases, adjoin each other. I hope that, when we consider the standard spending assessment for next year there will be better synergy between outer-London boroughs and that they will all feel that they are getting a similar deal, rather than there being a scale by which a borough such as mine receives substantially less than Ealing or Waltham Forest. By what yardstick are such decisions made?

Those questions must be answered. There must be a careful examination of how the assessment is made, and assessments of outer-London boroughs must be much more understandable. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, who had a distinguished career in local government before coming to this place, will apply his mind to that problem.

I can report that one borough has reduced its community charge, but will deliver a good-quality service at a level that people can afford to pay.

8.33 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Many Conservative Members have openly attacked councils in their areas. Most of their comments were pretty distressing. By attacking local politicians who are trying to deliver services as best they can, given the strictures to which local government has been subject since 1979, they are saying, "We agree with all the cuts that have been made. We do not mind that services have deteriorated. If we can do a little more to worsen the position by using the House of Commons to attack councillors, that is what we shall do."

The Secretary of State has spoken of bleeding stumps, and when he tried once again to convince the House that millions of pounds of cuts can be made—councils have been forced to make such cuts for the past 10 years—without harming services, he was not telling the truth. For proof of that, he need look no further than the Her Majesty's inspectorate report, "Standards in Education", which was published in May. It deals with services and the effect of cuts in education over the past 10 years. The Government cleverly manipulated the media and they misrepresented the position, but the report states clearly that huge damage has been done to the education service and that it will take much money and time to put it right. If I was not conscious of the time, I could give many examples of what has happened to people who need our help but who have been the victims of cuts in social services in the past 10 years.

My council, Calderdale, was formed in 1974 and it covers only two constituencies—Calder Valley and my constituency of Halifax. It is a nice area that has been badly hit by what has happened to manufacturing. The council has been hung for most of the time since 1974. Last year, the Labour group, by the casting vote of the mayor, took control. This year, we learned just before the local authority elections that we would be capped. We received a clear message from the electorate, even though they were offered in a leaflet the Tory bribe of £50 off the poll tax if they voted Conservative. The leaflet contained many inaccuracies, including one that bordered on racism and had to be withdrawn. The electorate were offered that clear bribe in May, but their message was, "We are not interested. We are interested in maintaining services." The Labour group took overall control for the first time, with a majority of four seats. The hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) rightly said that the local press ran a straightforward campaign of "Would you like £50 off your poll tax?", to which of course, everbody said, "Yes, we would." It did not say, "Would you like this school to close, or so many home helps to be cut or so many people to be put on the unemployment register?"

It seems to people in Calderdale that we are being punished for doing exactly what the Government have asked. Despite the cuts since 1979, we are the fastest growing council in Yorkshire and Humberside. We have had some excellent economic achievements. We have had the backing of Business in the Community and the Civic Trust as we have diversified from manufacturing. The council's response to the decline in the traditional industries has been excellent. It has tried to work with local business and we have had the patronage of the Prince of Wales, who has visited the area four times.

As recently as 30 March, the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), praised Calderdale's work in partnership with local industry and its efforts to attract tourists. He indicated that more cash might be made available. He said:

> "Every time I visit Calderdale I notice that it has improved. I have nothing but praise for the local council and the Rural Development Commission which has been able to work in partnership with the private sector."

Nothing could be clearer than that.

There is no question but that Calderdale has problems: chronic low pay compared to the rest of the country; a growing elderly and dependent population; and manufacturing has been hit again since Christmas. I remind the hon. Member for Calder Valley that more than 600 jobs in manufacturing were lost in our constituencies in 1990—mostly due to the Government's high interest rate policy.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I am listening to my hon. Friend's speech with great interest. It is important to place on record the fact that she was the first person to intervene during the Secretary of State's speech, when she asked him a simple question—why do the people in our constituencies, through the democracy of the ballot box, continue to support what their local authorities are endeavouring to do in the face of great odds? The Secretary of State said that he would answer during his speech, and he invited an intervention from any hon. Member in the House if he did

not. I have been sitting here since 3.30 pm and, to my recollection, the right hon. Gentleman evaded that question entirely. The policies adopted by our local authorities have been put to the test of democratic scrutiny through the ballot box, and the people in the area supported their councils.

Mrs. Mahon: My hon. Friend is right: the Minister ducked the question, and I suspect that he will continue to duck it.

The Minister referred to Calderdale council's spending as excessive. If that were merely an untruth it would be bad enough, but it is absolutely daft—that is a good word, and we use it regularly in Yorkshire. There has been no excessive spending by Calderdale council. It gave more than £1 million in grants to the voluntary sector because social services were so badly provided for. Rated by money allocated to primary or secondary education, Calderdale falls within the bottom 10 per cent. of all local authorities. Commenting on poll tax capping, primary school heads said:

"We believe that education is seriously under-funded in Calderdale. The effects of poll tax capping will be intolerable".

One of the reasons why we should have been made a special case—Minister after Minister has accepted this, but it is worth repeating—is the problem of Calderdale's highways budget. In 1985-86, Calderdale's budget, as a percentage above grant-related expenditure assessment, was 0·5 per cent.—hardly profligate. The situation changed dramatically in 1986-87, following the abolition of the county councils. Calderdale's spending in that year exceeded GREA by 9·4 per cent. mainly because of the inadequacy of the new highways GREA.

Before 1986-87, the county council spent more than 14 per cent. of its highway budget in Calderdale, although its percentage of the county council's rateable value was only 7·7 per cent. That meant that, up to 31 March 1986, ratepayers in Calderdale paid 7·7 per cent. of the cost of the highways service, based on rateable value, and received almost twice as much in return. To maintain the same level of service following abolition of the county council, Calderdale ratepayers had to pay almost double the previous amount.

I challenge the hon. Member for Calder Valley with the fact that all three parties on the hung council recognised this and realised that more money was desperately needed for the highways budget. The reason why the county council gave Calderdale extra money was quite simple—approximately half the land above the snowline in the area covered by the county council is in Calderdale. We needed the money, and the council recognised that simple fact.

Spending on highways is particularly relevant to the council's budget. Various Ministers have been absolutely convinced of that argument. Lord Jenkin conceded the argument, as did the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) when he came on a visit; so did the right hon. Members for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), and for Brent, North (Sir. R. Boyson), the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) and the right hon. and learned Member for Folkstone and Hythe (Mr. Howard). At different times, they all conceded that we needed extra money in the highways budget, but they have never been able to translate support into a solution.

By 1989, the council's excess spending compared to its GREA had increased to 14·4 per cent. In 1990-91, GREAs were replaced by standard spending assessments, and the council lost ground. I want to know—I hope that I get an answer—why our percentage increase was only 4·1 when the metropolitan average was 7·7, the national average was 9·9 and the increase for inner London from GREA to SSA was 25·7 per cent. A huge political fiddle took place. It also took place in other authorities, but I am speaking now for Calderdale.

If our SSA had increased by the same amount as the metropolitan average and our GREA had been similar to the old county council spending, or if the SSA had increased by the same amount as the national average, we would not have been capped. The poor SSA for Calderdale results in capping. It has nothing to do with hard-working councillors, many of whom would have been disgusted and sickened by Conservative Members' attacks. Many councillors suffer in their private lives and at work, as they lose promotion because they are doing the job of councillor for nothing. Conservative Members who have huge salaries and are paid huge mileage costs when they drive big cars attack people who are trying to do their jobs in difficult circumstances.

Local Tories and the hon. Member for Calder Valley have worked and conspired with the Government to cap Calderdale. I remind the House that the poll tax in Calderdale was only £297—the 47th lowest in the country—and with the £50 cap it is the 4th lowest. It is hardly a high poll tax. Tories have conspired to harm the elderly, the disabled, the very young and the educational chances of the next generation, and they should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. They have given us no details of where cuts should be made. They have said that they can come from administration or from this or that central budget.

Last night, the council in my area authority met to discuss the cuts. I know that councillors will do their best to protect the people whom I have just mentioned. Yes, they will sell off assets and do everything that they can. It is nonsense to say that we own a football team but make no money from it. It pays rent, and we also attract huge grants. If Northern Ballet comes to the area, it will bring a lot of money to the town. If manufacturing is to be wiped out, we must diversify.

I make no apology for local authorities trying to make some money. Local Tories and the hon. Member for Calder Valley have to tell us exactly where we should make cuts. From which voluntary sector will they take money? Will they go for the under-fives pre-school playgroups, the sports grants, or the women's refuge? Those are the sort of cuts that they are asking us to make. It is nonsense to suggest taking away £7·5 million from a council like Calderdale, which has nothing left to cut, and to say that it will not harm services. Of course it will.

The Minister said that everything that he was doing was legal, and he had had it tested in the courts. It might be legal, but it is certainly not moral.

8.48 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I trust that the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) will forgive me if I do not follow her remarks. As I progress through my speech, it will become apparent that we are poles apart on the issue that we are debating.

The backdrop to tonight's debate has occurred over the past six months, when there has been a cynical and mean attempt to confuse and upset members of the public on the

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introduction of the community charge. To add insult to injury, a number of local authorities have cynically sought to impose on the local populations that they are meant to represent unacceptably high community charges, with the purely political and cynical objective of embarrassing the Government.

Those local authorities know that the introduction of a new system of local government finance will create confusion. There are always teething problems with major changes in a system, and some local authorities have maximised those problems by imposing high community charges in the hope—in the first year, the not unexpected hope—that the Government will receive most of the blame. It is disgusting that local authorities should use innocent people as the weapon by which to gain votes and score political brownie points against the Government. That is the background against which we are debating the orders.

I support the orders, because there is a need to restrain some local authorities from excessive spending and to protect charge payers from excessive budgets. Capping this year will reduce the bills of about 4 million people by amounts between £26 and £99 per head. That is genuine aid which those who benefit from it will welcome.

Opinion polls show that 53 per cent. of voters of all political parties support capping. Perhaps surprisingly for Opposition Members, 43 per cent. of professed Labour voters support capping. Capping is necessary in the early years in order to help establish the principle of accountability. Many local authorities have not yet had to face their electorate despite having introduced a community charge, but they will have to do so next year.

I welcome the Government's commitment that, if necessary, they will cap excessive spenders next year as well. We will bear, as we have heard during this debate — it has been amplified in the national press, on radio and on television during the past few months—the accusation that capping will mean cuts in essential services, job losses and hardship for the less well-off. Capping certainly can mean all those things if the local authorities concerned are determined to maximise its impact by picking on the most politically sensitive issues and cutting them in order to embarrass the Government and to discredit the system. That is completely wrong and unfair. It is particularly cruel to cause hardship to people least in a position to protect themselves. I urge local authorities faced with capping to think hard and seriously before embarking on such a course.

When discussing the Labour party's case against charge capping it is worth recalling what a leader of Camden council said in 1987. The charges against capping are undermined simply because he had the decency to spell out the consequences of earlier policies. He said:

"Since 1982 our staffing has increased by 2,000 people and we have regraded thousands of staff upwards since 1985. Yet no member of the Labour Group can pretend that services are 2,000 staff better or x per cent. growth better."

That is the sad thing about this exercise. People face greatly increased community charges, but, to add insult to injury, they will not receive one iota of improved services, new services or better services. That is unforgiveable.

I was surprised and disappointed to discover an omission from the orders. A number of local authorities should be included in the list of capped authorities, but they are barred from being so included because of sections 100 and 101 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. That prevents the inclusion in the orders of those district or borough councils with spending of less than £15 million. That is a weakness and an anomaly. Had some of them been capped, it would have given additional protection to others who are being hammered by their local authorities.

My local authority of Chelmsford is one of those authorities. It is not Conservative-controlled. Essex county council is not included in the orders that we are debating and there was no chance this year of its ever being considered for inclusion, because its spending is within 2 per cent. of the SSA set down by the Government—one of the best records in the country. One would have liked to see it dead on the Government's SSA, or even below it, but unfortunately that will not happen this year because this is the first year that we have emerged from a hung council, which has allowed us to get to grips with some of the more profligate spending by the local authority in the past. But the borough council has cynically increased its expenditure above the SSA by a staggering 42 per cent.

As I said earlier, there will be no improved services for the people paying that community charge. We are having to pick up the financial burdens caused by past mistakes and unwelcome and unwarranted expenditure. We are having to spend more than £1 million this year on a leisure centre as a result of capital charges and losses incurred when the council was controlled by the Liberals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot debate authorities that are not the subject of capping orders.

Mr. Burns: I understand. I am sorry if I strayed a little. I was attempting to use the example of Chelmsford to draw attention to what is happening not a million miles down the road in Labour-controlled Basildon.

The people of Basildon have been stung—there is no stronger word that I can use—by the Labour-controlled council, which proposes to increase its expenditure by a staggering 194 per cent. above SSA. Many people in Basildon will welcome the orders, because they will seek to restore some financial responsibility to that sad local authority, and to save some of its community charge payers from its excesses.

What is especially depressing is that, in the first year of the community charge, Basildon council has snow-ploughed the whole thing by coming top of the league in exceeding SSA. Sadly, this is only part of a long, sad record: under the rating system, the council was rate-capped in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88—and, in order not to be left out, in 1988-89 as well.

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Gentleman talks about a long, sad record, but was not Basildon council returned with an overwhelming Labour majority only two and a half months ago? Surely the people of Basildon have chosen what they want in terms of their local authority and what their local priorities are to be. Who are the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues to say to them nay?

Mr. Burns: I appreciate that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) is sensitive on the issue, as he lives in London. However, I do not suppose that he has been to Basildon for months, if not years.

In the local elections in Basildon in May, the Conservatives won two seats from the Liberal alliance, as did the Labour party. What is probably welcome to

Labour Members—but not to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn)—is that, sadly, the alliance is fading away in Essex.

Mr. Boateng: Who runs Basildon?

Mr. Burns: Basildon is run by a Labour-controlled council: that is a fact of life. In the May elections, however, the Conservatives increased their share of the vote and won two seats, even if they were not won from the Labour party. Besides, as the hon. Member for Brent, South will appreciate, Basildon contains not only the Basildon parliamentary constituency but other parliamentary constituencies. I suggest that he examines the results for the Basildon parliamentary constituency: if he does so, he may not smile quite as broadly as he does now.

I appreciate Labour Members' embarrassment. It must be embarrassing to have a record of soaring local government expenditure, resulting from the profligacy of local authorities. Those authorities have met their match tonight, because the Government have not shrunk from taking the necessary action and capping those with the greatest excesses.

I would hate Opposition Members to escape before learning more of the horror stories of Basildon. The people who live there must live with their council day in, day out, and see their money frittered away through expenditure on items that a majority of them do not want. They deplore the way in which their money is being spent.

Mr. O'Brien: I want to put the record straight. The SSA for Basildon is less now than the amount that the council was spending 10 years ago. Does the hon. Gentleman think that that is correct?

Mr. Burns: The hon. Gentleman must bear in mind that the people of Basildon are not amused by the fact that the local authority sought to increase its expenditure this year by 194 per cent. above its SSA. As a result of capping—which will be warmly welcomed there—there will be a reduction of £4·2 million this year. That will help Basildon's hard-pressed community charge payers; more importantly, I hope that it will be a warning to the local authority that next year the Government will not be prepared to sit idly by and allow the people of Basildon to be ripped off again. If the local authority seeks to abuse its responsibility and increase its expenditure substantially next year, the Government will have the decency and the courage to take effective action again to stop a repetition of what it sought to do this year.

We should examine some of the extraordinary ways in which the local authority in Basildon is seeking to spend its money. [HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it."] I understand the embarrassment of Opposition Members, but I urge them to keep quiet and listen. First, they may learn something; secondly, I shall be able to complete my speech somewhat more quickly than I will if they are barracking.

Four years ago the council borrowed an excessive amount to build a civic centre, a showpiece for local government in Basildon. Sadly, it is the only civic centre in the country that does not have a council chamber. The council borrowed £12 million to build Town Gate theatre and money to build sport centres. Such facilities do not make money and are an additional burden on the community charge payer.

The council is now having to pay the reckoning because it has borrowed so excessively that it is now burdened with repayments. Once again it miscalculated. It prayed for the election of a Labour Government in 1987 who would have been able to bail it out when its fiscal irresponsibility caught up with it. As we know, that did not happen and we were re-elected for a third term with a majority of more than 100. The council now has to reap the problems that it sowed.

When the community charge is firmly established the philosophy of accountability will start to work and profligate authorities will be hit. People are not prepared to be ripped off and will take action through the ballot box to get rid of authorities that do not meet the needs of their people by providing a decent service at a reasonable cost.

I warmly welcome the orders and would like to see more local authorities included and a change in the law. I trust that this example coupled with the results at the ballot box next year and in subsequent years will show that the Government mean business about getting local authority expenditure under control and making sure that councils meet the needs of their people. This will ensure that charges are not excessive and bring responsibility back to local government.

9.7 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I shall not respond to the comments about Basildon by the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), who made an excessively long speech. I am sure that the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) will speak about his constituency some day—if the hon. Gentleman permits him to do so.

The Government's decision to charge-cap Barnsley metropolitan borough council is harsh and undemocratic and removes from the poll tax any notion of accountability. The authority is not profligate or inefficient, yet it will lose about £10 million from its budget in what is left of this financial year. Barnsley set a poll tax figure of about £329, which is lower than the figure set by 250 other authorities, yet it is being charge-capped.

I shall refer to Audit Commission figures which show that Barnsley is a low-spending authority. I challenge the Secretary of State or the Minister of State to point to any aspect of that authority's spending which is profligate or inefficient. Members of the authority met the Secretary of State and the Minister of State earlier this year and so far they have not been told of any service that is overprovided or inefficient.

The Secretary of State has stumbled upon a dubious method of capping only Labour-controlled authorities. He does so by comparing poll tax levels with the standard spending assessments. Capping has been achieved by imposing extremely low SSAs on various authorities, but those assessments are so diverse and unfair as to be totally meaningless and unrealistic. Barnsley is supposed to provide the same level of service as authorities such as Manchester, but we are allowed to spend only half the amount of cash in doing so.

I want to dispel the myth that only high-spending authorities are being charge-capped. The capping criteria take into account only the Government's idea of what an authority should spend, and then look at the percentage poll tax level above that. That throws any idea of accountability out of the window, because it does not take account what an authority might need or what its circumstances are. The needs of the authority and the area do not conform to the formula that the Minister has used

[Mr. Eric Illsley]

to allocate the SSA. I am sure that he is aware of that and does not need me to tell him again. Our problems—lack of economic development, low educational standards and achievement, decline of industry, and the loss of jobs in the mining industry—have all been explained to the Minister, and all have been ignored.

When it set its budget this year, Barnsley budgeted to spend £846 per adult, when the average figure for metropolitan districts is £915. Bradford has set its budget 19 per cent. higher than Barnsley, but has not been capped. From 1983 to 1990, Barnsley's assessed need, on grant-related expenditure assessments or on means assessment, has varied between 70 and 80 per cent. of the average level for England. That is not 70 per cent. of the highest, so for the past seven years we have been below the needs assessment of the rest of the country.

Over that period, our needs assessment has risen by 62 per cent. while the needs assessment in Bradford has risen by 93 per cent. If we had increased our assessment by that much we would not have come anywhere near the capping criteria. Over the past year, the needs assessment has risen by 2 per cent., taking account of the current rate of inflation. That is a ridiculous increase, and the Minister knows that, if that needs assessment had been increased properly, our poll tax would have been reasonable, and we should not have been capped.

Of the 418 other authorities, 359 had bigger increases in their means assessment than had Barnsley. Why does Barnsley have to provide all the services at a lower cost than other areas? Why do we have to spend only £394 when other authorities can spend £414? Why is it that we can spend only £86 per adult a year on social services when other authorities can spend £101? On highways, in an area with mining subsidence, we can spend only £37 per adult per year when the rest of the country can spend £44. For all services taken together, Barnsley can spend £669 per adult when the average is £836. The needs estimate for Manchester is £1,170, for Liverpool £1,068, for Birmingham £1,060 and for Barnsley £669. Why is our assessment so far below that of these other authorities, when we have to provide the same level of services?

I shall now set out the needs of the authority. Barnsley's record on education is one of the worst in the country, and always has been. I have fought to change it, as did my predecessor, and the local authority is also fighting to change it. There is a traditional culture in Barnsley and the surrounding area of a low take-up of post-16 education. A new tertiary college has just been created. As a result of poll tax capping, £1 million has to come out of its budget before it has even opened. In the past, when lads left school they went straight into jobs in the mining and glass industries. Both industries have vanished. By working in those industries and attending the local technical college, they obtained their post-16 education.

Our costs for special education are the highest in the country. We have the highest pupil-teacher ratio in the cluster of authorities known as the Webber-Craig authorities. Only three authorities spend less than Barnsley, on books and equipment. There is one computer for every 50 children in the country as a whole. In Barnsley, the figure is one computer for every 70 children. My authority has no modern language teaching assistants. There are 26 in the authority represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). The figures are there for all to see. They are not my figures which I have plucked out of the air. They have been provided by the Audit Commission and other bodies.

As for economic development, unemployment in Barnsley is still double the national average. Since 1983 we have lost 20,000 mining jobs. British Coal's educational provision has also gone. We are desperately struggling to regenerate the area, but if we cut the provision for education, which is what we are being asked to do by slashing £10 million from the education budget, we shall be unable to do so. Two thirds of the authority's budget is spent on education.

Barnsley's original poll tax figure was £329—not terribly excessive. Shortly afterwards, Barnsley went to the polls so that the Secretary of State's ideas on accountability could be tested. There were 22 seats to be contested; nine were unopposed; three had completely new candidates. That was the highest number of unopposed seats for the past four years. The rest were held by Labour. We increased our share of the vote in 1990, compared with 1986, from 71 to 76 per cent. In five seats, the majority was increased by more than 50 per cent. The number of votes cast for each Labour candidate increased by 35 per cent. while the votes cast for Conservative candidates decreased by 19 per cent. The people of Barnsley overwhelmingly endorsed the poll tax figure of £329.

Barnsley is not a high-spending authority. We accepted the authority's poll tax figure. The council is not profligate; it does not spend money on this, that and the other. However, an artificially low needs assessment and an artificially low standard spending assessment have been imposed on Barnsley. Local authority accountability, to which the Secretary of State referred, has been transferred to him because he has taken the decision to cap Barnsley.

Some people in Barnsley believe that the poll tax cut will be good for them, but it will lead to reduced services. Moreover, their poll tax bills will not go down all that much. The Secretary of State will eventually have to concede the shortfall in poll tax collection. The authorities will have to ask the Secretary of State for more money to meet that shortfall. The Minister shakes his head, but the shortfall in poll tax collection is greater than the authorities budgeted for when the poll tax was first set.

The cuts that will be necessary in my authority will be as bad as any of those that have already been cited by other hon. Members. I shall refer to only a few. Each week my authority meets in an attempt to phase in certain cuts in the time that it has left to do so. The first cut took £4·9 million out of the budget, mainly for education. Even swimming lessons for primary school children are being cut. The cost of school meals went up on the first day the cap was announced. School transport has been reduced to the absolute minimum. All 24 teachers at the schools' music centre in Barnsley have been made redundant. The nine local branch libraries are due to close. One of them is on a council estate with an unemployment level of 50 per cent. Old people's homes will be closed.

Mr. Stott: Ask the Minister about that. Is that leisure centre mentality?

Mr. Illsley: I could talk to the Minister until I was blue in the face, but he does not want to listen.

The next phase of cuts will involve £6·6 million. There has been no recruitment in Barnsley for the past few years.

One Conservative Member referred to the number of job vacancies in Avon. There are no job vacancies in my part of the world. There will be redundancies among manual workers such as gardeners in the parks. There will be redundancies among teachers. All those cuts must be made in the current year's expenditure.

Joint ventures are at risk. Barnsley has a proposed joint venture with Costain. I hope that it can find the funding for that because it is needed to regenerate the area. It is unfortunate that when Barnsley wants to borrow money, through the usual channels, the City does not want to know because it does not want to lend money to a charge-capped authority. It is worried that the authority will not have the finance to repay the loan. That is what is happening in an area with double the national average unemployment.

Charge capping has removed any vestige of accountability from the poll tax. It is undemocratic and harsh. It will rebound on the Government at the next election, when accountability will be important—but that accountability will be placed at the Secretary of State's door, not at the door of local government.

9.23 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am pleased to speak in this debate because I have been deeply involved in local government for a long time. I was a councillor in Haringey for nine years and I was an organiser for the National Union of Public Employees. During the past 10 to 15 years, there has been an unremitting attack on local government and on the ability of elected local authorities to make decisions that deeply affect the lives of people in their communities.

I represent an inner-city constituency. It has many housing, health and social services problems. It is not unusual for the weekly constituency surgeries held by myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) to last for four or five hours. In the main, people have problems with housing and with community care for elderly relatives. Those problems emanate largely from a lack of sufficient funding either in the national health service or in local government.

Unless more resources are put into local government and unless there is real support in solving the deep social problems in inner London, there will, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and others have said, be a whirlwind.

We are now debating, in the middle of July, a cut of £74·9 million in the budgets of a number of London local authorities, which must be made in the current year. What chance is there for any local authority to plan its expenditure, given that, three months later, we are debating cuts in budgets that were discussed last December, January and February? What possible consultation can there be with trade unions, local community organisations or anybody else, given that seven months later we are discussing how that can be done?

We are facing a serious constitutional position. The Government are keen to claim that they are concerned about promoting democracy around the world, yet here in Britain, we have the real vestige of the unitary state and elected local authorities cannot make decisions on matters affecting their own areas because central Government are to cap their expenditure, and because central Government control their expenditure in the first place. On top of that, over the past 11 years, the proportion of central Government finance for local authorities—compared to that raised by local taxation—has decreased, while the proportion raised by local taxation has increased a great deal.

Added to that, we have had the imposition of the poll tax—the most blatantly unfair and wrong form of taxation anywhere in the world. That is the heart of the debate, and the first priority of an incoming Labour Government will be to get rid of the poll tax.

For the past 10 years, the Conservative Government have forced privatisation on local authority services. They claim that it is efficient. In the health service, privatisation has resulted in dirty hospitals, dirty wards, and inadequate standards of health care. In local government, privatisation has meant that there are people on the dole who ought to be working, dirty school kitchens, unswept streets, uncollected refuse and private contractors making a killing by employing a small number of people where many used to be employed. Those are the effects of privatisation.

The Government blithely make allegations about waste in local authorities. There have been plenty of lectures from Conservative Members—who presumably have now gone to dinner—about councillors' profligacy in travelling first class by rail. We should remember that every hon. Member can travel first class if he so wishes and that hon. Members receive the most generous car allowance given to anybody anywhere in the country. The right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson)—the former Chancellor of the Exchequer—is, I believe, earning about £500,000 a year, although earning is not the right word because nobody earns that; the right hon. Gentleman receives it, merely because he is a former Minister.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend should tell the House the whole truth and nothing but the truth. When the Prime Minister came to office in 1979, she replaced the Rover that Jim Callaghan had with two Daimlers—one for herself and one for her husband to lie on his back and sup his gin in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with charge capping.

Mr. Corbyn: It is not directly connected with charge capping, and I do not want to get away from the subject, but I think that it is fair to contrast the profligacy with which former Cabinet Ministers are paid and the way in which Lambeth, Liverpool, and Clay Cross councillors have been denied civic rights for standing up for their communities—and now a further surcharge of £200,000 is to be imposed on Lambeth councillors who were trying to defend the services available to the people of Lambeth. That is the contrast that exists in Britain today. That is the hypocrisy and sleaze surrounding British politics.

My local authority has been told that it must cut £4 million from its budget in six months. In reality, that cut will be double the £4 million figure, because it has to be achieved quickly. It can be achieved only by serious harm to people in that community. However, at exactly the same time, Islington is told that it must contribute to the safety net that is applicable to other authorities in London. That means that Islington is to suffer a cut. My authority will experience job losses and a lack of services that are desperately needed, while at the same time contributing to the Government's bribe to the voters in Wandsworth. That

[Mr. Corbyn]

cannot be right. It cannot be right that Islington is being cut while Wandsworth is benefiting from a subsidy paid by the poll tax payers of Islington.

Islington has incurred expenditure of £1·2 million on the poll tax, with £7·4 million on capital controls and £4·8 million because of the ring fencing of the housing revenue account, and it has to pay £1·6 million to the London residuary body for the break-up of the Inner London education authority, yet it has been told that inflation is running at only 4 per cent. When I buy things from shops in Islington and when the council buys things, the inflation rate is 10 per cent., not 4 per cent. Whoever dreamed that the inflation rate is 4 per cent. is not living in the real world. The safety net contribution is £41 per head. All those are extra charges.

The housing revenue account has been ring-fenced to prevent any so-called "subsidy" to council housing. However, when we asked last week that the community care budget should be ring-fenced to protect community care clients when the services are transferred to the health authorities, we were told, "No, that cannot be done." We are seeing the greatest hypocrisy and double standards.

I hope that the debate results at least in the public understanding that we are witnessing the destruction of local democracy and local communities' ability to make their own decisions. We have a highly centralised state, a highly centralised media and a highly centralised Government who, in essence, are dictating to local authorities throughout the country.

People are elected to serve on local authorities because they wish to do something to improve their communities and because, for example, they want more nurseries and libraries and more people taking advantage of post-16 education. Local people are prepared to vote for that. I remind the Government of the election result in my borough—we have 51 Labour councillors and only one opposition councillor. We achieved a large swing to Labour at recent elections, despite years of articles in *The Sun* which vilified individual councillors and attacked the authority. We have also had rate capping and poll tax capping continuously for several years. The people of the borough have expressed their view clearly. They believe in a high level of collectively provided services to cope with the needs of a deprived inner-city area.

The Government have refused to fund the borough to the level that it needs. Local people have been prepared to vote to maintain those levels of services, but the axe is now being wielded by the Secretary of State for the Environment and his friends. I hope that the people of my borough and every other charge-capped authority will realise that the real culprits, the people who are really making the cuts, are that smug lot across the Chamber who have been busy denying people their needs.

It will fall to a future Government—I hope—to restore the level of central Government funding to local authorities and to remove the obscenity of local councillors being removed from office, not for fraud or corruption, but merely for trying to defend their local services. If the same standards were applied to the former Secretary of State for the Environment and to his spending on legal charges when trying to defend himself—or to many other Ministers—there would not be many ex-Ministers in the House because they would all be debarred from office. We cannot allow that system of double standards to continue.

I want to see real democracy in this country. That means giving local authorities the right to be elected to provide the services that the local people want and giving them the ability to collect the tax to pay for it.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Does my hon. Friend know that there has never been a debate in the 20th century either in the House or in Committee on the bankruptcy provision that debars people from local government service, which was used against the Clay Cross and other councillors? The bankruptcy provisions affecting public office are a 19th-century idea, associated with a privileged and propertied electorate for whom bankruptcy has some meaning. There is no sense in the word "bankruptcy" for the ordinary working class people who are involved in local government——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Once again we are straying from the motion.

Mr. Corbyn: I do not want to stray from the terms of the motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but earlier we heard some wild allegations from the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) about former councillors who were debarred from office in Clay Cross. He made the monstrous claim that they were sacked for corruption. In fact, the individual concerned was debarred from office for standing up against the Housing Act 1971 and was dismissed from his job for being a shop steward, active in his union.

I do not want to dwell on that, but I should like it to be absolutely clear on the record that Opposition Members oppose the orders. We do so absolutely because we want to protect the services that are so vital to the people of our communities. We also want something better. We want a nursery place for every child whose parents want it. We want to see libraries well stocked, schools well provided for, housing estates properly maintained and, above all, houses built so that the social crisis in London can be tackled by proper allocation of resources. We do not want tax cuts for the rich, which is the only philosophy that the Government understand.

9.34 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): Mr. Speaker said at the beginning of the debate that it would conclude at 12 o'clock tonight. It is now just after 9.30 and there are four Conservative Members in the Chamber. That is indicative of the way in which the Government have dealt with poll tax capping. My hon. Friends the Members for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) and for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett), and others of my hon. Friends who have spoken, said more in their 10-minute speeches about the real issues than the Secretary of State for the Environment said in an hour-long speech. He did not address the problem that he has created.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): The hon. Gentleman should recognise that Conservative Members who are affected by the capping proposals have spoken in the debate and that Conservative Members who are not affected have not attempted to speak. They recognise the tremendous pressure on the time of the House and wish to give an

opportunity to Opposition Members affected by the proposals to speak. The hon. Gentleman would rightly have complained if Conservative Members who are not affected had trespassed on the time of Labour Members who are affected by the proposals.

Mr. Stott: I hear what the Minister says. None the less, if Conservative Members regard the poll tax as the flagship of their election manifesto and if they support the capping procedure that the Secretary of State proposes, there should have been more passive support on the Benches behind him.

Mr. Blunkett: Perhaps one reason why the Minister is correct to say that time needs to be given to hon. Members who represent constituencies where the authority has been poll tax capped is that the overwhelming majority—not 100 per cent.—of capped authorities happen to be represented by Labour Members who are struggling to protect services and jobs in their constituencies.

Mr. Stott: My hon. Friend guessed what I was about to say. We have all made that point this evening. I need not dwell on the bogus and spurious formula that the Secretary of State has cooked up to determine the standard spending assessment. It allows him to poll tax-cap authorities which he believes have been profligate. Surprise, surprise, every authority that has been capped under the formula is Labour-controlled even though some authorities controlled by other parties have set a higher poll tax than my local authority or those of my hon. Friends. Therefore, my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) is correct. We do not need to dwell on that. My hon. Friends have made precisely that point this evening.

I draw the attention of the House to a point made by the Secretary of State in his opening remarks. He spent some time telling the House that what he has done has been vindicated by the courts because they have said that it is legal. I am not surprised that that is so because the Secretary of State wrote the rules. I should have been surprised if the courts had not ruled that he had the right to cap authorities, because he wrote the script.

My authority is the only one that did not take the Secretary of State to court. We were advised by a QC that the Secretary of State had the whole game sewn up. However, there is still some concern among judges and the rest of the legal profession over the Secretary of State's action. I refer the Minister to an article in the "Justinian" column in the *Financial Times*, written by Louis Blom-Cooper, the well-known Queen's counsel:

"Information concerning actual budgeted expenditure by all (except one) local authorities was with the minister by mid-March. But notification by the minister of his designation of the local authorities to be charge-capped was delayed until the beginning of April. By that time, it was impossible for any local authority to plan its expenditure so as to avoid restriction on its community charge, simply because no local authority could know in advance what rules or principles were to be applied by the minister. Mr. Christopher Patten was well aware of the consequences late service of his notice would have on local government administration."

My hon. Friends have been making the same point all night. It was made by, among others, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). We all knew what rate capping would mean because we were told in advance, but the Secretary of State did not tell anybody in advance his intentions in respect of poll tax capping. Mr. Blom-Cooper went on:

"The Secretary of State did not inform local authorities as to the principle he was proposing to adopt before designating them as excessive spenders. No local authority could be certain as to the size of the field on which they were going to be playing, the shape of the ball, or where the goalposts would be placed."

That article is headed

"The Government moves the goalposts."

That is precisely what they did.

Wigan council spent £250,000 sending out letters indicating what the poll tax would be, but then the Secretary of State announced from the Dispatch Box in April that he intended to cap my local authority. We had already devoted considerable resources to that exercise when the Secretary of State announced that Wigan would be capped.

Why did councils in Wigan, Barnsley, Rotherham, Derby, Doncaster and Brent——

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): But not Wandsworth.

Mr. Stott: —arrive at certain conclusions as to the level of their poll tax—as did Wigan, with a figure of £372? In doing so, did they ride gung-ho over the opinions of their ratepayers? Did they arrive at those figures because they are macho lunatic councillors who want to spend on everything in sight? I have taken delegations from my local authority to the Department of the Environment at least three times, always making the point that the Department's formula for grant-related expenditure assessment is disadvantageous for my constituency. I have also said that several times to the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope).

Mr. Skinner: The one who is getting the sack.

Mr. Stott: I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that talking to the Under-Secretary of State on that subject is like watching girders rust. You could walk into the deepest recesses of the Under-Secretary's mind and you would not even get your feet wet. We have been there on at least three or four occasions. We said to him, "Minister, we do not have any immigrants in Wigan. Nor do we have a high proportion of lone-parent families Similarly, we do not have a higher than national average proportion of old people." Therefore, the calculation under GREA does not recognise or understand our real problems. The calculation is based on the prevailing social circumstances of the day, not on the economic circumstances of the day.

Wigan, like Barnsley, Rotherham and other northern constituencies, was the cauldron of the industrial revolution. Mining, textiles and engineering, all of which have declined over the years, were to be found in the area. There is not a single pit, textile factory or major engineering factory left in Wigan. The consequences of that decline are that we are left with pit tips and the pollution of the industrial revolution. We are left with environmental problems and high unemployment.

The GREA formula does not recognise those factors. It does not take into consideration the major structural and economic problems with which my constituency and others must cope.

Mr. Hardy: A few days ago, I spoke at a conference in Blackpool. I sat next to the mayor and asked him what the poll tax was in Blackpool. I discovered that it was £2

[Mr. Hardy]

higher than the poll tax in Wigan. I asked the mayor how much the council had been capped and he told me that it had not been capped. Does my hon. Friend believe that that is because Blackpool's poll tax is only £2 more than the poll tax in Wigan, or because there is a Labour-controlled authority in my hon. Friend's constituency but a Conservative one in Blackpool?

Mr. Stott: My hon. Friend has made my point. Perhaps it is not unusual for a formula to be constructed which does not catch a single Conservative-controlled authority even though their poll tax levels are much in excess of the poll tax levels set in my authority and in the constituencies of other hon. Members who have spoken tonight. *[Interruption.]* My colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench have provided me with some information. I become confused about initials. When I referred to GREA I should have referred to the standard spending assessment.

There are special problems in Wigan and in areas like it because they are old industrial areas. My authority, in the face of those problems, had to clearly outline and identify its priorities. It had to ensure that it preserved the services that it thought were necessary. As my hon. Friend's constituencies have done in the past, we had to set about the revitalisation of our area given the decline in coal, textiles and heavy engineering.

We have attracted new industry to the area. Heinz is locating its European headquarters in Wigan. Pennsylvania Glass, the Tote and the Tidy Britain Group are all setting up their headquarters in Wigan and Girobank is providing a new centre there. All that was achieved in partnership with the local authority. In addition, we have prioritised the social provision for our people, including education, schools and home helps.

We have endeavoured to protect our people against the worst ravages of a decade of Thatcherism. Does that sound like a loony council? Does that sound like a profligate one or, to quote the expression used by the Minister at recent conference, a "leisure centre mentality" council? In the past three years, a raft of Ministers have visited Wigan and they have all said what a wonderful job we have done. They all said that Wigan pier is marvellous. We have all heard the music hall jokes about Wigan pier, but since Her Majesty the Queen opened the Wigan pier centre in 1984, it has attracted nearly 2 million overseas visitors. That enterprise was designed and undertaken by the local authority.

As a result of the order, the Secretary of State has decided to reduce my council's budget by £8 million. Originally it was to be cut by £10 million, but we re-submitted our case and the Minister was magnanimous and lopped off two million quid. He and I know that that £2 million has been taken up by administration costs, and interest charges as well as by the cost of re-issuing poll tax bills to a quarter of a million people.

My hon. Friends have already outlined the problems that such reductions in budget will create. My hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) spoke about the meals-on-wheels service, old people's homes, schools and other educational provision that would be hit. All the services that we provide to our people will be damaged.

Conservatives talk about democracy and the democratic involvement of local communities. The metropolitan borough council of Wigan is made up of 72 members, 65 of whom are Labour and only two of whom are Conservative. I have the privilege of standing in this Chamber as the Labour Member for Wigan with a majority of 22,000. I do not need to be told by the Conservatives what my constituents feel.

I am glad that the Secretary of State has returned to the Chamber because we are talking not about a bleeding stump, but about real problems. On Monday a constituent came to my office. He is middle-aged and a mature student with a place at Salford university to study for a BSc. The director of education in Wigan has written to that man to say that he is sorry, but, because of charge capping and because that man is eligible only for a discretionary grant, the council is unable to pay for his three-year course. I am not talking about a bleeding stump, but a real person, Mr. John White of 7 Bramble Grove, Worsley Hall, Wigan. His life has been totally destroyed. He is unable to start his university course in September because my local authority has had to cut the money that they were to give him.

Such problems are not the responsibility of my local authority; the responsibility lies with Conservative Members and, come the next general election, they will pay for it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. If those hon. Members waiting to be called speak for about 10 minutes each, I shall be able to call all of them before midnight.

9.54 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I shall endeavour to keep to the time limit that you suggested, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad that the Secretary of State is present, because in his introduction he seemed to be fairly confident—almost acerbic—about the fact that so far the courts have found his action lawful. He was good enough to allow me to intervene and suggest that, although the courts might have found his action lawful, local authorities have been entirely justified in showing that what may be legal is not necessarily just. I hope to show that the Government's action has been utterly unjust to the point of corruption.

I used some statistics on 25 April, and I propose to repeat some of them and use two or three others. I remember telling the House that Westminster spends £1,141 per head, which the Prime Minister and her colleagues regard as prudent. Rotherham spends £820 per head, but she regards that as big spending. Unfortunately—this is the argument that the Minister must overcome, but he is not doing so in the north—Westminster receives £865 per head in Government standard spending grant, whereas Rotherham receives £188.

Rotherham must pay more because the biggest single item in its budget, as the Minister knows, is the education of children. As Rotherham will have a larger than average proportion of its population at school, whereas Westminster will have a smaller proportion, the accusation of corruption is certainly justified.

It is not only Rotherham that is entitled to be angry. We have carefully analysed the changes that accompanied the introduction of the poll tax. It has been established beyond doubt that there has been a marked and deliberate shift of resources from the areas of need. For example, changes in Government grants to local authorities cost Yorkshire and

Humberside £373·8 million this year, whereas the south-east of England—*[Interruption.]* I will give way to the Secretary of State if he wishes me to do so.

Mr. Chris Patten: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to tell that story to Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham or inner-London boroughs. If he looks at the contribution that Government make to education needs, he will see that far more resources are being given to those inner-city areas.

Mr. Hardy: I shall give way again to the Secretary of State in a few minutes because I have not finished.

Mr. Patten: Answer that.

Mr. Hardy: I shall answer, as the Secretary of State courteously did in his speech, but I will not take so long.

The fact remains that Yorkshire and Humberside received £373·8 million less in grant this year, whereas the south-east received £414 million more. It is no good the Secretary of State shaking his head in disagreement because that is a fact. Including the safety net, the south-east gained £389·3 million.

Unfortunately, the problem is that, in shifting the money from metropolitan districts and shire counties to assist inner London, particularly Westminster and Wandsworth, the metropolitan areas generally, and the Yorkshire area in particular, suffered severely indeed. But because of the nature of the calculations, smaller metropolitan districts such as Rotherham, Barnsley, Doncaster, Wigan and St. Helens caught a bitter cold. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) said—his area is affected more than mine—the quality of life is likely to be completely destroyed. School music, swimming, and the efforts of individuals to promote the quality of life to compensate for the horrors that we inherited from industrial history will be destroyed. All that will go unless there is an absolute assurance from the Minister that the corrupt distribution of central funds will be amended next year.

There must be an improvement in the calculations as the basis of the Government's assessment is ridiculous. The factual basis for social calculations is outdated, and the assumptions upon which grants have been made are erroneous. For example, much of the social calculation within Government funding comes from the 1981 census. Does the Minister not understand that in my borough we have lost Cortonwood colliery, Wath colliery, Manvers colliery, Kilnhurst colliery, Brookhouse colliery, Orgreave colliery and two or three others that I have not mentioned; plus steelworks, plus one of the largest glassworks in the country, in Swinton, which Guinness assured us would be saved if a takeover went ahead, plus the railway marshalling yard at Wath; and the largest coking plant in Europe, and another coking plant at Brookhouse, which one of my hon. Friends may seek to mention tomorrow? We have lost thousands of jobs. Thousands of the losses are in steel because of restructuring in the industry.

All the closures that I have mentioned have occurred since 1981. The economic base of my area has been dramatically changed; in fact it has been destroyed. None of those changes is reflected in the calculations upon which the standard spending assessment was made.

The Minister suggested that I got angry when we debated this issue before. If his constituency had been disfigured in the past 10 years in the way that mine has, and then he was robbed, he would understand why we are angry.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for giving way twice in his necessarily brief remarks. He is criticising SSAs. As I recall, although his local authority budget is above the SSA, it also happens to be about 15·5 per cent. above the former grant distribution formula—GREA. The hon. Gentleman is saying not only that the SSA is inadequate but that the last formula was inadequate, too. It seems that the formulae are always inadequate for his local authority, which is rather surprising.

Mr. Hardy: Of course I am. If the Minister wants comments on the previous assessment system, the Audit Commission provided evidence of the defective nature of GREA. In my area, that was compounded because we have the highest level of unemployment in the country and the largest problem with environmental dereliction, which is growing. The Members of Parliament who represent the Rotherham borough and people in my authority recognise that we have to transform our environment to provide our economy with a chance of survival and success. The local authority is seeking to do that. No Minister can argue that my authority is inefficient. The Minister said that we have been to these shores before, but we have never been to these shores as far as the Rotherham authority is concerned.

Rotherham has a particular need and the problems are getting worse almost every day as further industrial closures and economic changes take place.

I am taking a little longer than expected because of the Secretary of State's interventions. The Department of the Environment assumes that the snow lies longer in London than in the Lake District and the rest of Cumbria. That is one preposterous illustration of the inadequate methods of calculation, and the other calculations make me angrier still.

According to the social indicators and the social calculations that the Department has made, the Rotherham metropolitan area is regarded as the least deprived and the best off of all the metropolitan districts. It ranks 98th in the table of deprivation. Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, the Isle of Wight and such depressed places as Richmond-on-Thames and the royal borough of Tunbridge Wells are all regarded by the Department as far more deprived than Rotherham. Yet Rotherham has the highest unemployment and the worst environment problems in the country. The Minister cannot deny that because it is taken from a recent answer to a parliamentary question.

The Minister knows very well that areas such as Barnsley, Doncaster, Wigan and Rotherham are deprived. They do face difficulties. For his Government to produce calculations which show that the places that I have mentioned are impoverished, poor, deprived and facing dereliction on a scale far worse than my area is sufficient for me to charge the Government with the utmost corruption and the grossest unfairness that anyone has seen in public life in Britain for a long time.

10.5 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I apologise for being out of the Chamber while I attended an important Committee meeting between 4.15 pm and 7 pm and attended to some other business afterwards. As a result, I missed the contributions of the hon. Members for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), which I understand were vitriolic attacks on Derbyshire county council. The hon. Member for Amber Valley made a similar vitriolic attack on Derbyshire county council in a recent ten-minute rule application and on other occasions. I have told the hon. Gentleman that I wish to refer to his contribution today.

Among the attacks on Derbyshire county council made by the hon. Gentleman to justify poll tax capping is one that he has peddled on many occasions concerning the operation of Derbyshire county council's pension fund and moneys which were used in connection with *News on Sunday* and were subsequently moved to another company. Something that he said in the ten-minute rule application would, if repeated outside the House, lead to action being taken by David Bookbinder, the leader of Derbyshire county council. The hon. Gentleman has denied in radio broadcasts in which I have been involved that he has said anything inside the House that he would not have said outside. He said that Derbyshire county council was

"embroiled with a former estate agent called Owen Oyston in a series of sleazy deals"—[*Official Report*, 26 June 1990; Vol. 175, c. 189.]

If the words "sleazy deals" were used outside the House, that would be ground for legal action.

Much of the rest of the hon. Gentleman's speech was taken up by a well-worn list of complaints regularly picked up by Derbyshire newspapers including the *Derby Trader*. They include complaints against specific individuals and against perfectly reasonable and justifiable expenditure and activities by the council.

The pension fund is one of the most profitable of its type in Britain and Derbyshire county council is adept at attracting industry to the area, including Toyota. In doing so, it has used some of the skills of the business world which Conservative Members regard as their preserve and all Conservative Members can do is groan.

The hon. Members for Derbyshire, South and for Amber Valley should tell us what Derbyshire county council should cut in response to the poll tax capping. Should it be its education service? Special, primary and secondary education in Derbyshire—in terms of the pupil-teacher ratio—are the best in any shire county in the country. Presumably, the attitude is that because it is good it can reasonably be attacked, but the people of Derbyshire support their education system. For example, there is a very good special school at Inkersall Green, but unfortunately it has been damaged by coal-mining subsidence and may have to be removed.

A constituent of mine, Mr. Bev Smith, and his wife have been attempting to adopt a mentally handicapped child from Romania. He has mentally handicapped children of his own, and has also adopted two mentally handicapped children in this country; the Romanian child would be a third. He is worried about the future boundary arrangements for Derbyshire, which could mean some of the northern bit of Derbyshire being moved to the Sheffield area. I am sure that Sheffield provides good services, but Bev Smith is used to those provided by Derbyshire county council, and in the event of a boundary change he would move south to remain in Derbyshire.

That, surely, is a tribute to Derbyshire's special-education service. Similar examples could be quoted in relation to not only special but primary, secondary and further education, but services that are regularly attacked through the Government's educational programmes are now being attacked through charge capping.

Should it be the social services that are attacked, such as Derbyshire county council's family care and support service? Should it be its home help service, which is free to those in need? That is a concept that Conservatives do not wish to see in operation—the concept that people in need should have sufficient services provided by the community, free of charge. It runs against the Conservative party's so-called principle of accountability, which itself attacks the democratic system in this country, because it undermines electoral registration and has knocked people off the register.

Do Conservative Members want to increase the meals-on-wheels charges in Derbyshire, which average 35p, compared with the English average of 81p? Do they want to attack aid to the disabled in Derbyshire? There is a fine centre for the disabled known as the Ripley centre for integrated living. Derbyshire county council, working together with disabled people, can be justly proud of it. It is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Amber Valley. When I became a Member of Parliament, attending its opening was one of the first appointments that I kept. Unfortunately, the local Member was not there, having not responded to the invitation to attend the opening of the centre, which is of vast importance to Derbyshire.

There are many other services, including the police, highways, planning, recreation and tourism—the Peak district planning board is within the area—with which I could deal if time permitted.

Government action has caused other problems in Derbyshire——

Mr. Wilshire: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Barnes: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. At least I explained my non-attendance for a period during the debate.

The Government have persistently imposed financial difficulties on Derbyshire county council. The leader of Derbyshire county council, David Bookbinder, contributed an article to a recent edition of *The House Magazine*. It was an interesting article and I was pleased to see it published. So far, I have not been mentioned in that magazine except in the blue pages. The article was about local government services and says:

"By far our greatest problem has been uncertainty. There has scarcely been a single financial year when the same rules and criteria established during the previous year have applied and, time after time, our Treasurer has found himself unable to programme expenditure because, even days before the budget fixing deadline, the criteria has been changed . . . We learned of Mr. Patten's proposal to poll tax cap Derbyshire in April, after most of the county's nine district councils had issued demands to their charge payers."

The cost to the district councils of sending out fresh bills has to be picked up by the county council. Deputation after deputation went to the Department of the Environment to point to the nonsense of the formula for the provision of funds and the further cuts in the grants for

Derbyshire which have taken place year after year since the government came to power. That has led to the crisis in which the council now finds itself.

Where will Derbyshire council make cuts? No firm decisions have been made, but possibilities were mentioned in a letter sent by David Bookbinder by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). It suggested that the £40 million cut could be achieved by dismissing 1,000 staff, doubling the price of school meals and meals on wheels, closing all nursery schools, four aged people's homes and four children's homes. It also suggested abolishing community transport and concessionary fares, cutting home help services by 20 per cent., dismissing 90 police officers and 35 fire officers and not spending the £7 million that had been earmarked for the improvement of schools in Derbyshire. Schools in many rural and semi-rural areas have outside toilets and some of those schools were built more than 100 years ago. Those are the cuts facing Derbyshire as a result of the orders.

Conservative members on Derbyshire county council take a somewhat different stance from that taken by the Government. Initially, they proposed a cut of £20 million in the Derbyshire budget, which is well below the proposed £40 million cut. Now they are retracting that.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Barnes: No, because other hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who represents a Derbyshire constituency, wish to speak.

On 7 May Councillor Norman Wilson said:

"Further to our meeting of 3 May 1990, having had explained to me some of the more difficult points and sensitive parts of the negotiations concerning Toyota, I now accept without reservation that the land which we sold to Toyota after compulsory purchase was sold at a fair and proper price and withdraw my remarks and those of my Group that the land was under sold."

That was one of the allegations levelled at Derbyshire county council. The letter continues:

"I further recognise and support the Council's initiative of 'Derbyshire in Japan' and would be prepared now to demonstrate this support with my presence. I agree that a budget reduced by £40 million will still require a contingency provision that may be only £3 million-£4 million less than the existing budget,".

He is speaking there about the budget before the poll tax provision. He goes on:

"but the £20 million that I propose now may not be achievable in the revised budget."

That is the £20 million cut about which he had spoken. He continued:

"The points you raise regarding my claim that £4 million can be saved from the publicity budget. This was said to the Press in an unguarded moment and was a mistake and I accept that the publicity budget is no where near the £4 million that I suggested and apologise for any inconvenience caused."

There is another complex point about a public inquiry, which I shall not read out, but the final paragraph says:

"Hopefully, this resolves all the issues between us and I look forward to a renewed and beneficial working relationship for the benefit of the community that we both serve."

That is an abject apology, all the way along the line.

I could say much more about these orders and the nonsense of the formulas and the budgets used against the Derbyshire county council, but I shall make those points on some other occasion. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover wants to make important points.

Mr. Skinner: That man told a pack of lies.

Mr. Barnes: It sounds as though that is the case.

10.21 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): I shall not dwell for too long on the capping mechanism. The Secretary of State is entitled to use the powers given to him by Parliament, and that is what he has done. But it is not only the hon. Member for Dagenham and his colleagues who believe that the list of capped authorities, with not one Conservative administration among them, is a political fix. That view is shared by most fair-minded people. All political parties in Greenwich oppose this move. It may have been a clever political conjuring trick, and while it says something about the skill and ingenuity of the civil servants involved, it reflects no credit on the Government.

The argument that the poll tax is a fair tax was lost a long time ago. These capping proposals are the final nail in the coffin of the argument that the poll tax would, above all else, make councils accountable. One of the main aspects of this flagship policy was that it was to bring local authorities to heel and give electors the power to say yea or nay to levels of spending. This evening's debate shows once again how interventionist the Government are.

The right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) told the House that capping was to be

"a reserve power—rarely, if ever, used, we hope—to protect the charge payers of an area against extreme cases of extravagant and irresponsible local authorities."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 510].

We are being asked to accept that Calderdale district council, which set a community charge of £297, is so extravagant and irresponsible as to demand Government action to protect its charge payers. I doubt whether any hon. Member seriously believes that to be the case.

I am no more enthusiastic about local Labour authorities than are many Conservative Members. Labour's hard left is alive and well and living in Greenwich, despite the conciliatory remarks of the Opposition spokesman this evening. Greenwich council spends large sums of money on projects that I and many of the electorate do not consider worth while. Nevertheless, I have to agree with those Opposition Members who say that in certain areas—Greenwich is one of them—the poll tax has been put to the test in local elections. The Labour party in Greenwich won convincingly. I must give credit where credit is due. Voting took place after the £408 charge was widely publicised.

Reductions in services should be made, if they have to be made at all, so as to cause as little damage as possible. However, can it be done and will it be done? The *Greenwich Times*, which costs £300,000, and the women's unit, which does not have a viable function, should be axed, but that will not happen. They will almost certainly be at the bottom of the list. The weakness of capping is that it tempts local authorities to make cuts that hit the elderly, the disabled and the most vulnerable. They will say that the cuts have to be made to underline the unacceptable nature of the poll tax and the harshness of capping. The Government have provided the opponents of the poll tax with a perfect weapon.

[Mrs. Rosie Barnes]

The community charge in Doncaster was to have been £338. After capping, it is £285. In the local elections last May, 66·3 per cent. of the voters in Doncaster supported the Labour party. I may not like it and Conservative Members may not like it, but that was the choice of the people of Doncaster. Why, then, does the Secretary of State say, "I know more about your area, the services that you want and the charge that you are willing to pay than you do; your council must not charge more than the amount that I have set?" Many local authorities, including mine, are already struggling because of the cuts.

Although there is inefficiency, and although there are many matters that I should like to be tackled differently, the fact is that there is precious little fat left to cut in Greenwich. This morning I visited a school in my borough for children with severe learning difficulties. If one has not visited such a school, one is inclined to think of children with learning difficulties as slightly backward and incapable of doing as well as others. However, many of these children are confined to wheelchairs. Many of them cannot feed themselves, and a fairly large number are doubly incontinent. Even when food is put into their mouths, many of them suffer from such severe brain damage that their reflexes do not allow them to swallow.

For the first time ever in Greenwich, these children are being told that when they reach the age of 19 no social service or other provision will be available for them. Education services will cease at 19. Until now, they have been cared for in a special school throughout the day. Moreover, respite care has been available—often for one week out of four—throughout the early years of their life. All that will cease at 19. For the first time ever in Greenwich, the parents of the children who leave that special school are being told that no more can be done for them and that they must be kept at home. Such a burden is intolerable, unacceptable and short-sighted. Invariably, the health or mental stability of the carer will break down and the child will end up in residential care.

There is an alternative to the poll tax and poll tax capping. The Minister will not be surprised to hear me remind him yet again that local income tax is a viable option and that proper accountability and responsibility would result from proportional representation in local authority elections. Although there can be no doubt that the people of Doncaster voted overwhelmingly for what they got, only two out of five people in the borough of Greenwich voted for the Labour party. However, it won 44 of the 62 seats.

For the benefit of the Labour party, I shall put the other side. At the last general election in the borough, which contains three parliamentary seats, the Labour party had more than a third of the votes, but did not gain a seat. One Conservative and two SDP candidates were elected. Proportional representation would work both ways in those circumstances. As the Labour party had one third of the vote, it would have gained a seat.

Local income tax, combined with proportional representation, would allow the Government to leave local authorities to set their own charges, confident that local charge payers were capable of making their choices and that their preferences would be reflected in the composition of the councils for which they voted.

Mr. Wilshire: Will the hon. Lady reconsider her approach—that if we had this or that, it would leave local government free to make its own decisions? What about the national interest? That cannot be ignored in the name of letting local people spend exactly what they want.

Mrs. Barnes: All my remarks have been in the interest of the nation as well as of local authorities. Nationally, proportional representation and local income tax would enhance democracy. I am trying to put a constructive alternative. I am not being negative about the poll tax while not suggesting an alternative.

Proportional representation would put an end to the many complacent boroughs, where one or both main parties are almost guaranteed a permanent hold on power often despite commanding only minority support. That breeds inefficiency and political smugness. Knowing that their position will be based and judged on their performance would work wonders for accountability. It is my belief that it is fair and democratic that the number of councillors elected be proportional to the number of votes cast.

I wish to relate charge capping to what I consider to be one of the most serious victims of that approach—community care. For some weeks, there has been speculation about whether there would be a delay in implementing the community care aspects of the national health service legislation. Tonight's news appears to confirm that that will happen. It is a widely acclaimed and popular policy, supported by all hon. Members. It is now threatened by the folly of another Government policy—the poll tax.

The transfer of community care to local authorities now appears likely to be delayed because of panic about next year's poll tax levels. Some local authorities have estimated that community care could cost £500 million on top of what social security departments would transfer to their budgets. That could amount to as much as £15-plus per head on poll tax. If people knew that that was the reason for the additional charge, I am sure that they would find it acceptable.

If reports are to be believed, in the additional sums that have been gained by the Secretary of State to soften the blow of poll tax next year—I understand it to be £3·5 billion—nothing has been earmarked for community care. It appears as though it is now set to join other areas of local authority responsibility and be sacrificed on the altar of the poll tax.

Community care is being threatened in three ways—the failure to ring-fence the funds; the delays because of panic about the poll tax; and erosion by charge capping. Those of us who have always supported community care warned that it would not be care on the cheap. It is clear that, once the cost became apparent, the Government had cold feet, and community care will now have to pay second fiddle to the Government's chances of winning another general election.

The Government must make up their minds. Do they want local authorities and the local electorate to have the freedom to decide how much to spend on services in their areas, including on community care, or do they want to ensure a basic level through earmarked grants? We look forward to hearing. The aim of a single doorkeeper to community care should not be sacrificed in a vain attempt to make a bad tax better. Nor should accountability be further eroded.

I make one final plea. My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) outlined the incomprehensibility of the standard spending assessment for Greenwich when he spoke in a debate on 18 January. The mathematical complexities, which all of us find difficult, are exacerbated in the case of Greenwich by the erroneous and outdated assumptions about it. Any hon. Member who has canvassed there in an election will remember that it has its fair share of inner-city features—tower blocks, densely packed estates, poverty, high infant mortality—the list could go on. However, the disparity in our spending assessment in relation to other London authorities with a broadly similar composition of population is striking. Greenwich has the lowest SSA in London; it is £398 below the highest. That is particularly evident in social services. Greenwich has had a difficult time with a number of child tragedies and, as I have said, it has a high infant mortality rate.

I plead for a thorough review of the SSA, based on current information, before any further decisions are taken about Greenwich.

10.36 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): This is a sad day because we are seeing a further erosion of local democracy. That is what this debate is all about. The Government are exercising a dictatorial authority, via a Secretary of State who is working against the will of the people, who made their will known through the ballot box. It is sad when, due to their huge majority and the arrogance of power, central Government move against the people. From area to area we have had clear evidence of people supporting their local representatives against the poll tax and against poll tax capping. That has been proved in our debate by hon. Members from the whole of England and Wales, from north, south, east and west.

The poll tax is unwanted and undemocratic. It is unwanted by our constituents, who are fair-minded people. It is also unwanted by the chambers of commerce and industry throughout the country which realise the damage that the legislation will cause. All are agreed that it is a rotten piece of legislation from a rotten Government.

It was originally intended to introduce the poll tax over a 10-year period. Initially, that seemed worth consideration because for 40 years—throughout the time that I spent in local government—local government has been seeking a better alternative to the rating system, but it has not found it. The alternatives have been too hard to collect, too easy to evade or too expensive. The poll tax is no different. It is exactly what the name implies—a charge on every person, irrespective of ability to pay. The poll tax capping that is being introduced in these orders is a way of putting the boot in to local authorities when they have already been broken down by the despotism and arrogance of central Government, with their ignorance of local government. The electorate, who clearly stated their view at the ballot box, will have to take the consequences of that arrogance. The consequences lie on the Government's shoulders.

Throughout my life in politics I have examined the case for proportional representation. For various reasons, I have always been against it. However, if we have to accept proportional representation to make sure that no longer do we live under a Government such as the present one, so be it. Despite overwhelming support for Labour in the local elections in my constituency, central Government 200 miles away believe that they know better. That point can be highlighted by the answer to a question that I tabled. The answer was:

> "The charge capping which, if the House approves, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment intends to set, represents his view of what is reasonable"—[*Official Report*, 3 July 1990; Vol. 175, c. *536*.]

How are the views of the electorate taken into account when the Secretary of State says that his view must be paramount?

The Government usurp the authority of local government by imposing on my constituents that which clearly they do not want. That has been shown time after time in my area at the ballot box.

On my local authority there are 63 councillors—60 Labour, one Conservative, one other and one independent. Councillors have been elected in similar proportions many times. The local authority went to the electorate on the issue of poll tax capping, not the poll tax. On that issue, the Labour party increased its majority, its number of votes and its number of seats. That is a clear demonstration that the people of Barnsley wanted not poll tax capping but the services that the local authority provides. I question the right of central Government, in their power and arrogance, to override the wishes of the local electorate.

Barnsley is not by any means a high spender—no way. Its problems are similar to those which have been mentioned by my hon. Friends. It is an area of low rateable values, high unemployment—about 13 per cent., twice the national average—and low wages. Everything in the grant-related expenditure assessment went against us. We have overcome that to an extent. But our standard spending assessment is wrong. That has caused us problems.

Barnsley's problem, like Doncaster's, Rotherham's, St. Helens' and Wigan's, is a low SSA. Barnsley's assessment must be examined. The assessment has fallen from the average for 1983-84 to that for 1989-90. It hovered at between 87 per cent. and 90 per cent. of the average assessment for metropolitan districts. In 1991 it will fall to 84 per cent. of the average. If Barnsley's assessment had risen as much as Bradford's, it would have received an extra £20 million in 1990 and 1991 and would not have been capped. Barnsley's assessment rose by only 2 per cent. between 1989-90 and 1990-91. It did not even keep pace with inflation.

How does the Secretary of State come to the conclusion that Barnsley needs less money to look after its aged population than any other authority? How is it that Barnsley's primary and secondary schoolchildren need less money spent on their education than those of any other authority? How is it that Barnsley needs less money to overcome its problems than elsewhere?

Poll tax capping imposes an additional administrative charge on Barnsley of £1·8 million. The late changes made by central Government in transitional relief contributed to late delivery of software. As a consequence, no bills have been sent out since March covering any change of circumstances, and non-payment reminders have only just been mailed.

Poll tax collection is running at 60 per cent. of the expected level among both private householders and business and industry. Interest charges on the money borrowed to compensate for that situation are now running at £67,000 per month. The rebilling that is a consequence of the Government's reassessment has cost another £250,000.

It may be that the expected return of £59 per poll tax payer will not materialise because the original assessment of collection charges was wrong. It was set at 5 per cent., but it is currently running at twice that figure. Additionally, there is the cost of borrowing. Between now and next year the whole system may fall into disrepute.

Mr. Portillo *indicated dissent.*

Mr. McKay: The Minister may shake his head, but can he say why in the past, when changes were made to the rates, they were implemented in the following, not the current, year? Why must changes be implemented in the same year that the poll tax is introduced, causing extra difficulties?

The poll tax has never been properly thought through. There have been many achievements in my constituency in industrial regeneration. Some £100 million of investment has been attracted. The area was once dependent upon

coal, steel and engineering, but the bottom fell out of all three, which is the reason for Barnsley's high unemployment rate.

The local authority took it upon itself, in partnership with private industry—including Costain—to regenerate the area. However, the poll tax will mean that the meagre balances upon which those plans are dependent will no longer exist. Ours is not a rich authority by any means. The amount in balances is £7 million, £5 million of which is earmarked for the Costain venture. There is £2 million left, but the district auditor is telling the local authority that it should have £6 million instead. So no one can point a finger at that authority and accuse it of high spending.

The damage that will be caused by capping the authority is already being seen. We have been forced to close the music centre—a centre of excellence—and to sack 24 of its teachers. On the table is the closure of two aged people's homes and one children's home; charges for home help; the closure of branch libraries and the reduction of hours of opening of others; the closure of nursery schools or the introduction of a £5 to £7 weekly charge; cuts in tertiary college education in respect of a college that has not yet even opened; the ending of children's swimming lessons; a cut in the hours that the pool opens; staff redundancies; leaving vacancies unfilled; and a rise in all local authority charges, including school meals. Financial support to community industry is to cease and there will be no Christmas decorations in the metropolitan borough this year. Support for youth clubs will also be cut. All that is happening under the first two trawls, but we are still short of £2·5 million. The third trawl will hurt us very deeply.

What will happen next year and in the two years after that, once the transitional period ends? What will happen if we need £40 next year, another £40 the year after that and £40 in the year after that for the poll tax? What will happen in future if we are capped this year? Are we to be poll-taxed again on items that we do not have? Are we to incur expenditure that we cannot afford? Are we to suffer once more from the Government's dictatorial attitude via the Secretary of State?

My constituents are asking questions such as those. The poll tax is rotten legislation from a rotten Government. I can derive joy only from the thought that this legislation, together with that for the national health service, will lead to the Government's demise and they will disappear for ever.

10.50 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I want to refer to two councils in my constituency—Thurrock, which has not been capped, but which should be, and Basildon, which is one of the most notorious high spenders in the country. I speak also on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) whose important duties in the House prevent him from speaking on his own behalf. However, I know that he shares my sentiments and, as the hon. Member for Basildon, perhaps feels more strongly than I about what is happening to his electorate.

Basildon has introduced a poll tax of £478 per head and that is £234 per adult above the standard spending assessment. Not many councils are worse than that. Basildon has a notorious history of overspending. It has been capped many times and it richly deserves its colloquial name of Moscow-on-Thames. However, I am not sure whether the people of Moscow are worse off than the people of Basildon and Billericay who live within the area of that profligate council.

Mr. Boateng: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gorman: No, I will not, because I have just begun. However, I will bear the hon. Gentleman in mind.

Basildon council had a budget of £13 million two years ago. It raised that to £23 million last year and this year it proposes to bring in a budget of £28 million. The capital expenditure that it has indulged in, largely on the assumption that there would be a Labour Government at the last election who would wipe out its debt, has been truly horrendous.

In the past year a new town hall was opened at a cost of £18 million. Before that, the council spent £9 million on a municipal theatre. Two new sports centres cost £4·5 million and naturally enough all those organisations are running at a loss. Our debt bill is so enormous now that 30 per cent. of the budget of £28 million that the council wants to raise comprises debt charges. It is deplorable that a council should take on that amount of debt. Those debts will, of couse, be passed on to future generations of residents to settle long after the profligate spenders on the present council have disappeared.

Basildon council is approximately one third Liberal. The Liberals have voted throughout with Labour for all the high spending. They voted for the town hall, for the Town Gate theatre and for the sports centres. They will vote for anything and everything that Labour chooses to adopt. In practice, they are no different from the Labour party.

The people communicated what they thought about the council in the May elections when one third of the seats were contested—the Conservative party polled 1,000 votes more than the Labour party. If those results are projected over three years, it means that we shall sweep Labour out of office. The people of Basildon and Billericay will be rid of the profligate spenders eventually. Fortunately, the Liberal vote completely collapsed during the elections and I hope that a little more sense will now be shown by those running the system.

The Conservatives of Basildon worked out a budget which meant that the community charge was £100 less than that quoted by the Labour party. However, Basildon council gets rid of its money by sending Valentine cards to all its electors to tell them about the poll tax. It also sent out a letter from the leader of the council which cost about £9,000 to distribute. In addition to offering bus passes to every pensioner, the council offers food and leisure vouchers to those who do not want that pass. Those vouchers are wonderful for those who are not spending their own money, but they are spending the money of other pensioners who pay the community charge because they saved up to buy their houses. They do not qualify for all the forms of rebate available, and their pockets are being picked to pay for the vote-buying exercises indulged in by the Labour majority. The Labour council no longer has any mandate for its actions.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Lady may say that the council has no mandate, but the Conservatives have no mandate for poll tax-capping. The election manifesto spoke of the poll tax, but it implied that poll tax-capping would not be introduced as such decisions would lie with the local electorate.

Mrs. Gorman: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is seeking to make a point, but the Government are here to protect people when Labour councils seek to exploit a sensible change in the way in which local revenue is raised. The Government are right to seek to reduce the community charge in Basildon by a certain amount—it will be greatly reduced when we have defeated the Labour majority and wiped out the Liberals who consistently vote with Labour.

Basildon council employs 10 per cent. more administrative staff per 1,000 residents than the national average—it is all about jobs for the boys. Heads of Department of every conceivable nature are appointed almost daily, as well as area committees and new offices for those committees. Every ward now has a committee paid for out of the rating system. That is all unnecessary. The House should note, however, that the 10 per cent. surplus is based on figures given two years ago. The Government have been unable to get any other figures since then, because the council has not put in its returns. Why not? It is either because the council is so busy spending our money on other things that it does not have time to fulfil its commitment to the Department of the Environment or because it is jolly well ashamed to admit that it is beefing up its staff. I believe that 50 per cent. of the jobs in the council could go.

The council has a publicity department which spends £400,000 a year trying to sell Labour policies to the electorate, which is a misuse of local government money. "Basildon Link", a newspaper, is delivered every week and costs £68,000 a year in subsidies alone. We already have three free newspapers that contain all the local news people want—they are a lot more interesting, because they are concerned with what the community does. The Labour party misuses public money in a deliberate attempt to sell its policies to the electorate. It is an outrage that the people who seek to administer our community have added to the council's debts by challenging the Government's legal right to cap it.

The local council is one of the worst in the country. We do not need these councillors and I am sure that over the next few years we will be able to work them out of office. I thank and congratulate the Government on behalf of my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon.

The problem with Basildon is that it lives in the age of Neville Chamberlain, when the state was considered to be the organ for everything, but local government is different now. I sat on the Committee that considered the Local Government Act 1988, which made local authorities put out to tender functions such as cleaning, catering and so on. I certainly hope that I shall be in the House long enough to see most of the functions of local authorities put out to the private sector and subject to competition.

I said in Committee that I do not know why we need local councils. We get adequate distribution of milk and newspapers—even free newspapers—without the intervention of local authorities. Why should not people pay directly for their dustbins to be emptied? Why do we need a sub-contracted municipal service? Local authorities in the United States are run as companies, with a managing director and a small elected board of directors. Every function from accountancy to road sweeping, street lighting and looking after parks is contracted out to the private sector.

Mr. Wilshire: My hon. Friend is right that such things occur in America and I wish that they were here, but is she aware that those councils are still local government?

Mrs. Gorman: I take my hon. Friend's intervention. I said that the board of directors is elected, but it is small and its mandate is to provide services as economically and efficiently as possible. We are moving along those lines and I look forward to seeing more of that system here. As I know from experience as a Westminster city councillor, that is the efficient way of getting things done. Wandsworth, where I was born and raised, is even more efficient and effective. There is no reason why the people of Basildon should not enjoy the community charges that people in those communities enjoy. They have returned Conservative councillors with massive majorities.

I want to say something about my constituents in Thurrock, whose community charge is high. I hope sincerely that the Government will consider capping that council, which suffers from a Labour administration and unnecessarily high charges. People in my constituency would dearly love to be separated from that profligate council. They have been petitioning the Government for many years for a separate council simply because they see no other way of escaping from this appalling spendthrift organisation. Although we must suffer this administration pro tem, it will be relatively short term. We have seen the turn of the tide with these new measures and with more Conservative votes being cast at the last election than we have had before. I am sure that everything that the Government are doing is absolutely right. They are spot on, because people want to know what these councillors are doing. They want to be able to respond to that through the ballot box, and they are doing so in our constituencies.

I congratulate the Government on what they are doing, and I urge them to stick to their guns, to keep up the pressure and to keep down the wretchedly high community charges under which the people of Billericay, Basildon and Thurrock have suffered.

11.4 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): It is tragic to hear the ignorance of the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), who does not even understand that Chamberlain was a Conservative. Unfortunately, it seems that the Conservatives have moved away from the principles that once included a concept of justice and of social acceptance; they have moved into the arena of grab, greed, thieving and corruption—these are now the order of the day.

The hon. Member for Billericay is ignorant not only of the history of her party but of social justice. She fails to appreciate that the poll tax is not fair, and that the standard spending assessments are not fair. Had she been here earlier, she would have heard the brilliant speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and realised that the whole basis of the SSAs is the 1981 census. In St. Helens as much as anywhere else, times have moved on. The industrial base has changed. Demography has altered—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Member for Billericay will listen; she might learn something.

There have also been demographic changes in Basildon, Thurrock and other places. If SSAs are arrived at on the basis of figures that are nearly nine years old, mistakes are

bound to be made. If mistakes are made in SSAs, the areas affected by them will suffer when their poll tax is calculated. That, too, is not fair.

I endorse, adopt, accept and support every word that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) said earlier. I do not intend to repeat his arguments, but let us examine what has happened in St. Helens in the past nine years. We have lost two thirds of our coal mining jobs, and many glassworks have closed. Industry has been modernised. The number of employees in the glassworks has fallen from 28,000 to about 9,000. Other industries have gone out of business too.

If SSAs are based on the 1981 census, the Minister must accept, if he is fair, that mistakes will be made. We once had a massive mental health hospital in St. Helens called Rainhill. When I was first elected to my seat, it contained 1,300 to 1,500 patients. Last week it contained 190. Where have the other 1,300 gone? They have gone on to the streets of Liverpool, into cardboard city.

There have also been problems associated with the health service. A change of emphasis has meant people going into the community, where there must be social services to help them. None of these facts was reflected in the 1981 census, so they are not reflected in our SSA.

I have three simple questions for the Minister. First, if the SSA is based on the 1981 census, what steps have been taken to account for the demographic, industrial, social, housing and health changes of the past nine years? I have put the question to the Department in writing. It has been asked by the local authority in my constituency and by many other organisations and individuals. None of us has received an answer, but generally the answer is known—it is none.

What would be the position if I lived in Wandsworth or Westminster? The hon. Member for Billericay wears almost as a badge of credit her membership of Westminster city council. It is the council that can sell the dead. It can cheat on the calculation of who can vote by means of the way in which the register is compiled. There are so many second homes in Westminster that the council can "adjust" the figures. The hon. Lady should come off it. She should carry her membership of Westminster city council as a badge of shame, not one of pride.

If the authority in my constituency had property of the rateable value of that in Westminster, I would not mind what the Minister did with the SSA. In Westminster, there are flats worth £100,000 or £200,000, but in St. Helens there is not a house that is worth that much.

Mrs. Gorman: In Westminster, 60 per cent. of the population live in local authority or traditional trust housing, such as the Peabody or Guinness estates. There are relatively few high-value properties, and the rateable value that is linked to domestic rates is relatively low. Most of the high rateable values were attached to the business rate, which is now being distributed nationally. To my chagrin, it is assisting many Labour authorities to do better than I think they deserve.

Mr. Bermingham: I gave way as graciously as I could to the hon. Lady, and I have no intention of being other than gracious to her. She has demonstrated yet again that her ignorance surpasses her knowledge. Is she aware that St. Helens and other authorities pay into the business rate pool? In the old days St. Helens could use the moneys raised from its business rate, but that is no longer possible.

If the hon. Lady would do her homework before she opened her mouth—in other words, arrange for her brain to work a little faster than her mouth—she would understand the problems of St. Helens and other authorities.

My plea to the Minister is to ensure fairness. In my constituency, the majority of people pay more per person in poll tax than they ever did in rates. Under the rating system, I paid about £240 a year for my flat in St. Helens. As it is a second home, I shall have to pay a double charge in due course. The single person charge is over £400. My flat is not large and it is not posh. Why is the poll tax almost twice as much as the rateable charge? Thousands of people in St. Helens are similarly affected. It is not fair. Could the SSA have been wrongly calculated?

Secondly, if it is true that the basis of SSAs is wrong, will the Minister undertake to reimburse the authorities which have suffered as a result of the inaccurate calculation? Surely that is a fair question, but I suspect that it will not be answered.

I cannot understand how the SSA of the authority that borders St. Helens—it is just down the street in one of the wards in my constituency—is so much higher than in St. Helens, South. The demography is the same and there is the same industrial base. It is a similar area. Why are the two SSAs different? Perhaps the sense of fairness and justice that I and many others feel has not been brought into effect. Perhaps the 1981 census produced different assessments for the two areas. The Minister might explain, but I suspect that he will not.

That leads me to my third question. If the SSA is wrong, and if the Minister will not reimburse us, what will he do? We have already had the first hint, with the postponement for a year of ring fencing of care in the community and next year's payments. That more than a little affects St. Helens, which has the problem of Rainhill hospital.

If the Minister will undertake to come with me to St. Helens, I will show him the conditions, facilities and needs there. Then, as a quid pro quo, I will go to his constituency, or to the Secretary of State's rather pretty constituency of Bath. If the Minister or the Secretary of State are not prepared to swap facilities and amenities in their constituencies, will the Minister undertake to give us the finest SSA so that we can improve our facilities so that they match those in his constituency?

For me, justice must be justice for all. The facilities in one part of the country should be available in another. Those of us who live and work in the industrial north of England have a lot of catching up to do because it was the south that grew rich on the back of the spoil heaps and the exploitation of the north; it is time that we had a little justice.

11.16 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): My 11 years in local government and my subsequent lecturing in and research into local government have convinced me that muddled thinking and confusion are two of the worst aspects of any debate on local government among not only Members of Parliament but councillors and the general public. Tonight's debate is yet another classic example of such muddled thinking and confusion.

The debate has tended to focus on issues that are not in question. This debate is really about something else. It is

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not about how local government is financed, as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and others have suggested. It is not about the structure and size of local government, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said. Nor is it directly about services themselves, as a raft of Opposition Members have suggested. However important services might be, and I do not seek to underplay them, they are not an issue in this debate.

Mr. Boateng: They are in my borough.

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Gentleman makes my point for me. There goes the muddle and confusion again. This debate is about how much local government spends. It is not directly about what it spends money on.

Mr. Hardy: There is some truth in what the hon. Gentleman says, except that it is not the whole truth. The whole truth is certainly relevant. This debate is also about the level of grant which the Government distribute to local authorities, and we have sought to demonstrate that the distribution of grant under the present formula leads to the accusation of corruption which we believe is justified.

Mr. Wilshire: There goes the muddle and the confusion again. Grant is about income. Limiting expenditure is about expenditure. If only hon. Members could grasp that fundamental point we would make a lot of progress.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) went on and on in a heart-rending way about services in Derbyshire. He would not let me intervene—I understand why—to ask him the simple question whether he intended to say a single word about expenditure, which he did not.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilshire: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, although he does not return the courtesy.

Mr. Barnes: If I had had the opportunity, I would have said a good deal about overall budgetary arrangements, and about the grant problem in particular. One answer would be for all the grants that are being cut with the introduction of the poll tax to be replaced by Government provision. Another £40 million for Derbyshire would solve some of our problems.

Mr. Wilshire: Not at all. We are continuing to witness the Opposition's failure to grasp the fundamental point that grant is about income, while we are talking about expenditure.

Let me try once more to drive the point home. Why are we not talking about how local government is financed? Because it does not matter whether we have a community charge, a rating system, a local income tax or an arrangement to fund local services with a 100 per cent. grant from central Government—or, indeed, by highway robbery. Whatever the method of funding, we must still address the fundamental issue of whether spending should be limited. If we decide that the answer is yes, we must ask ourselves how the limit should be set and who should have the final say.

The entire case put by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) can be boiled down to his closing flourish —"It will not be long before the community charge is swept away." Not a word was said about what would happen if spending got out of control under whatever system Labour wants to introduce.

Let me tackle a point made much earlier by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North, as I feel strongly about it.

Mr. Boateng: He is on the hon. Gentleman's side.

Mr. Wilshire: I know. I am not talking only about the Opposition's failure to understand certain issues; there has been some misunderstanding about other issues among Conservative Members. Those who try to bring the size or the structure of councils into the argument miss the central point: we are talking about expenditure.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North said that, if councils were made smaller and the overlapping of responsibilities was ended, there would be no conflict and no need to control spending. That simply is not true. Conflict is inevitable: throughout history and all over the globe, conflict between national and local arrangements will be found. We cannot get away from it. However it is organised, unfettered expenditure is impossible, because it is impossible to escape the economic facts of life: at the end of the day, we cannot spend what we have not got.

Why, then, is the debate not about the provision of services? Opposition Members tried to mock me on that score. I accept that the range of services available is an important issue, and one that the House debates regularly; the level and cost of services, and whether there is waste, are also important subjects, but they are not at issue tonight. They all relate to the needs of local people, which Opposition Members have addressed time and again—without saying a word about affordability, which is what the Government have asked us to consider. The question of needs is entirely separate. To confuse the two subjects is like confusing income with expenditure.

Opposition Member after Opposition Member has stressed the importance of need; but someone must pay, even if it is not the local charge payer. If Labour ever return to power, and if a Labour Government flatly refuse to address the question "Can we afford it?", the International Monetary Fund will be back. If Labour Members have not learnt that lesson yet, I hope that the country will note that they are willing to take us back down the road to bankruptcy by refusing to consider affordability. We must ask how much local government should spend. It does not matter how the money is raised or on what it is spent. Should the amount be limited and, if so, in what way should we limit it?

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rightly asked us to answer two questions, and not one Opposition Member even attempted to answer them. He asked whether central Government should have the power to limit and whether they should use that power. The answer to the second question is simple, because there is no point having powers if no one is willing to use them. The Secretary of State has such power, and therefore answers his own question.

I feel sorry for any Secretary of State in such circumstances. Matters would be a great deal simpler if Parliament provided 100 per cent. of local government expenditure. In such a scenario the control of expenditure would be simple. But, rightly, Britain does not work like that. We allow for an element of local choice and permit priorities to be decided locally.

Mr. Allen McKay: The Government stop local decision making.

Mr. Wilshire: We do not. We question to what extent such powers should be unfettered, and that is a different matter. Should councils have unfettered powers? As the result of my intervention earlier in the debate, the hon. Member for Dagenham answered yes to that question. He had used the term "in extremis" and I asked whether there should be any control. He said that there should be no control over what happens locally but made an exception in the case of fraud. The message from the Opposition was that there should be no control. The Leader of the Opposition expressed the opposite view when he launched the Labour party's local government conference at Eastbourne. He said:

"We are in the process of discussion and negotiation on which is the best way to maintain local authority expenditure within negotiated limits."

There we have it. The hon. Member for Dagenham says that local authorities should be allowed to do what they like, but the Leader of the Opposition talks about "within negotiated limits." Perhaps before the end of this two-day debate the Opposition will once and for all clarify Labour policy. Perhaps the Opposition Member who winds up will tell us what happens if beer and sandwiches at No. 10 do not result in negotiated limits. Will a Labour Prime Minister sit on his hands and abdicate his responsibility to govern or will he introduce controls? We are back to the central issue. Will the Labour party control expenditure in extremis?

The Opposition must try to understand why expenditure must be limited. They have not addressed that issue, so I shall do it for them. Somebody must ask what people can afford and what the economy can bear.

Mr. Boateng: People should be allowed to decide for themselves.

Mr. Wilshire: Exactly, the hon. Gentleman is giving me enormous help. I accept that there is a case of sorts for allowing people to decide locally what they can afford. However, people cannot escape the national implications of their decisions. When they decide on local expenditure they are deciding on 26 per cent. of Britain's public expenditure. Such decisions affect inflation, unemployment and take-home pay and remove the scope for people to take care of themselves and their families. We cannot escape the market system. There is no point in behaving like an ostrich and pretending that that system does not exist.

Perhaps Opposition Members should seek out their leader and try to sort out their differences with him because he and I agree that there should be a limit on council expenditure. Who should set that limit? Parliament should set it because no council is an island. The spending of every council affects the national economy. No local council has secure boundaries. It may take decisions that people do not like, but one cannot pass laws to stop people moving round, and that further undermines the economy.

There is unequal distribution of wealth. There is no point in simply saying that local councils will get on with it, because there always has to be a mechanism within a state to redistribute money from the rich to the poor. I for one—I hope that all Labour Members agree with me—do not wish to see redistribution of wealth taken away from the sovereign Parliament and handed to local councils. It needs to be Parliament that does this for another reason. This is a small island, and wild variations in public expenditure, and in taxation, between areas that are close together will put an intolerable strain on the economy.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Does the hon. Gentleman think that these arguments apply equally to private companies? For example, do they apply to GEC in Coventry, which is sacking 600 people, and thereby reducing the local economy and raising unemployment? Should there not be controls on such decisions?

Mr. Wilshire: Fortunately, this is not a debate about GEC or private companies. This is about local authorities, and their effect on public expenditure. Instead of saying these wild things, I suggest a test that Labour Members might care to use. Would they like to think through who is best at what when trying to arrive at a decision? Local councils are best at assessing local need, and in responding to it, despite what my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) said. They are best at service assessment, and arranging service provision. Parliament exists to settle what is best for the nation, and the economy of the nation is one such key issue. That explains why the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East was wrong to suggest that, if the Government cap, they should say what should be cut. He misunderstands who is best at what. The Government will settle what expenditure limits there must be, and local councils, which are closest to the people, must sort out the priorities.

If Parliament sets the limitation, how is it to be done? Any Labour Member who scuttled up to the Library would not take long, looking at my contributions to the broader debate, to discover that I am on record in a number of places as saying that I would not start from here. But that is irrelevant to this debate. Charge capping is the only mechanism available to the Secretary of State by which he can limit expenditure. To quote the hon. Member for Dagenham, "in extremis", the Secretary of State must use his powers. I believe that that is what the Labour party was saying. How to make a different limitation will be discussed in the review of the community charge, but for the moment we are being asked to address how much local government should spend, and this is the only way to control it.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Is it not implicit in my hon. Friend's argument that as, over the past 10 years, a small number of local authorities have been breaking the rules and conventions that govern local government and local government spending, those minorities should be dealt with by charge capping? It is most important for our Government and party to have regard to the considerable efforts by elected councillors and officials, particularly in Conservative authorities, who try all the time to keep spending down.

Mr. Wilshire: That is right. I started by saying that confusion was the worst part of many a debate on local government, and the confusion on which I have been focusing is that between income and expenditure—it has not been understood by Labour Members. The other point is that made by my hon. Friend. There is confusion about the true nature of the central Government/local government relationship. The two form an interlocking part of a social system. One cannot get away from that. They cannot be separated, and they cannot exist without

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tension. That is why every debate on local government —here or anywhere else—is full of pleas for democracy and full of wonderful comments about people attacking democracy or defending it.

The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), who is not here now, produced a splendid example. He said that 62 Labour party members serve on his council, that it has only two Conservative members and that he was returned to this place with a majority of 22,000 and they all wanted local freedom. We could all play that game. Thirty-eight Tories and two Labour party members sit on my local borough council, and my majority is only about 2,000 less than his. My constituents wanted both the borough council and the county council to be capped. We can all play the local democracy game—what the people want —but it does not get us very far.

Local government and central Government are a partnership. Despite what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay, local government is more than a creation of this place and it is more than the deliverer of services. It has to settle local priorities. If Parliament were ever stupid enough to abolish local government, something else would rise, phoenix-like, out of the ashes.

Local government is not free-standing; it is not exempt from having to face up to the economic facts of life. The correct partnership, which must be understood, is that Parliament sets the overall limits of expenditure for the country and the redistribution of wealth while local government settles its own priorities and makes its own arrangements for the delivery of services. If that partnership breaks down, it is the duty of Parliament and the Government to act. That relationship has broken down. Local government expenditure has gone beyond the limit that we can afford. It is the Government's duty to act. It is also the duty of every democrat in the House to vote tomorrow for the orders.

11.36 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): It is a cruel and unusual punishment to be required to sit on these Benches at this hour and listen to speeches such as the one that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and the even worse speech of the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). Charming and entertaining though she doubtless is, I have seldom heard such a farrago of extremist Conservative ideology and sheer nonsense. She excelled herself in the venom that she displayed towards local government. It would be dangerous for Opposition Members simply to sit back and barrack the hon. Lady—although we have to sometimes —and to dismiss her as merely an aberration within the Conservative party. She is nothing of the kind.

There has been a sea change in the Conservative party. From being the party which was concerned to preserve local government autonomy, it has become the party which is hellbent on undermining it at every turn. This is but one of a series of measures directed towards that end. It would be understandable if there were any logic in the orders that we are debating, but that logic is missing. When similar measures were last brought before the House, we were told that councils would be capped in this financial year only if their expenditure was excessive, or if they acted recklessly or irrationally, or if they intended to prove some kind of distorted political point.

During the previous two years, my authority, the London borough of Brent, was not rate or poll tax-capped. The reason is clear. It did not come into any of the categories outlined by the Government as being ones that would determine whether a council should be capped.

Had the borough been allowed to set the level of poll tax that it had intended to set, it would have meant, in effect, a 17 per cent. cut on the previous year's local taxation. Yet the Government still imposed a cap, and in circumstances that are likely to maximise the hardship for my constituents. It does not make sense to impose a cap in that way.

What will it mean for the already hard-pressed poll tax payers in Brent? We need not rely on anything that can be dismissed as rhetoric or politically motivated invective. We have only to listen to what local government officers say will be the consequences for services. What do they say about social services? The options include the closing of a nursery. I wonder what the hon. Member for Billericay thinks about that. She identified nurseries in her area that will be closed. There will be a reduction of 72 nursery places in my borough.

A flat rate of £1 per person will be charged for those attending family day care centres and a charge of £5 per week for day care. The jobcentre is to be closed; the management of residential homes is to be transferred from the public to the private sector, with the inevitable drop in standards that will follow; a day centre for people with learning difficulties will be closed; there will be standard charges of £3 and £5 per week for home care; and there will be an increase in charges for meals on wheels. It goes on and on and on. My constituents cannot take any more. The borough's services have been pared to the bone and there is nothing left. Although the borough was not capped in the two preceding years, and although it is recognised that it is seeking to put its house in order, the Government are still imposing a cap.

The position of education in the borough is almost worse than that of social services. The officers—not the politicians, of any political party—in the borough say that we are on the verge of losing 350 teachers and that certain evening classes will close. There will be a cut in the number of discretionary awards, when already not a week passes during which a bright and committed young person—very often from a deprived and disadvantaged background—who is trying to make something of his life comes to me saying that he cannot obtain a grant to pursue a vocational course, be it in catering, the law or whatever.

The misery that the measure will compound—not cause, as we have had a decade of misery under this Government—knows no bounds. Social services and education are just two areas. I say nothing about the fabric of the community in Brent, about the quality of life, the environment, the streets and the homes in which people are required to live. The Minister's answer is, "Collect more rents." I recognise and support measures that are taken by local authorities and every encouragement that the Government can give them to ensure that due rents are collected and that the housing department gets its act together. That is important, but it is also important that Conservative Members understand and appreciate the level of deprivation in the community, which is now

making old and disabled people choose between food and heat, and paying the poll tax. That is the reality—*[Interruption.]* I see the hon. Member for Billericay laughing. She should not laugh——

Mrs. Gorman *rose*——

Mr. Boateng: No. The hon. Lady should not laugh. She should be prepared to take on board the extent to which——

Mrs. Gorman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Boateng: No, I do not intend to give way. We have already heard enough from the hon. Lady——

Mrs. Gorman: The hon. Gentleman should not tell untruths in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order.

Mr. Boateng: The reality is that the disadvantaged and the disabled are suffering and cannot afford to pay the poll tax. The orders will make that situation even worse.

Opposition Members make no apology for the anger that we feel about these provisions. I cannot believe that some Conservative Members are oblivious to the suffering that is now being caused in our communities. One need only have eyes to see and ears to hear to know about the cries coming from those who can least afford to pay the poll tax or to suffer the extent of the cuts that are being made in vital services as a result of the legislation.

We shall continue to say that the whole basis on which the calculation of the capping procedure is based is flawed. My constituency has been erroneously designated as an "outer London" borough and has been treated accordingly, yet it has all the problems of an inner-city area. The calculation breaks down when there is an appreciation of the existing deprivation in my constituency.

Let us see what setting the cap level for Brent actually means. The Government relied on a formula of standard spending assessment, in which Brent is classified as an outer-London borough. Although it is the eighth most deprived borough in the whole country, it is designated as an outer-London borough and does not receive the benefits that an inner London borough would receive in terms of the calculation of the level and extent of the cap. Had it done so, it would have been allowed £8·75 million more expenditure. That is the reality. The Government would then have found it reasonable for us to set a poll tax £5 higher than the one that they ultimately sought to cap. That is the way the figures work out. That is the nonsense of this measure.

I ask the Minister who is to reply tomorrow to address the question how a borough such as Brent can have its assessment level calculated as an outer-London borough when it has all the characteristics of an inner-London borough and all the problems of deprivation that such a borough would experience.

The people of Brent want an answer to that. They want to know why the democratic procedures have been swept away in this legislation. They want to know why Ministers and their civil servants seem to have turned a blind eye to the hardship that their measures are causing. They know only too well that answer will there be none. They do not expect anything else from the Government and, in due course, their votes will ensure that this measure is confined to the dustbin, as it so richly deserves to be.

11.49 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I rise to speak tonight on behalf of my local authority, Hammersmith and Fulham but first, I wish to comment on the speeches of the last two Conservative Members who spoke. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) admired the United States system which she would have the Government follow. I remind her that in many United States cities life expectancy for children is at third-world levels. The reason is precisely the type of services that she described.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) is not only confused but, to put it kindly, naive, or, to put it more crudely, childish if he believes that the way in which the Government have drawn up the standard spending assessment does not affect income and expenditure and dramatically affect the services on offer in the local authority and their efficiency. The standard of services impacts on our constituents. All hon. Members, whether Labour or Tory, would do no service to our constituents if they did not draw attention to that. If the hon. Gentleman wants to avoid the question, that is his responsibility, not ours.

The cuts imposed on Hammersmith and Fulham amount to £11·7 million. That is a lot of money and it will hurt a lot of people. One reason why I object to it so strongly is that we know that the Government have fiddled the figures. Many Conservative councillors, to their credit, admit that. When the Government were asked at the last Environment Question Time how many local authorities had complained about their SSA, they refused to answer. The reason why they refused to answer was the same reason why the Secretary of State's speech was so uncharacteristically empty of content. The Government know that Conservative local authorities are as deeply worried as Labour ones about how the poll tax has been assessed and implemented.

It is daft to do what local authorities across the board are being asked to do. I intend to give just one example of many of what I would call perverse incentives. It pays a local authority to close a unit to encourage fostering and adoption and take more children into care. The way in which the Government have fixed the SSA means that an authority receives more if it has more children in care. Yet the aim of a modern social services system is to keep children out of care. The moral of the story is, "Do not do that, or your standard spending assessment will be affected."

The 1981 census has been referred to, from which the Government took much of their information. Hammersmith and Fulham is a classic example of how that is out of date. The Government agreed to let into Britain many Iranians, Vietnamese, Sri Lankan and Polish refugees. Many such refugees live in my constituency. None of them was included in the 1981 census and we receive nothing for them. The composition of the population has changed dramatically since 1981 and the Government should recognise that.

There are even more bizarre examples. The SSA estimates that we have 186·9 km. of roads in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The figure is 189·6 km. I assume that it is a typing error. Poll tax payers in Hammersmith will have to foot the bill for an extra £43,990 because of a typing error, yet the figure cannot be changed. Apparently that is the Government's position.

[Mr. Clive Soley]

Capital spending included in the SSA understates the outstanding debt considerably. The Government have the figures so why do they understate it? The figures are known, and are not secret, but the Government understate the debt in the SSA. If the accounts are wrong on either the income or expenditure side, the council cannot give the level of service required.

More than anything else we need nursery school places. Yet that is an area that is likely to be cut. The CBI, a close friend of the Government, often says that we need to support greater provision of nursery places. If we need to support it, why will the London area, which has fairly good provision of places because of the Inner London education authority, be forced at least to hold back the number of places and in many areas to cut it as a result of the absurd assessment?

We are asked to take over the education function from the Inner London education authority, and the implications are enormous. There is no way that we can find £11·7 million without it having a serious impact on other major services. It is significant that Conservative councillors in Hammersmith and Fulham cannot devise a budget to produce that £11·7 million without major surgery on other services. The Government talk of peripheral areas and of saving a few thousand pounds here and there, but that will have no real impact in producing the money that is needed.

The Government take no account either of leisure areas such as Wormwood scrubs. What are we supposed to do —start charging people if they want to take a walk there? Is that what the Government want? It is certainly what the hon. Member for Billericay wants. The Government impose on local authorities a duty to provide such facilities, so presumably we shall have to charge for them.

The situation in respect of education is desperately serious. Many children come from other boroughs which we then have to bill. The Minister knows that we cannot assume that we shall receive that money within the first 12 months. In many cases, we will not see it for 18 months, yet we will be given no help. The figure could run into millions of pounds. The Minister cannot impose such changes and expect them to have no effect.

My local authority also has what is universally recognised as an excellent service provision for the incredibly high proportion of people in the borough with HIV. That is because a couple of the hospitals in the area specialise in that condition. Are we supposed to cut that service? Expenditure on such facilities can only increase. There are also housing implications because the local authority is bound to find homes for HIV sufferers. Nevertheless, there is no recognition by the Government of that burden. If we have to make cuts of £11 million, such services will be at risk. The local authority does not want that to happen. If the Government want those services provided, as they say they do, they must work out the SSA properly.

The Government have made no assessment either of community care implications. We know that those plans are being abandoned because of their likely effect on poll tax levels. Those services are incredibly expensive, but local authorities should be able to provide them.

The Secretary of State complained about the expense of court actions. The additional cost to my local authority of collecting the poll tax is £2,900,000, which makes any court costs pale into insignificance. If the right hon. Gentleman is suggesting that we are wasting money by taking him to court, I say that he wastes much more. Let us also remember that not only would capping be illegal and unconstitutional in most western democracies, but so would the poll tax itself. It would be deemed unconstitutional in the United States, West Germany and a number of other countries because it is not based on the individual's ability to pay.

As to the Government's assessment of inflation, not even Conservative Members can believe that it is currently running at 4·76 per cent. It is 9·7 per cent. As a consequence, local authorities throughout the country have incurred extra expenditure. That level of inflation reflects the Government's incompetent management of the economy. After all, we were supposed to have zero inflation by now. That was the Government's great aim and the reason given for all that we have suffered.

It was said that the purpose of cutting expenditure was to bring down inflation, so that we would by now have an efficient economy. It has not worked out like that. The reality is very different. I would rather see the position we had in 1979, when we still had a manufacturing industry that could pay for the future of the people of this country, than the present position.

The poll tax is not only unfair, it is a large nail in the coffin of local government democracy in Britain. Tory councillors as well as Labour councillors believe that to be the case. When the Tory councillors in West Oxfordshire resigned they did so not just because of the poll tax, but because of the way in which the Government were using the housing benefits and housing issues to limit the rights and discretions of councils.

At the end of the day the elections matter. We won the elections and if the Government do not like it, they should challenge us at the ballot box and not in the way that they are conducting this debate.

It being Twelve o'clock, the debate stood adjourned, pursuant to Order [10 July].

Debate to be resumed this day.

Mark Woodward

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

12 midnight

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): The case that has prompted me to call for this debate is that of the tragic death while on holiday last summer in north Devon of 13-year-old Mark Woodward whose family live at Buglawton in my constituency. I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friend the Minister and the House would wish me to extend to Mark's parents, Jim and Eileen Woodward, to his sister, Lisa, and to his family and friends our deepest sympathy in their loss. To lose a child is a cruel and deep blow which can never be forgotten and which changes irrevocably the lives of those left behind. My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr Speller) would want to be associated with that expression of sympathy, not least because he will participate later in this debate.

If anything good is to come out of this case, it will do so because of the determination of the Woodward family to ascertain the true facts of what happened, have them acknowledged in public—which this Adjournment debate achieves—and, as a result, instigate changes to ensure that such a tragedy can be avoided in future.

It may help the House if I recount briefly what happened. Mark was staying at the home of his uncle, Mr. John Smith, in Ilfracombe for a week of his summer holidays. At approximately 4 pm in the afternoon of Wednesday 16 August he went to Rapparee cove with his cousin Ben also aged 13.

Rapparee cove is a well-known and popular bathing beach. The boys played on the rocks, as young boys will, and amused themselves by jumping from the rocks into the sea. Mark's cousin Ben relates that about 10 minutes later the sea became rough with the incoming tide while he was still in the water. He was unable to climb out on to the rock where Mark was standing. Ben was thrown continually against the rocks, but Mark was too high up to reach down and assist him. Ben was obviously getting into difficulties.

In an act of great bravery, which has since been recognised posthumously, Mark Woodward jumped into the sea to save his cousin. He grabbed Ben's legs and forced him up to the surface. For a while they were both flung against the rocks and later Ben was found to be badly bruised on his back and legs.

A large wave broke around them which swept Ben up onto the rocks, but which carried Mark to more open water. Ben saw Mark climb momentarily onto a partly submerged rock before being swept back into the sea. Witnesses on the beach relate that Mark turned in the water, removed his beach shoes and waved to onlookers, seemingly to inform them that he was all right.

It then appears that Mark, who was a very strong swimmer, decided to swim with the current around the slight headland into an adjacent cove where the water appeared calmer, presumably also to wait for assistance.

An inquest was held at which evidence was given on how and when the coastguard was alerted and what action was subsequently taken. The questions that remained unanswered, and which in some cases were unasked, caused Mr. Woodward to develop profound concerns about the way in which a 999 emergency call to the coastguard by a witness, Mr. Kevin Richards, had been handled. Those questions have highlighted concern widely felt, I understand, in the south-west about the way in which emergency coastguard services are now provided to the north Devon coast.

Because of the persistence of Mr. Woodward and his family the facts have emerged and it is clear that the rescue services were not activated soon enough because of human error and misjudgment at the Milford Haven and Swansea stations.

We now know that the first 999 call at Swansea was from Mr. Kift reporting one person who appeared to be cut off by the tide. I understand that that is not an uncommon event at Rapparee. The second 999 call, which was re-routed via Milford Haven because of a fault, was answered a minute and a half later. It was from Mr. Richards who reported clearly that two lads at Rapparee were in the water and being swept onto the rocks.

At the inquest Mr. Richards was subjected to cross-examination by the solicitor representing the coastguard, who seemed to want to suggest that Mr. Richards had said that two boys were "trapped against the rocks". That was not so and the British Telecom tapes proved beyond doubt that Kevin Richards acted correctly and gave accurate information which, sadly, was not acted upon immediately.

It was not until Mr. Richards's second emergency call, answered by the coastguard at 4.35, that the helicopter at Chivenor was tasked. It arrived on the scene 10 minutes later. That helicopter should have been, activated immediately it was known that two boys were in the water. The correct evaluation of the situation was not made by personnel on duty at Swansea: if it had been the outcome might have been different for the Woodward family.

This experience begs the question, what went wrong? In an answer to a parliamentary question that I put down inquiring of my hon. Friend the Minister the reasons for the delay in sending the rescue services he replied that it was not considered that there was any delay on the part of Her Majesty's Coastguard at Swansea in acting on the information received regarding the tragic incident.

It is patently obvious to one and all that there was delay and that my hon. Friend was gravely in error in giving the House that reply. Furthermore, in a letter in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North, he stated:

> "Given the initial information received from the Swansea centre from a known reliable source, a member of the RNLI, the response was correct and conformed with current laid down instructions and advice"

That reply neatly side-stepped the fact that the information given by a second source within a minute and a half of the first source was totally ignored. It is obvious that current laid down instructions and advice need to be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

The chief coastguard is presiding over a service that is understaffed, underpaid and most important, attempting to do a job without adequate training and retraining. I have never met the chief coastguard in person, but I have seen him interviewed on television when he has stonewalled questions. I am amazed and horrified by his arrogant and high-handed manner, which can do nothing for the reputation or the morale of the service that he heads. My hon. Friend the Minister must bear that in mind and address the two other questions.

What part has the closure of Hartland played in the lack of local knowledge of the north Devon coast, which is apparent from the confusion shown at Swansea on 16

[Mrs. Ann Winterton]

August, as recorded in the transcript of the British Telecom tapes? Why does the coastguard service rely so heavily on auxiliaries and volunteers—excellent individuals though they may be—who are totally inadequately equipped even to contact each other and the coastguard stations in an emergency? I should have thought that good, reliable communication was absolutely essential.

To restore public confidence in the coastguard service in north Devon and elsewhere, the Minister must take urgent and positive action. I hope that he will respond accordingly tonight.

12.9 am

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I associate myself with everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) said and will not seek to cover the same ground.

It is fair to say that the Minister has been pursued—indeed, harried—by parliamentary questions in the past 12 months. It is interesting that he has gone from being, frankly, complacent to somewhat defensive. None the less, at no stage has he admitted that any errors were made. Those who have heard the tapes know that the messages from the public were models of clarity. The responses, particularly from Milford Haven, were the most awfully muddled affairs that anyone has ever heard.

I ask the Minister—this is the first time that I have done so—to institute some form of inquiry, within the Department by all means, but one in which the public may have some input. Since the debate was announced—and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton for raising the issue—I have had calls from people who work in the coastguard, lifeboat services and almost all the emergency services saying the same thing—that the coastguard cannot continue to attempt to cover a large and potentially dangerous coastline and cliff line with their present resources.

This is not the "onlie begetter" of the problem. The Hartland closure may or may not be fundamental, but the key error was the re-routing of a telephone call. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), who cannot be present tonight, asked me to say that the problem is the lack of local knowledge when there is an emergency. That does follow from the closure of Hartland. It is an anomaly that all the emergency services are run far away from north Devon, although Swansea is closer than the ambulance service and the 999 service for the area, run from Exeter.

It is time that my hon. Friend the Minister and the Department came out from behind the barricade. Even at this late date, he might say, on behalf of the Department, that he regrets any error that was made. I find it intolerable that for almost 12 months we have had only complacency and a defensive attitude.

About a year ago, the Ministry of Defence almost removed our greatly admired and respected 22 Search and Rescue squadron helicopters from RAF Chivenor. Fortunately, that was prevented but the Department of Transport must ensure that there is always helicopter cover. When there is a problem that requires instant search and rescue usually only a helicopter will do although young Mark was very close to rescue all the time and small boats from the harbour could have saved him if communications had been better.

I have met auxiliaries in north Devon and have no complaint about the calibre of the staff, but I do not believe that their equipment is up to date enough or good enough. I am told—it is almost inconceivable—that the pay for an auxiliary coastguard is about £2·40 an hour or less and that training is undertaken in their own time. I hope that the Minister will say that that is not so; if we are paying that sum to dedicated men and women not only in north Devon but throughout the country something is very wrong.

I take all the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton made about the radio telephone signals and about confused information going back and forth, but alas there is no way of stopping people putting themselves at peril. There will always be accidents, and everyone is aware that everything possible was done, but it is infuriating that in fact something could have been done if the first call from Kevin Richards, which was a model of clarity, had been picked up and correctly transmitted. It was not until his second call was made some 13 minutes later that the Swansea coast guard picked up the urgency and reacted instantly. By that time the damage had been done. We shall never know whether the boy could have been saved, but his chances would certainly have been a great deal better had the helicopter been scrambled in the first, not the 13th, minute.

We cannot stop people making fools of themselves. People climb about on cliffs that they should not climb. King Canute was right: the tide does come in, and cover's people's feet, and more, if they are in the wrong place. There is still no way to stop people buying a small boat, putting it in the water and setting out to sea with their families—without a pennyworth of training, without a licence and without any checks on their safety equipment.

This is an inevitable problem in a free country such as ours. North Devon is doing well: tourism is strong, the economy is booming and the population is growing. People will buy boats and good luck to them, but why does not the Department ensure that they carry proper equipment with them? I have seen people waterskiing without flotation equipment; they could drown when they fall.

I beg the Government not to be complacent or to claim that they are doing as well as they could. The auxiliary coastguard needs equipment and more resources are needed for training. I suspect that the force is undermanned, whether Hartland station is reopened or not.

The Coastguards are not asking for this, as far as I know, but it needs someone in the control room with local knowledge of the north Devon area, who can instantly give information to the rescue services. Had someone in my part of the world heard the words "Rapparee cove", he would have known immediately where it was. But that was not known at Milford Haven or Swansea.

This was a single sad tragedy. Nothing will bring that gallant boy back, and I understand that he is to receive posthumously an award for bravery. I honour him, and share the grief of his family. It is our duty to take action before more accidents happen by ensuring that the coastguard has adequate resources to do the job, so that, if accidents do happen, they will not be the fault of the Government.

12.17 am

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) has raised what can only be described as a sad case. The word that comes to mind in association with this tragedy is sadness—sadness that efforts to save Mark Woodward failed, and sadness for his parents at their loss. This tragedy is deeply regretted, and all parents, of whom I am one, will join me in offering our sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Woodward.

I know that the coastguard officers involved directly or indirectly in this incident feel particularly upset that in this case their efforts were unsuccessful, for although they successfully assisted more than 11,000 people last year, it is perhaps natural that an incident such as this, which occurred during a holiday by the sea so close inshore and so near to rescue facilities, tends to overshadow this excellent record.

I should like to deal with some of the points made by my hon. Friend, and with some of the results of my investigations into the case. I joined my hon. Friends the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) and Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on a visit to Ilfracombe and Hartland not long ago.

The death of Mark Woodward in the sea off Rapparee cove, Ilfracombe, occurred on 16 August. Mark and his cousin Ben were playing on and off the rocks into the sea. Conditions were not ideal and the cousin got into difficulties; Mark bravely jumped in to assist his cousin. The cousin then managed to get to safety by his own efforts, but Mark, despite being a competent swimmer, failed to do so.

It has been reported that there were numerous holidaymakers watching the incident from the clifftop surrounding the bay. But until a local man, Mr. Kevin Richards, was made aware of the incident, no alarm was raised. Mr. Richards made a 999 emergency call which, due to a fault on the British Telecom line to Swansea, was redirected to Milford Haven coastguard. The information then had to be relayed from Milford Haven to Swansea coastguard. The loss of time was minimal. At the same time a 999 call was being received at Swansea from a member of the lifeboat launching crew, who was on the pier at Ilfracombe, to the effect that he could see one person cut off by the tide. Swansea coastguard thus had information on the incident from two sources. One was via Milford Haven and the other was direct from Ilfracombe. Both sources suggested that the problem related to a person or persons cut off by the tide.

Given this information, Swansea coastguard took the appropriate action. Even at high water it is possible to rescue people who are cut off by the tide from the landward side of the cove. The normal action is to call out the auxiliary coastguard cliff rescue team to lead people out using the cliff path. This was the action taken in this case.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: The point behind my remarks was that the first telephone call gave the information that one person was cut off. I said also that that was a common occurrence. The second telephone call, which came through a minute and half later, made it clear that two boys were in the water—in the sea. Why was not that message compared with the previous one? Why did not someone twig at that stage that the first message may not have been 100 per cent. accurate?

Mr. McLoughlin: I promise that I shall deal with that important issue.

Some 15 minutes later, Mr. Richards dialled 999 again, and on that occasion he was connected direct to Swansea. He was very concerned that nothing was being done. He said that someone was in the water and would drown before help arrived. At this stage, realising for the first time that someone was in the water, Swansea coastguard immediately called for helicopter assistance and the launch of the Ilfracombe lifeboat. Tragically, the helicopter arrived too late.

On 15 September, an inquest was held into the death of Mark Woodward and a formal verdict of accidental death by drowning was recorded. The coroner saw no reason to criticise the actions of the coastguard. I would like to record that all the coastguard's documentary evidence pertinent to the incident was available to the coroner. This included signals, logs and the coastguard's own analysis of the incident. The coroner was advised that tape recordings of all telephone and radio conversations had been impounded and could be made available. As the tapes can be played only by using large and cumbersome multitrack recorders, extracts from the tapes had been made on standard cassettes for the benefit of the court.

Immediately before the inquest the evidence, including the cassette tapes, was taken to a meeting in the coroner's office. Present at the meeting were counsel for the coastguard, the coroner and counsel for the family. The tapes were pointed out to the latter, but he elected not to listen to them. Three weeks later, in the absence of further interest, the multitrack——

Mr. Speller: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am short of time and I want to cover the points that have been made.

Mr. Speller: I have something to say as well

Mr. McLoughlin: I ask my hon. Friend to bear with me. I want to place the facts on the record as concisely as I can.

The tapes were wiped after three weeks and put back into use, as is normal practice. One member of the family subsequently wrote to the coroner alleging perjury by the coastguard and claiming to have information which had been deliberately withheld from the inquest. Such were the contents of the letter that the coroner was obliged to put the matter in the hands of the police.

The police investigation included reading all the documentation, listening to the cassette extracts and interviewing all concerned. As part of the investigation, the police took possession of the BT master tapes of the 999 calls, to which reference had previously not been made. British Telecom holds the tapes for three months before returning them to service, as against the 30-day cycle operated by the coastguard. The report on the investigation was passed to the Crown prosecution service, which found that there was no case to answer either for perjury or any other offence.

Following the return of the tapes to BT, they were made available to the family. On those tapes, Mr. Richards can be clearly heard to say, "They are in the water." This is because the tapes are recorded at point of source. Mr. Richard's voice comes out much louder than that of the

[Mr. McLoughlin]

coastguard operator. Conversely, on the coastguard cassette extracts, there is evidence that the line was poor. The voice of the coastguard operator can be heard clearly repeating back to Mr. Richards his immediately previous words, thus interfering with the final phrase, "They are in the water."

It is accepted by Her Majesty's coastguard that the officer at Milford Haven could have dealt better with the re-routed 999 call. The handling of 999 calls, not just in this case, but in the service generally, has been and is continuing to be addressed by coastguard headquarters, through the coastguard training centre and individual regional controllers.

In considering the details of the case, I remind hon. Members how easy it is to be wise after the event.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way yet again and I am delighted to hear that he feels that the matter could have been better handled than it was. That has been obvious to everyone who has shown an interest in the case. But it is with great sadness that I must tell my hon. Friend that most of what he has said tonight has shown that there has been an absolute whitewash. I only wish that he had been able to answer the direct question that I asked him earlier.

Mr. McLoughlin: I cannot answer all the points that my hon. Friend put to me and I am trying to be as helpful as possible by dealing with the incident in as factual a way as possible. I assure my hon. Friend that the incident has caused me deep concern. When the life of a young person is so tragically lost, anyone who has to deal with the matter is filled with horror. That applies to the coastguards, too. They do not want to recover bodies. They are there to try to rescue people.

Let me deal with what has occurred since. I caution against drawing conclusions which do not recognise how matters appeared to those directly concerned at the time. Reacting to an emergency is always difficult, as it requires a quick response to information which may be incomplete or inaccurate.

As in many tragic accidents, I suggest that Mark Woodward's death was not the result of the action or inaction of any one person or authority. Rather it was a succession of unfortunate circumstances which independently might have been insignificant but in combination were fatal.

Having visited the area, I am satisfied that there has been no reduction in the capability of the coastguard to respond to search and rescue incidents in north Devon. Nevertheless, it has been pointed out to me by my hon. Friends the Members for Torridge and Devon, West and for Devon, North that there remains a feeling among the community that the coastguard service in north Devon could be further improved. Taking their opinions and combining them with my own reflections, I have agreed a number of measures.

An additional patrol vehicle has been placed in the area. The number of auxiliary coastguard patrols has been increased. Familiarisation patrols have been conducted along the north Devon and Somerset coasts by all regular officers from Swansea. When Hartland was closed, its officers were transferred to Swansea, so those officers were not suddenly lost.

In addition, I have approved a doubling in the number of personal pagers available to the north Devon auxiliary coastguard companies. That was a particular point made to me by auxiliary coastguards when I was in north Devon. I have also agreed to the establishment, on an experimental basis, of a local liaison body for north Devon, involving the district councils, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Ministry of Defence, the coastguards and all other interested bodies involved in providing search and rescue in that area. I hope that those initiatives will restore confidence in the coastguard.

We must all appreciate that, however regretful, lives will always be lost around our coast. The sea is always potentially dangerous. However, it must be emphasised that last year the coastguard co-ordinated 6,800 incidents —the highest ever. As has been said, people sometimes pay huge amounts of money for equipment but go out to sea with no experience. However, that was not the case here. Mark Woodward was a competent swimmer and the tragedy is deeply to be regretted.

Nearly 40 per cent. of such incidents involve recreational users of the sea and shore. That is why the Department of Transport, as part of its "safety on the move" campaign, has recently launched a coastal safety campaign. That represents a major new thrust in publicity directed at recreational users of the sea, the aim being to ensure safe enjoyment of the sea by all. I hope that that will help to reduce the number of incidents round our shores, particularly in the summer holiday season, and the sad tragedies which so often occur round our shores at holiday times.

I appreciate the deep anguish felt by Mr. and Mrs. Woodford. I can only say that I regret the incident.

Mr. Speller: In view of what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton and myself, can we not have the inquiry that all the people in the west country now demand?

Mr. McLoughlin: A review of the role of auxiliary coastguard officers has been completed and we are considering its results to see what measures we can take. When I visited my hon. Friend's constituency, I talked to a number of the auxiliary coastguards and others involved in the incident. We discussed a number of particular issues and I have tried to go some way towards meeting their anxieties. I hope that——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having been continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 12 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [25 June],

That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment to Clause 3, page 3, line 10, to leave out '85' and insert '85E', instead thereof:

Debate further adjourned till Wednesday 18 July at Seven o'clock.

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration of Lords amendment read.
To be considered on Thursday 19 July.

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 19 July.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 19 July.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [26 February],

That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 19 July.

GREAT YARMOUTH PORT AUTHORITY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Read a Second time, and committed.

Mr. Speaker: As the remaining seven private Bills set down for Second Reading have blocking motions, with the leave of the House I shall put them as a single group.

HEATHROW EXPRESS RAILWAY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 19 July.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [10 May],

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 19 July.

SOUTHAMPTON RAPID TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 19 July.

EXMOUTH DOCKS BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [29 March],

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 19 July.

KILLINGHOLME GENERATING STATIONS (ANCILLARY POWERS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 19 July.

INTERIM REPORT ON THE MAGUIRE CASE

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, That she will be graciously pleased to give directions that there be laid before this House a Return of the Interim Report on the Maguire Case: The Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the convictions arising out of the bomb attacks in Guildford and Woolwich in 1974, by the Right honourable Sir John May.—*[Mr. Waddington.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the Home Secretary to answer Question 1, I wish to make a brief statement. During the exchanges in the House yesterday, reference was made to the possibility of the Maguire case being raised at Home Office questions today. I am informed that at 11 o'clock this morning the case was formally referred to the Court of Appeal. It is therefore now sub judice, and in accordance with the resolution of the House relating to sub judice matters I must ask hon. Members not to refer to it during questions today.

Mr. Hattersley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I first make it clear that the Opposition accept, without qualification, the principle that the House must neither influence the courts on individual decisions nor appear to be attempting to do so? That being said, we are presented this afternoon with a real denial of hon. Members' rights. At 2.30 pm today the Home Secretary published the interim report from Sir John May. Everybody in the world is entitled to comment on it except the British House of Commons. That is intolerable, particularly as yesterday you, Mr. Speaker, told hon. Members, in perfectly good faith, that an opportunity for raising these matters might arise today. Will you confirm that the reason why your proper prohibition applies concerns not the way in which the May report was published but the simple fact that the Home Secretary chose to refer the Maguire case to the Court of Appeal this morning? Will you further confirm that had he chosen to refer it this afternoon, the House would not have been denied its proper rights? As the Home Secretary has behaved in that way, both sides of the House would welcome your guidance on what can be done to preserve our proper rights.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the House is aware that I answered a question yesterday saying that I was going to refer the matter to the Court of Appeal. In those circumstances, it is somewhat difficult to see how I could fail to do that which I said I would do. I know that you, Mr. Speaker.

have some latitude in these matters, and if you would allow me some latitude I shall do my best to answer questions on the point.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The matter is clearly sub judice, and it is an important constitutional principle that Members of the Legislature should not pronounce on the guilt or innocence of individuals facing criminal charges during the course of their trial or appeal.

Mr. Waddington: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Of course I would not challenge that proposition for one moment, but I am wondering whether it would be possible for me, in answer to questions, to give the grounds on which Sir John May decided that it would be right to ask me to refer the case.

Mr. Speaker: I am not certain that that would be in order under our sub judice rules. It would be an evaluation of the matters before the Appeal Court.

Mr. Maclennan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The difficulty that the House is in this afternoon stems from the fact that the Secretary of State, in making his answer yesterday, did not at the same time publish the interim report and make a statement. That would have enabled the House to ask him questions about it at that time before the matter of sub judice arose. This situation is entirely due to the Home Secretary.

Sir John Wheeler: Further to that point or order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I am the constituency Member of Parliament representing the Maguire family, so I am especially familiar with the circumstances of the case. The Maguire family are modest people who seek only that this issue is proceeded with in the proper judicial way. I have no cause to raise any point on the Floor of the House this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: I have made—*[Interruption.]* Order. I have made my ruling on this matter. It is important that we uphold the major and important constitutional principles regarding matters which are sub judice. We should proceed with Question Time.

Mr. Hattersley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to pursue the matter further—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] No. I hope that my hon. Friends will take the same course so that we can pursue questions. I rise only to clarify the request made to you, Mr. Speaker, by the Home Secretary. As I understand it, the Home Secretary, in a mood of apparent reasonableness, asked whether the rule could in some way be eroded. My understanding is that the Home Secretary was, like me, told before he came to the House that no erosion was possible. Posing in that way does him no credit.

Mr. Stanbrook: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is not it correct that the Home Secretary has expressed the position correctly on this matter because the essence of the sub judice rule is to prevent juries from being affected in their consideration by external comment? It does not apply in respect of the same matters to a court of learned judges who are well enabled professionally to discard such matters and to disregard public comment.

Mr. Speaker: I assure the House—and I share the concern expressed on the matter—that I have looked most carefully at this issue. I am satisfied that the sub judice rule does apply to this matter. We must uphold the sub judice rules of the House.

Mr. Waddington: I think that I might be able to help the House because I am anxious, first, to do what is correct and, secondly, to follow the precedents set by my predecessors. My right hon. Friend the present Foreign Secretary made a statement in the case of the Guildford Four after the decision had been made by the Court of Appeal. I am perfectly prepared to say here and now that I shall be more than willing to make a statement at that juncture.

Mr. Flannery: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is this on a different matter?

Mr. Flannery: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said precisely the opposite to what he has just said. He said that, as Home Office questions were today, hon. Members would be able to ask all the questions. Yesterday, there was a written question No. 220. The question and the answer came from the Home Secretary, yet now we are forestalled by the Home Secretary in a squalid and crude manoeuvre.

Mr. Speaker: We should get on with Question Time now.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Pub Bombings

1. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the nine Surrey police officers who were in Birmingham at the time of the pub bombings have been indentified.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said in reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 30 October 1989, it is not known whether any Surrey officers were in Birmingham at the time of the pub bombings, although I understand that a team of nine Surrey officers was in the west midlands area at the time. That is among the matters relating to the case of the Birmingham pub bombings which are currently under investigation by the Devon and Cornwall police on behalf of the chief constable of the West Midlands police and we await their report.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Minister make the names of those policemen available to the solicitors acting for the people convicted of the Guildford pub bombings and to the solicitors acting for the Birmingham Six? Will he try to find out exactly what they were doing in the area at that time?

Mr. Patten: Making known the names of the police officers could do two things: first, I am advised that it could hinder the police in the conduct of their examination, which I am sure no hon. Member would want; secondly, it could lead to the integrity and probity of a number of individual police officers being questioned

unfairly. I entirely agree with the hon. Lady that it is right to try to put right any injustices if they have occurred. However, in seeking to do that, one should not inadvertently thereby cause other potential injustices to occur, although I know that that is not the hon. Lady's intention.

Dame Jill Knight: Can my right hon. Friend suggest why Opposition Members constantly seek to denigrate the police while frequently failing to acknowledge that the Birmingham bombing crime, which killed many people and injured far more, was a dastardly crime? Opposition Members claim to know who committed that crime, but shield them and fail to provide evidence such as the fact that one of the bombers had in his possession a receipt for six cheap alarm clocks to make the bombs.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend represents a west midlands constituency and I entirely agree with her that the West Midlands police and all serving police officers throughout the United Kingdom deserve the support of all hon. Members in the House. In response to the second part of my hon. Friend's question, I believe that it is important that all hon. Members should make available to the investigating authorities information that they say is available to them. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South has pursued a number of cases with great interest. During an Adjournment debate on 14 June he said that he had the names of people who could assist the police with their inquiries. To the best of my knowledge, he has not yet made those names available.

Ms. Short: Does the Minister know why his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) seeks to suggest that anyone who seeks justice and to ensure that anybody who is wrongly convicted should be properly freed is somehow guilty of maligning the police? Does not he think that that shows that the hon. Lady has little confidence in British justice and is willing to see innocent people wrongly held in prison?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and I and all hon. Members should have the maximum confidence in British justice and in the British police. During our search for evidence of miscarriages, no matter how passionately we feel, we should make it clear that we support the basic fundamental right and duty of British justice and of the British police to do what they can to ensure that we live in a stable society. I sometimes feel that occasionally hon. Members forget to say what they should in terms of supporting the police.

Sir John Wheeler: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that this issue requires the greatest care and scrutiny in the course of the inquiry. Does he further agree that associated with the inquiry is the role of the forensic science service? He will recall the recent Home Affairs Select Committee report on that subject. Will he confirm that some of the issues attached to the inquiry relate to many years ago and that today's service is different and has yet to be improved still further?

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We are well aware of his Select Committee's recommendations. As he said, the offences were committed a very long time ago. Since then, the forensic science service has been investigated in a report by Sir Ronald Mason, a fellow of the Royal Society. That report was published in 1985. Enormous strides forward have been made in both the administration and the scientific procedures of the forensic science service. As it proceeds towards its possible new status as an executive agency, questions of whether it should automatically be made available to help the defence as well as the prosecution must be considered.

Mr. Mullin: Will the Minister confirm—I do not think that the gap between us is as great as he sometimes makes out—that, if one is interested in catching terrorists, it cannot be in anybody's interests to put away the wrong people? Will he confirm further that those who have pursued the Guildford, Woolwich, Maguire and Birmingham cases remorselessly over a long period of years are motivated solely by the belief that the wrong people have been convicted, and that we have been proved right so far in two out of three cases, despite a great deal of abuse heaped upon our heads by some of the Minister's hon. Friends, although not all of them? Will he confirm that there is absolutely no point in keeping innocent people in gaol? They are not hostages to be held there simply because the police are incapable of catching the correct people.

Mr. Patten: I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Sunderland, South—there is nothing between us at all in wishing to see alleged miscarriages of justice put right; of course, there is not. However, I thought that the hon. Gentleman was going to tell the House that which he told the House during an Adjournment debate on 14 June, only about a month ago—that he had material evidence in the shape of two more names. It is recorded in *Hansard* that he would make those names available. I plead with him now, in the interests of putting right the injustices that he alleges occurred, only to give those names immediately to the prosecuting authorities. I cannot understand why he does not.

Mr. Kilfedder: Is not it nauseating in the extreme that the IRA, which could provide the names and conclusive evidence of the guilt of terrorists responsible for an atrocity, fails to do so and allows people to linger in gaol, yet those IRA people use such cases to denigrate the United Kingdom, the police force and our legal system, which is the finest in the world? Should not we bear it in mind that the IRA gives no right of appeal to the people whom it murders? That is something which people will not forgive.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is quite right. Hon. Members should listen to the moderate but passionate way in which he has put his case, speaking on behalf of the people in Northern Ireland who have suffered so terribly over the years. All hon. Members, whatever their political affiliations, owe it as a duty to the House and to the people, if they have information that can help the police in the pursuit of alleged miscarriages of justice, to tell the prosecuting authorities as soon as possible.

Mr. Mullin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has now three times accused me of not providing information——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order; it is a matter of argument.

Mr. Mullin: It is a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order for me that I can deal with?

Mr. Mullin: The Minister three times accused me of not providing information that I undertook to provide. In fact, the Devon and Cornwall police inquiry has been in touch with me, and I am in the process of providing it with just that information.

European Council of Ministers

2. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the last three meetings he attended of the Council of Ministers; what subjects were discussed; and which Ministers were in attendance.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): My right hon. and learned Friend has not attended any meetings of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Welsh: Does the Minister accept that my concern about the Scottish Office not being represented at European Council of Ministers meetings extends to the Home Department and its failure to attend? Is the Minister really saying that there are no important issues that should have been discussed with European colleagues during the past months and years? Does that confirm Britain's role as a part-time, semi-detached member of the European Community and extend to the Home Department the isolationist and anti-European ideas of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

Mr. Lloyd: The simple reason is that Council of Ministers meetings are attended by Ministers who have responsibility for the issues to be discussed there. Home affairs do not come under the treaty of Rome. Therefore, my right hon. and learned Friend attends the Trevi meetings, in which Ministers with responsibility for home affairs and immigration discuss the issues that are important to them. My right hon. and learned Friend attends all those meetings, as did his predecessor.

Electronic Surveillance Devices

3. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to introduce regulations restricting the supply and sale of electronic surveillance listening devices.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): No, Sir, for the reasons given in response to the debate on electronic surveillance devices initiated by my hon. Friend on 13 March 1989.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is outrageous that anyone, especially criminals, can buy such pieces of equipment, which can be used to snoop into other people's affairs, at a number of retail outlets in Oxford street and in high streets around the country? Does he further agree that that could constitute an invasion of privacy? Although it is not well known outside the House, companies around the country are increasingly aware of that problem because they have to buy countersurveillance equipment to deal with it. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that is outrageous and will he do something about it?

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend has raised an important question, which has been looked into and explored in the House on several occasions. It would be difficult to define those devices to be made illegal without the definition being overtaken by technological advance. It is highly unlikely that there is any device that could not be represented by somebody as having some legitimate use. Therefore, it is probably very much better to go down the path recommended by Mr. Calcutt's report and to identify where a serious mischief is done by the placing of a surveillance device on private property to obtain, in the case recommended by Calcutt, personal information for publication.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Home Secretary aware that there is a wider problem? Many instruments are being used for the furtherance of crime and the Home Office must do more to stop the sale of such things by direct mail. I refer, for example, to the direct mailing of skeleton keys to members of the public, which can easily be used for opening car doors. That is an obnoxious and dangerous activity, which should be brought under review of the Home Secretary—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Waddington: Clearly, the main question has nothing whatever to do with the sale of keys; has a lot to do with the sale of surveillance devices. The hon. Gentleman has not addressed his mind or his question to the two difficulties that I identified in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran)—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to listen to Home Office questions.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Colvin: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that during the passage of my Computer Misuse Bill, which is now, happily, enacted, the House seriously considered the possibility of making electronic eavesdropping a criminal offence, but rightly concluded that it was almost impossible to do so? On the basis that prevention is better than cure, will my right hon. and learned Friend reconsider the suggestions made by my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) because this is a growing problem, which the Government must address?

Mr. Waddington: Obviously, in deference to my hon. Friend, I shall reconsider that matter. However, I cannot do more than repeat the difficulties that I identified when replying to the original question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on all his work to get his private Member's Bill on the statute book.

Mr. Darling: The Home Secretary has accepted that it will be possible to legislate to control the use of listening devices by the press. Surely, therefore, it is also possible to address the problems, which are now becoming quite common, of the sale and supply of those electronic surveillance devices and their uses? If the Home Secretary wanted to do something about that problem, surely all the resources that are available to him tend to suggest that

something could be done about it, not only in the simple case of the invasion of privacy by certain members of the press.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman has not addressed his mind to the very real difficulties that I identify. It would be easy to define devices that would attract the sanctions of the criminal law, but I find it difficult to believe that within a few months other mischevious devices that would not be covered by the prohibition would not be on the market. New devices are developed as a result of technological advance. In any event, I repeat what I said earlier: it is unlikely that we could point to any single device for which somebody could not allege a perfectly legitimate use. The most obvious example is that any hearing device can be dressed up as some form of hearing aid. One could produce a whole list, including surveillance devices in shops that are there to identify shoplifters. Time and again, such devices would attract the criminal law because of the wide definition.

Juvenile Crime

4. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the trend in the level of juvenile crime in the first quarter of this year.

Mr. John Patten: The number of known juvenile offenders has been falling since 1985. Last year there were under 100,000, compared with 176,000 in 1985. We do not yet have figures for the first quarter of this year.

Mrs. Hicks: May I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to the unfortunate rise in juvenile crime in my area in the first quarter of this year? The rise in joy-riding among those under 17 who have never passed a driving test is particularly worrying. Does my right hon. Friend agree that a significant factor contributing to juvenile crime is the lack of discipline and parental responsibility in the home? Does he agree that the sooner that we legislate to make parents more accountable for the actions of their children by making them appear in court with their children and pay the price of their deeds, the better it will be for all our constituents who have to bear the consequences of that lack of responsibility?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The plans that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary published in his White Paper to find new ways of making parents more responsible for preventing their children from offending—an idea which would have been unfashionable 10 years ago—have been widely welcomed in the country. I hope that we can proceed to legislate as soon as possible.

Mr. Sheerman: Why does the Minister continue to shuffle responsibility for the enormous increase in the crimes committed in Britain on to parents or anyone else, but refuse to admit that it is the fault of the values that his party has represented during the past 10 years? His party has introduced a rottweiler society rather than a just society. When will the Minister announce plans for crime prevention policies that provide creative outlets for our young people?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is rather excitable this afternoon. The Labour Front-Bench approach to why crime rises and falls is extraordinarily naive. Sometimes the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) say that crime rises because of poverty, but on other occasions they say that it rises because of affluence. *The Guardian* was entirely right two weeks ago when it criticised the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, who is laughing there on the Front Bench, for his knee-jerk reaction to the recently published crime figures. If anything demonstrates to the House that the Labour party does not understand that we are all responsible for helping to prevent crime, it is the hon. Gentleman's question.

Ealing Police Consultative Committee

5. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on funding of the Ealing borough police consultative committee; and what changes there have been in its membership.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Funding for the Ealing community and police consultative group is provided from the Metropolitan police fund, as is the case with all 41 police-community consultative groups which operate in the Metropolitan police district. The cost of running the Ealing group in 1989-90 was £33,000.

I understand that Ealing borough council has recently appointed representatives to the Ealing group. I welcome that move, and urge the three London borough councils —Brent, Hackney and Lambeth—which have yet to take up their places on their local groups, to do so.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Ealing borough police consultative committee has done an excellent job for several years? Will he also confirm that Labour councillors refused to attend a single meeting when Labour was in control of Ealing borough council and that the same councillors spent millions of pounds of ratepayers' money and employed 10 staff to abuse the police and make their work difficult? They were led by a Labour councillor who was the deputy leader of another borough. Does not that give the lie to Labour Front-Bench spokesmen who pretend to support the police? They do not.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right. The Ealing consultative group has been doing extremely good work without Ealing borough council representation, but it will now be able to do better work because it has that support. It is extremely interesting that of the five councils that did not send representatives to their consultative group, the residents who felt disadvantaged by that turned two of those councils out—quite right too. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Home Office Questions are extremely important. They are about good order in the country. I hope that we can treat them with equal good order in the Chamber.

Missing Persons Register

6. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to establish a national computerised missing persons register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We intend to introduce such a register. We have been examining two possible options as

to how this might be done and are currently seeking the views of the Association of Chief Police Officers before reaching a conclusion.

Mr. Hughes: Last year, some 98,000 young persons were reported missing. The Home Office has conducted a feasibility study on a register and, while I welcome the intention to create one, is not it about time that it was produced? Will the Minister confirm that he has already had the views of the chief police officers? Why is he delaying? Why will not he say that the register will be established and fully funded?

Mr. Lloyd: Because there are several ways that we might advance. We want the chief police officers' views before we decide on our route, but the most likely is one that involves the police national computer, which does not come on stream until next year. The hon. Gentleman appears to imply that the collection of information on missing people is not good, but that is not so. Each police authority organises its own information. The hon. Gentleman referred to young people who are lost, but the police in each area take quick action when young people are reported missing and they are nearly always found. The hon. Gentleman mentioned 98,000 vulnerable people who are missing. For the last year for which I have information, the figure stands at just over 100,000, but it is important to note that only 1·5 per cent. were not found after four weeks. That demonstrates that our existing methods are good, but we can use new technology to make them better.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: I have had missing persons' cases in my constituency. Does my hon. Friend agree that when we consider the matter we should look once again at the idea of a national identity card scheme?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not believe that that would help; nor would it be a valuable investment. I believe that the plans that we are maturing are the best that can be devised to find missing people, which is what we all want to do.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister be more positive about setting up the register? He knows that the Association of Chief Police Officers is entirely in favour of it. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has already mentioned the 98,000 young people who go missing on the streets of our towns and cities every year. The police national computer mark 2 is ready to come on stream. Will the Minister assure the House that he will set up that register as soon as conceivably posssible?

Mr. Lloyd: I said that we intend to set up such a register, and we shall do so, but we must have the new computer on stream before it is practical for that to be done. We are seizing the first opportunity to do that.

Mr. Rathbone: In this planning period will my hon. Friend ensure that there is co-operation among police forces throughout Europe? With the greater movement of people, particularly young people, it is essential to have a pan-European system.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend makes a good suggestion, but first we need to get our system properly in order and computerised. We shall then press for such a development.

Pub Bombings

7. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has discussed the Guildford and Woolwich or the Maguire cases with *(a)* the Lord Chief Justice or *(b)* the Master of the Rolls.

Mr. Waddington: I have not discussed the Guildford and Woolwich case or the Maguire case with the Lord Chief Justice or the Master of the Rolls.

Mr. Hughes: Does not the Home Secretary share the public's serious concern that a number of leading judges are saying that the Guildford Four and the family that we are not allowed to mention are guilty? In the light of those ill-founded and irresponsible remarks which will pervert justice, will he demand their resignation?

Mr. Waddington: I know nothing whatever of the remarks that the hon. Gentleman alleges have been made.

Mr. Franks: As and when my right hon. and learned Friend meets the Lord Chief Justice, will he discuss the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the prosecution of Mr. Kevin Taylor, Mr. John Stalker's friend?

Mr. Waddington: I have no intention of discussing any of those matters with the Lord Chief Justice.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Home Secretary tell the House what the hell is going on in the British judicial system? We have had Woolwich, Guildford, the case we cannot refer to today because it is sub judice, and we shall have the Birmingham Six before long. Many people in this country are beginning to believe that a combination of perjured police officers, judges who are clearly biased and compliant Ministers is reducing the British judicial system to low farce. In view of the times that the Home Secretary has had to eat his own words, would not it be better if he printed them on rice paper to make his task more palatable?

Mr. Waddington: I am amazed at the hon. Gentleman's intemperate remarks. I certainly do not understand what he means by "compliant Ministers" because he knows perfectly well that I told the House on 14 June that counsel for the Director of Public Prosecutions had told the May inquiry that, in his view, the convictions were unsafe. I said that in those circumstances the proper course would probably be for me to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the Home Secretary is going wide of the sub judice rule on this matter.

Mr. Waddington: I am sure that I am not infringing the sub judice rule—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me hear what the Home Secretary has to say.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman's suggestion was that there had been compliant Ministers. I was merely rehearsing the action that I had already taken and what I told the House as long ago as 14 June. I was going to remind the House of what I said in answer to a written question yesterday. I do not understand how that can be referred to as compliance. I have never heard such nonsense in all my life.

Mr. Speaker: I must say to the Home Secretary that it was he who caused this matter to become sub judice, and I now have to uphold that rule.

Trevi Group

8. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to encourage the other members of the Trevi group to adopt his four-point agenda in the Europeanwide fight against crime.

Mr. Waddington: I welcome the priority that my colleagues in Trevi have already agreed should be accorded to co-operation in respect of terrorism and drug trafficking, methods of detection, and confiscation of the proceeds of serious crime, and I will continue to press for effective action on all those fronts.

Mr. Knapman: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply and for all the good works that he has done in this area. Does he agree that the idea of open frontiers may be better in principle than in practice if we are to contain the spread of drugs, contraband and illegal arms?

Mr. Waddington: We have made it absolutely plain to our partners in the Community that it would be foolish for us to abandon the advantages of our geography and that we have no intention of removing the controls to deal with serious crime, terrorism and drugs. That does not mean that we should not continue to try to get the maximum of police co-operation in the Community.

Pub Bombings

9. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the inquiry by the Devon and Cornwall police into the Birmingham pub bombings case to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

13. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider establishing a public inquiry into the convictions of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: Important aspects of this case are now being investigated by the Devon and Cornwall police. It is not possible at this stage to say when the Devon and Cornwall constabulary will be able to report on the results of their inquiries, but I know that the police are fully aware of the need to complete the inquiries as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. My right hon. and learned Friend will decide, in the light of the outcome of those inquiries, whether any further action is called for on his part.

Mr. Flannery: Is not it a fact that the report will go only to the chief constable of the West Midlands, and that it will not be published or made available to the solicitors for the Birmingham Six? What kind of democracy is that? In view of this melancholy and sordid business, can we have an independent public inquiry into this case which has gone wildly astray in the same way as many others?

Mr. Patten: About 45 police officers in the Devon and Cornwall force are working as fast and as thoroughly as they can to conduct their inquiries. I am sure that no hon. Member would wish to hinder that. The hon. Gentleman was right when he said that the report will go to the chief constable of the West Midlands. Of course, the information will then be made available to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary so that he can take it into account in deciding whether he needs to take any more action in respect of this case.

Mr. Madden: If 45 officers have been seconded to this inquiry why on earth is it taking so long? When is the inquiry due to be completed, how many people have so far been interviewed and how many have still to be interviewed?

Mr. Patten: I entirely appreciate the hon. Gentleman's impatience and his desire to know when the inquiry will be completed and the report returned. It is important for the police to be allowed to conduct their in-depth inquiries at their own pace and to look into everything. A number of people, including his eminence Cardinal Hume, have pressed my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to ensure that the investigation is not hurried and is properly carried out.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I returned from a meeting of the economic summit in Houston. I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Dunnachie: Following last week's conviction for murder in Kilmarnock of a 15-year-old who was addicted to machine gambling, will the Government now impose the severest panalties on those who flout the law by exposing people under 18 to the dangers of machine gambling?

The Prime Minister: We have done our level best to increase the penalties for such matters, and not always with the support of the Opposition. I note the hon. Gentleman's strong views that such penalties should be further increased.

Q2. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amess: Recalling that it was this Government and the Conservative party alone who supported the right-to-buy legislation which was successfully piloted through the House, is my right hon. Friend aware that in Basildon we have sold 14,000 council, commission and development corporation properties? Will she consider further enhancing people's opportunity for home ownership by extending the rents-into-mortgages scheme to the rest of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted to hear that the Government's right-to-buy legislation is doing so well in my hon. Friend's constituency, as it is elsewhere. It gives a new opportunity to people to own their homes and

eventually to pass them on to their children. The pilot scheme that operates in Scotland and Wales to turn rents into mortgages is another advantageous way for people to own their homes, and that scheme is doing very well. When we have more experience of it we shall see whether it should be extended further.

Mr. Kinnock: Is not it clear to the Prime Minister that what the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said to *The Spectator* cannot be unsaid and that therefore he can have no place in her Cabinet?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has expressed his very great regret and has unreservedly withdrawn his remarks.

Mr. Kinnock: Has not the Prime Minister made it clear by that reply that the only reason for the right hon. Gentleman staying in the Cabinet is that his views are her views?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. Those views—which have been withdrawn—did not represent the Government's views or, indeed, mine.

Mr. Kinnock: Is not it the case that when, within the terms of collective responsibility as everyone understands them, a Secretary of State expresses views strongly and graphically that are contrary to the views of the Government, that Secretary of State is sacked? Will not the Prime Minister recognise that what the right hon. Gentleman has said is not just deeply offensive to our allies and partners, but deeply damaging to our country's interests? He must go.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has expressed his very great regret—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: —and unreservedly withdrawn his remarks. They do not represent the Government's view or, indeed, my own. I have always understood that it is the custom of the House that when remarks have been apologised for and unreservedly withdrawn—as they have been in this case—that withdrawal is gracefully accepted.

Sir Peter Hordern: When my right hon. Friend meets the leaders of the European Community countries, will she tell them that a country that controls its inflation better than any other by strict monetary policies and offers rapid economic growth to the benefit of the whole Community —including the United Kingdom—is a country greatly to be admired, and that West Germany plays an important and useful role in Europe and the world at large?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. Indeed, I said words almost identical to that at the economic summit, pointing out that Germany had managed to keep her inflation and unemployment low and to keep her growth, investment, savings ratio and exports high, and that all that was greatly to be admired.

Mr. Hood: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It will take time out of Prime Minister's questions, but—*[Interruption.]* Order. I must take it if the matter needs my immediate attention.

Mr. Hood: The Prime Minister told the House that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has apologised to the House, but she has apologised for him——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is certainly not a point of order for me. The hon. Gentleman must sit down: he is taking a lot of time out of questions.

Q3. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does not the Prime Minister realise that she cannot talk about increasing international co-operation while retaining in her Cabinet a Secretary of State who has not only been downright unneighbourly, but has cast a slight on the attitude towards the European Community? Does she agree that this is the worst example of little Englander behaviour that we have seen? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask Government Members to listen to the question.

Mrs. Ewing: What will the Cabinet do to redress the position?

The Prime Minster: The Government were prominent in furthering co-operation at the economic summit in Houston, to the benefit of each and every one of the G7 countries. I have nothing to add to what I said about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who has unreservedly withdrawn his remarks.

Q4. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Peacock: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should all welcome Mr. Gorbachev's fine handling of his party's 28th congress in Moscow? Is not that a pointer for good international stability in the future?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. The Government have consistently supported President Gorbachev's efforts towards reform in the Soviet Union, and we earnestly hope that they will be successful. Clearly, his political reforms have already been successful and have led to freedom of speech and of movement, and freedom to emigrate on a scale undreamt of two or three years ago. At the Houston summit we agreed that each of us should give—some are already giving—technical assistance and know-how training, and we have embarked upon a study through the International Monetary Fund to see what further help can best be given and what criteria should be fulfilled before such help is given.

Mr. Ashdown: Is not the real significance of the comments of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry reported this morning that they reveal a deep and irreconcilable split on Europe in the Cabinet which is damaging Britain's interests and causing confusion in the Government's policy and contempt for Britain abroad? Does not the Prime Minister realise that if she will not sack

him, she condones him, and that her Government will remain in shambles for as long as he remains a member of it?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. Those remarks did not represent the Government's views or my own. Britain's influence and reputation were greatly enhanced at the Houston summit by the spirit of co-operation that we showed and by our efforts to bring about a successful communiqué at the end of that summit.

Mr. Lawrence: Since it appears from recent court decisions that the Shops Act 1950 is contrary to the treaty of Rome, will my right hon. Friend consider introducing amending legislation on Sunday trading, preferably after the next general election?

The Prime Minister: My hon. and learned Friend asks a bold question. Before the Government introduce legislation after the next election we should seek assurance from those who opposed the previous legislation that we have an acceptable compromise, particularly in view of some recent court cases. That would be advisable, and if my hon. and learned Friend would like to start collecting the voices and the views I should be very grateful.

Q5. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Primarolo: The track record of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry of insensitive and outrageous statements on a number of issues is well known. Is there anything that the Secretary of State could say that would get him the sack?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated clearly that my right hon. Friend has unreservedly withdrawn his remarks. *[Interruption.]* When remarks are so unreservedly withdrawn we accept that withdrawal gracefully.

Hon. Members: Where is he?

Mr. Speaker: Order. A few moments ago I had to reprove Members on the Government Benches. Now I must ask the Opposition to let the Prime Minister have a fair hearing on this.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is in Hungary, as I thought hon. Members knew.

Mr. Moate: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, following the great success of the abolition of the dock labour scheme a year ago, there is now an urgent case for following it up with a new public enabling Bill to allow the rapid development of other port enterprises by the privatisation of the outdated trust port structures?

The Prime Minister: There is a great deal in what my hon. Friend says. The abolition of the dock labour scheme was a great success for the ports and their hinterlands. I understand that for other ports in the trust to be privatised it would have to be done by the private Bill procedure, which is very cumbersome. We are looking into the possibility of an enabling Bill so that they could be privatised more easily.

Q6. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Reid: Is the Prime Minister aware that the fight for the steel industry in Scotland is concerned with saving Ravenscraig, a Motherwell steel plant, not Ravensglass, a Cumbrian village, which is what the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry seemed to believe when we met him? Is she aware that as part of the fight Sir Kenneth Alexander has been nominated for the board of directors of British Steel? Although she cannot endorse any particular candidate, will she testify to his fitness as a candidate, as a man of great learning, industrial experience and integrity?

The Prime Minister: I regret that I do not know the gentleman and it would be quite wrong of me to endorse one candidate because I was asked to do so. That is a matter for the shareholders of the company, as the hon. Gentleman realises and it is for those who put him forward to testify to all the things that the hon. Gentleman has enumerated.

Economic Summit (Houston)

3.31 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement on the economic summit held in Houston from 9-11 July, which I attended with—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an important statement. Would hon. Members who are not remaining in the Chamber for it kindly leave quietly?

The Prime Minister: I attended the Houston summit with my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The communiqué and the separate political declarations issued at the summit have been placed in the Library of the House.

Our discussions ranged widely, and we achieved important practical results which meet the needs of the times. Great credit for this is due to President Bush for his firm and friendly chairmanship. I shall summarise the main points of our discussion, under seven broad headings: the world economy; international trade; assistance to the Soviet Union and eastern Europe; developing countries; the environment; drugs; and political issues.

First, on the world economy, economic expansion is now in its eighth year in our countries, with notable growth both in incomes and in the number of new jobs. We ascribed this excellent record to sound budgetary and economic policies. These should continue if economic expansion is to be sustained. Much emphasis was placed on the need for more saving, at a time when the investment needs of the world are expected to grow, in central and eastern Europe and in the developing countries.

I reaffirmed Britain's determination to get down inflation as our first priority, and our intention to join the exchange rate mechanism.

Secondly, international trade, in my opening remarks, I stressed that the touchstone of success at the summit would be our attitude to the continued freeing up of world trade. I am glad to report that we reached agreement which should make possible a successful conclusion to the Uruguay round of world trade negotiations later this year.

The main difficulty lies in the subsidies and other forms of support and protection which virtually all major countries give to their agriculture. We agreed in Houston that we should each make substantial, progressive reductions in our agricultural support programmes. This will cover internal support, barriers to market access and export subsidies. To subsidise inefficient producers to keep them in business is unfair to those who are competitive. The outcome should therefore be to the advantage of British farmers, who are among the most efficient in Europe.

I believe that the result will also be very welcome in other countries, including the developing countries, and will open the way to resolving the remaining problems in the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations. Most importantly, it will give a clear signal that we are determined to go on with the liberalisation of world trade, which has contributed so much to growth and prosperity. That was the most encouraging message from the summit.

Thirdly, we discussed assistance to the Soviet Union. We all recognised the Soviet Union's need for technical assistance and know-how. Many of us are already providing management training, for instance—but help from the summit seven as a group should be tied to the introduction of genuine market policies and to encouraging the Soviet Union to mobilise its own extensive resources. We also pointed to the need for the Soviet Union to shift resources away from the military sector and to cut its support to nations that promote regional conflict. It is not our purpose to provide an oxygen tent for survival of much of the old system.

For that reason, we agreed that there should be a thorough study of the problems and needs of the Soviet economy, and of the criteria for assistance. That study should be led by the International Monetary Fund, which has the greatest expertise in that area. Other organisations will be involved, and the Commission will be closely consulted. The report should be completed by the end of this year. Thus we can ensure that any help we give will be properly targeted and effective.

Fourthly, on developing countries, we noted that the best help that we can give the developing countries is to sustain our own economic growth and to keep our markets open. We welcomed the growing acceptance by many developing countries themselves that the best way to growth is through market-oriented policies, openness to foreign investment, and sound, democratic government. We reaffirmed our support for the case-by-case debt strategy, and agreed to support longer repayment periods for lower middle-income countries, which are implementing strong reform programmes.

Fifthly, on the environment, we acknowledged that there is still some uncertainty about how much global warming is due to natural causes and how much to man-made causes, but the threat of irreversible environmental damage required us to take actions that are justified in their own right.

We all want the world climate conference in November to consider the best ways to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions. That would lead to the negotiation of a framework convention on climate change by 1992, under the auspices of the United Nations environment programme.

We welcomed the decisions at the recent London meeting to phase out chlorofluorocarbons by the year 2000 and to provide financial assistance to developing countries to enable them to meet their obligations. We also attach particular importance to action to save tropical forests.

I believe that as a result of the summit there is now a much better understanding and sense of common purpose among the G7 countries on environmental issues, which is vital if we are to tackle these problems effectively. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I may say to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) that this is hardly a laughing matter.

The Prime Minister: Sixthly, on drugs, we underlined once more the crucial importance of international co-operation in every aspect of tackling the drugs problem—production, demand, trafficking and money-laundering. We pledged our support to the countries engaged most directly in the fight against drug trafficking, and we agreed to set up a special task force to ensure that precursor and other essential chemicals are not diverted to the manufacture of illicit drugs.

The summit discussed also some of the principal international political issues, and agreed statements on securing democracy, terrorism, and the growing problem of proliferation in nuclear and other fields. We acknowledged some recent progress in China, and said that we would be ready to relax measures in response to further positive steps towards political and economic reform. We also called on all parties in South Africa to refrain from violence or its advocacy.

Finally, I invited other Heads of Government to meet in London for a further summit next July. They gladly and graciously accepted.

The great achievement of these summits has been to make it easier for all of us to reject short-term soft options in favour of longer-term real solutions: in particular, sound economic policies, freer competition, keeping our markets open and identifying new problems such as drugs and the environment at an early stage, and tackling them by international co-operation.

The world looks to these summits for a lead, and I believe that the G7 countries have once again provided just that, particularly on trade. Last week's very successful NATO summit in London was an important step towards a safer and more peaceful world. Our meeting in Houston takes us towards a more prosperous world for everyone.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I thank the Prime Minister for that statement but express some surprise and concern that, in the week of what President Bush and Mr. Wörner called an "historic" NATO summit, the Prime Minister made scant mention of that meeting in London last week. Why was there virtually no reference to the London summit when it was widely anticipated on good authority that she would be making a statement on the NATO meeting?

On the Houston summit, the G7 commitment to giving "appropriate" economic assistance to "countries that choose freedom" is welcome. Does the Prime Minister accept that, if the end of totalitarianism in eastern European countries and the Soviet Union were to be followed by poverty, it would be a great tragedy and a source of dangerous instability? Does she not agree that, although aid to those countries obviously must be judiciously allocated and geared to specific objectives, if it is too slow or too small it will not have its full and desired effect of fostering change, liberty and peace. Will she therefore stop thinking of economic help from west to east as what she calls "an oxygen tent" for old regimes and start recognising that, properly used, it is the vital means of finishing off the old order once and for all?

In the wake of the Houston summit, does the Prime Minister accept that there is widespread support for the reduction of agricultural subsidies? Does she not agree, however, that the terms of the Houston communiqué are extremely vague? Will she assure the House that the British Government will press for a more precise timetable over which agricultural subsidies will be reduced in the advanced countries? Will she tell the House what the Government's policy will be for transitional arrrangements and towards hill farmers and others who work marginal areas who will be unavoidably affected by any significant change?

Does the Prime Minister agree that the response of the Houston summit to the pressing environmental issues confronting our planet was far from adequate? Can she explain why the summit failed to specify any action whatsoever on the urgent and growing problem of global warming?

Finally, is the Prime Minister aware that the language of co-operation that she uses in her statements on international summits will carry no conviction for as long as she shares a Cabinet table with a Secretary of State who likens the European Commission to Adolf Hitler and Chancellor Kohl to Nazi tyranny? If she considers the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry still to be fit to hold office, then she is not fit to hold office.

The Prime Minister: On the right hon. Gentleman's last point, I have nothing to add to what I have already said. I note that he is not capable of graciously accepting the withdrawal of his remarks which my right hon. Friend has fully made.

I did not make a statement on the NATO summit, but I am quite willing to make one. I did not think that it would be very welcome if I made two statements today, but I am delighted that the right hon. Gentleman wants a statement every time I have a bilateral meeting or attend a NATO summit.

I shall quickly answer the right hon. Gentleman's three questions on the NATO summit. As he will realise, we have set up a team to work out a new strategy for the different circumstances because forward defence may no longer be suitable. We need much defence in depth and much more flexible forces and to rely more on reserves.

We were, however, clear about several things on nuclear weapons. For example, we made it quite clear that to keep the peace the alliance must maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces based in Europe and kept up to date where necessary. I hope that that pleases the right hon. Gentleman.

When speaking of short-range nuclear weapons, there was a suggestion—it was put in the communiqué—that they should be weapons of last resort, but in case that was misread, we also included in the communiqué an agreement which we have had in NATO for a long time—since the comprehensive concept, which the right hon. Gentleman has never agreed with—that nuclear weapons will continue to fulfil an essential role in the overall strategy of the alliance to prevent war by ensuring that there are no circumstances in which nuclear retaliation in response to military action might be discounted. I hope that that also pleases the right hon. Gentleman.

With regard to aid to the Soviet Union, many countries already have lines of credit to the Soviet Union from their banks, some of which are backed up by Government guarantees, like Germany, and others by Export Credits Guarantee Department cover. In our case, £800 million has not been drawn by the Soviet Union, so it is not short of a loan facility should it wish to purchase things, and most of those things will have ECGD cover.

Many of us are giving various technical assistance, mostly on managerial training, and each in our own way. We were considering further aid, which of course comes from the taxpayer, but any aid that we can give, even as G7 countries, will be comparatively small compared with the economy of that enormous country of 280 million people and 11 time zones, which runs from the sub-tropics to the ice cap. We cannot run that country for it; we can only help it to help itself. In the political declaration, we offered substantial facilities for drafting, because they have no law

[The Prime Minister]

on private property, no company law and precious little contract law. We can help with many of those things. When we are considering how——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Let us send them truckloads of lawyers.

The Prime Minister: It would be a very good thing to have a number of lawyers in a country that knows no rule of law. This country believes—at any rate, Conservatives do—that an independent judiciary must determine the law. It would be good to pass on that lesson to the communist countries.

We shall look at the International Monetary Fund's analysis to see whether there is further help that we can give, but it would be absurd to think that we can change the future of the Soviet Union by the amount of aid that we give, which is why it must be carefully targeted. It is not that it does not grow sufficient food, but that about 40 per cent. of the food that it grows never gets to market. It could do with much technical help on food processing, storage distribution systems and transport. That would be worth doing. May I remind the right hon. Gentleman that these were the conclusions of the seven largest industrialised countries responsible for 60 per cent. of the world's gross national product?

With regard to agriculture and a more precise timetable, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, we negotiate our agriculture through the common agricultural policy, and we shall have to get together in the Community to see how we shall go ahead and honour the commitments that we made at Houston. But it was very important that we made this commitment before the Uruguay round ends this year.

We are also using the De Zeeuw report, which was produced by the negotiating committee of GATT, as a basis for our negotiations. It recommended that we should have a common measurement among all agricultural countries and that we should reduce our export subsidies —[HON. MEMBERS: "Briefly."] The right hon. Gentleman asked me the questions, but he does not like it when I answer them thoroughly. The environment conclusions reached—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has already said that she is answering the questions posed by the Leader of the Opposition. His Back-Bench colleagues should listen.

The Prime Minister: The environmental conclusions reached were significant. They followed the excellent conferences we have had in London on the ozone layer and the commitment of 80 nations to phase out chlorofluorocarbons by the end of the century. The next step is to try to deal with the greenhouse gases.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will find, for example——

Mr. Cryer: Will the Prime Minister give way on this point?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is intolerable for the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) to behave like that.

The Prime Minister: We wish to be ready for a climate convention on greenhouse gases or their equivalent, which includes methane and many other gases. We also made arrangements to join together to try to protect the Brazilian rain forest. We have already taken a lead by allocating £100 million over three years to protect the Brazilian rain forest. Other people, especially the young people of this country, will be very interested, even if the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is not.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that today we have the conclusion to the important debate on community charge capping, which must end at 7 pm, and also a business statement.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members who will now be called to put single questions and to put them briefly.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): While at Houston, did my right hon. Friend receive any representations from the Japanese about their wish to be more closely involved in the reorganisation of European security and in the resurgence of eastern Europe? Was she able to encourage and support those aspirations?

The Prime Minister: The Japanese are closely involved in the resurgence of eastern Europe and, with their enormous balance of trade, they are capable of giving considerable investment help—and are willing to do so. We did not become involved in security at this meeting.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does not the Prime Minister think that it is a pity that she did not take the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry with her in her ministerial team, along with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary?

The only timetable at which the right hon. Lady hinted in her statement was that of the election. Can she be a little more precise about bringing down the rate of inflation, about joining the exchange rate mechanism and about the progressive reduction of agricultural support?

On the question of the Soviet Union, is the Prime Minister aware that—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes a lot of time.

Sir David Steel: Is the Prime Minister aware that, at her press conference last night, she sounded, perhaps unwittingly, a little grudging about aid to the Soviet Union? Will she now make it clear that she accepts that the price of support to the Soviet Union has to be balanced against the considerable cost of defending ourselves against that country?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I made a formidable and successful team at the Houston summit. We shall join the exchange rate mechanism when the Madrid conditions are fully satisfied. There will be an election during the next two years. I have forgotten what the last question was.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Does not my right hon. Friend find it hypocritical to be given advice about the ending of the old Soviet economic order by men from the other side who have spent the best part of their political lives defending that same economic order and who have tried to bring it over here?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his own point well. Many of those people would still retreat to protectionism if they had half a chance.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): If the Prime Minister believes her own rhetoric about deregulated markets and free trade, why does she acquiesce in what is perhaps the worst protectionist racket in the modern world —the common agricultural policy? It grossly inflates the price of food to the British consumer and it damages the trade of countries such as Australia, the United States and those in the third world. Why did not the Prime Minister give stronger support to the Americans for knocking the CAP on the head instead of agreeing to a bland form of words which leaves the CAP entirely intact?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that before we were members of the CAP we had our own support system for agriculture. That also cost a good deal. I think that every major industrialised country has one. This time we got together to try to reduce the amount of support that each of us gives so that we were each of us aware that we reduce export subsidies, internal support and access to our own markets. There had been a scheme put up under which we reduced only export subsidies. That would have been very advantageous to some countries, but highly disadvantageous to this country. We would have had to reduce our internal support and access while others would have kept their internal support and only reduced export subsidies. That is what we faced. We came away with us all reducing the total support and all reducing each component of it.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): At the end of her statement, my right hon. Friend referred to the wish of all the leaders at Houston to go for longer-term real solutions rather than short-term soft options. Did my right hon. Friend look favourably upon the imaginative idea put forward in the United States as well as in this country for a kind of carbon tax or tradable pollution permits as a long-term realistic way of dealing with the problems of global warming?

The Prime Minister: I have seen much about tradable permits, but I am not yet convinced that they would work on a worldwide scale, which is the action that we need. When the question of a carbon tax is put to me, I point out that we already have pretty high taxes on petrol and gasoline, and they were put up in the last Budget. Other countries must have artificially cheap gasoline, and that leads to extravagant use, while our policy leads to economical use.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I welcome the progress on GATT to which the Prime Minister referred, but is she aware that it will be difficult to make much progress here when the Minister in charge of foreign trade is the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? This matter concerns us all because, when he goes to Europe representing us, he will be rather disliked and his negotiations will be less advantageous to this country than they would be if someone else represented us. Is the right hon. Lady aware that it is not enough to repudiate the words of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry; she must repudiate him as well for the sake of the country?

The Prime Minister: The main negotiations as a result of the Houston summit will be on agricultural matters. That was the great success of the summit. The other thing that is of great importance in the communiqué is that we have all agreed not to take unilateral action. If there are disputes on trade, we should leave it to GATT and take the multilateral action required. That is also a great step forward.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is the height of hypocrisy for the European Community to lecture eastern Europe on the virtues of the free market economy while at the same time perpetuating the perversion of those principles which is enshrined in the common agricultural policy? Does she agree that it is no good fiddling around the edges with the CAP? She said a moment ago that she did not think that that was the right approach. The CAP is wrong in principle and must be completely scrapped.

The Prime Minister: With regard to the amount of support that is given through the CAP in comparison with other countries, OECD estimates show that the total cost of consumers and taxpayers of all forms of agricultural support or protection is $46 billion-worth in the United States for a population of about 220 million; in the European Community it is $93 billion-worth for a population of 320 million; and in Japan it is $68 billion-worth for a population of about 120 million. We are all guilty to some extent of supporting farming. The reason, as my right hon. Friend knows, is that, as the standard of living goes up, we buy many more consumer goods, but each of us will not eat more—we might eat different quality—and therefore the only increasing standard of living in agriculture has to come from increased productivity or variety.

We could not go from those figures straight away to no support at all. It so happens that New Zealand is now down to about 10 per cent. support. I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree that we are going steadily in the right direction on reducing protection, reducing subsidies, and getting away from support to the uncompetitive farmer to letting the competitive, efficient farmer have a much larger proportion of the trade.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): In the wide-ranging discussions that the——

Hon. Members: Come on.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will think that it is fair that I call hon. Members today who were not called on 12 June or 28 June, and I am doing that.

Mr. Nellist: In the wide-ranging discussions that the Prime Minister had, in particular on eastern Europe, did she consider apologising for the remarks of Sir Alan Walters, who, in Prague recently, lectured Czechoslovakia on how to introduce capitalism? He spoke of randomly sacking two thirds of that country's work force, and said:

"Put their names in a hat—it appeals to their sporting instincts."

Is he, like the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, still a close family friend reflecting her views?

The Prime Minister: The countries whose economies have collapsed are the countries that have been following the centrally planned and controlled system that the hon. Gentleman supports. Their economies have collapsed totally and, until now, have not enjoyed the freedom of speech which is fundamental to every remark that the hon. Gentleman makes and which he enjoys in this House.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Although the substantial and progressive reductions in agricultural support are a logical outcome of my right hon. Friend's insistence over the years that agriculture should play a major part in the Uruguay round, does my right hon. Friend understand that those reductions would be unacceptable and wholly unsaleable to European farmers unless those countries that subsidise their agriculture—my right hon. Friend referred to one a few moments ago—much more than we do take part in those reductions, just as much as everybody else? I am thinking of Japan in particular.

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. We made that point many times during the discussions. In particular, we said that rice is heavily subsidised in Japan. At one time it was subsidised to the tune of about eight times the world price. Countries cannot expect to export their manufactured goods on the basis of efficiency and refuse to import agricultural produce also on the basis of efficient production.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): Does the Prime Minister recall that last week President Mitterrand referred to her recent statements as representing the penultimate twitch of a dying Government who had brought Britain to the stage of terminal decline? Is she aware that, after the recent interview with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry published in today's issue of *The Spectator*, the British people now regard her as not the general but the camp follower of Fred Karno's army? If she herself will not sack people such as the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Sir Alan Walters, who are her personal pets or family friends, will she explain to the House and the people how the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Leader of the House can continue to sit in the same Cabinet as men who are trying to undermine every objective that they are pursuing on behalf of what they state is her Government?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will be known for ever as the only Chancellor in the post-war period who brought this country to the brink of bankruptcy.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is it really the case that not a single Head of Government of the Group of Seven believes in the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange?

The Prime Minister: I most earnestly hope so, and believe so.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I understand that the recent summit dealt with long-term structural aid to the Soviet Union, but does the Prime Minister accept that there is a case for short-term initiatives also? The negotiations between Scottish and Soviet fishermen on the herring trade are deadlocked, for example, simply because of the Soviet shortage of hard currency. I am sure that the Prime Minister appreciates that, despite the build-up of home-based processing capacity on the pelagic side, the herring and klondyker trade is vital to Scottish fishermen. Will she undertake to ask the relevant Minister's to consider that matter to see whether a Government initiative might break the deadlock?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman heard what I said earlier. There is a line of credit—of £800 million—for the Soviet Union from the banks of this country, which is supported and covered by the Export Credits Guarantee Department, on which the Soviet Union has not yet drawn, although it can do so if it wishes. Nevertheless, we shall continue to look for technical problems that we could help the Soviet Union to solve. We are looking for larger things so that we can bring the Soviet Union to a complete change of attitude, from a centrally controlled economy to a market economy.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): As the European Community has made promises before about export subsidies, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that we are one of the two paymasters of that system, and will she therefore insist that, on this occasion, a clear timetable is laid down whereby the export subsidies can be brought to an end?

The Prime Minister: I doubt whether we can bring those subsidies totally to an end. That would have enormous and difficult effects on many areas of this country. We must agree to reduce those subsidies, as well as other forms of support, and we are doing that. We shall be keeping a watch on other nations to ensure that they are doing so as well. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is vital that we go for less protection, and for more open trade, but we must do that at a rate at which people can adjust to the new circumstances. I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): In today's *Herald Tribune*, the Prime Minister is quoted as saying, in relation to agriculture, that the Houston conference was a bipolar conference, built around the dollar, the yen and the deutschmark. How does she reconcile that view with the remarks of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in *The Spectator* that the Germans are trying to take over Europe and that the deutschmark will always be the strongest currency because of their habits? Is it because the right hon. Lady agreed with those views that she did not accept his proffered resignation?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman used a false premise at the beginning so that he could ask his customary question at the end. Of the economic countries, Japan has the yen, the United States and Canada have the dollar, and those in the European group, except us, are linked to the deutschmark by the exchange rate mechanism, and we shall be when we join the exchange rate mechanism. I should not have thought that the hon. Gentleman needed a lesson on those matters because he is highly skilled in them.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): If we are to discuss the process of political and economic change in the Soviet Union, does my right hon. Friend agree that the terms used must be both accurate and precise? Has my right hon. Friend noticed that the BBC, especially, now refers to the progressive pro-Gorbachev element in the Soviet Union, which supports policies similar to her own,

as "the left", and that those hard-line socialists who oppose President Gorbachev are referred to as "Conservatives"? Is that journalistic laziness or something worse?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that that is difficult and confusing. In every country, it is the classic communists and the hard-line left who are the trouble, and they are death to the prosperity of the people.

Sir Cyril Smith (Rochdale): Does the Prime Minister agree that it is rather hypocritical of the United States of America to talk about freer trade when the Prime Minister herself in the past three weeks, by Act of Parliament, created a protectionist law under which certain equipment which has been bought in Britain for the past 10 years will now be supplied only by United States manufacturers, thereby threatening hundreds of jobs in my constituency?

The Prime Minister: Each of us is guilty of some form of protectionism. We have voluntary agreements on the number of cars that can be imported from Japan. We have a multi-fibre arrangement. Each of us is guilty of some form of protectionism. We pointed out that the United States, particularly in defence procurement, frequently goes to American manufacturers. That is not an open market. We mentioned those matters.

The important thing is that we are each determined to tackle that protectionism and reduce it. We cannot get rid of it all at once. Indeed, as we know, some other European countries are still protectionist towards some of our services. We want to get rid of that form of protectionism by 1992. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that it is right to go in the direction of less protectionism and more open trade as fast as we can.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. Friend should be congratulated on at least starting to tackle the common agricultural policy. It is one of the reasons why Europe has not succeeded in the way that so many of us hoped. To turn to the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, many Conservative Members rather fear unification of Germany. We fear its economic might. We fear that it is better placed than any other country to scoop the eastern and central European countries' trading arrangements. A word in time—perhaps less emotive language should have been used—was intended to convey to Germany that we cannot stand by after 1992 and aid it to take over central Europe.

The Prime Minister: Thanks to Britain's efforts over the years, we have already tackled many aspects of the common agricultural policy. We have reduced surpluses substantially. There are few surpluses left. We have given the Community an agricultural budget within which it must live, and we have instituted a process whereby, if people produce more than the target amount of goods, whether wheat, rapeseed oil or anything else, the price falls the following year. We have tackled a great deal already. We have not yet tackled the fundamental amount of protectionism, but we shall do so now.

The unification of Germany will happen. East Germany will be in a much better position than the other countries of eastern Europe because it will be able to plug straight into the whole structure of a free market economy. From a system which the country has rejected it can move immediately to another. The other countries do not have that system. That is why we are giving aid to Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. That is quite right, because it will help them to come to that system. Poland is going most quickly along that road.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Is it not one thing to speak with the G7 countries about free trade but another to remember that the textile industry, for example, faces competition from countries which are not represented in that group and have shown no inclination whatever to liberalise their trade? If the negotiations are left to GATT, the textile industry may find that the multi-fibre arrangement has been eliminated altogether. Our textile industry will face free trade but will not have an opportunity to export to many other countries. Will the Prime Minister keep it in mind that in Britain we have lost 45 mills in the past 12 months?

The Prime Minister: We have asked the developing countries to join in GATT. With regard to what they can export, the fact that we subsidise our agricultural exports to other markets deprives them of a market. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we import a lot of textiles from developing countries and we have some special imports outside the multi-fibre arrangement. We must all steadily reduce protectionism. Those developing countries are being asked to join in GATT for freedom of services and intellectual property. If they are to join, however, they must also see that they have markets on the basis of competition. In our debates, we noted that it is not good enough just to talk about aid to developing countries; they want our markets to be open for trade.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the significant achievements and agreements of the past two weeks, to which she made an outstanding contribution, are to form the sure foundations of a new order—we all hope that they will—it is absolutely essential that we do everything possible to build trust among our allies, and not to sow dissention?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree. Mr. Delors and Mr. Andriessen were in Houston and took part in the debates. I spoke with Mr. Delors and seconded him for a further term as President of the European Commission. They are looking forward to the new challenge on agriculture, and I am sure that they will tackle it vigorously.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Agricultural protection damages developing countries and the newly independent countries of eastern Europe. Is it not a fact that the common agricultural policy, with its wholly effective device of variable levies, is the most perfect system of agricultural protection ever invented? Is it not time that that system, with all its aspects, was placed firmly on the agenda of, first, the Uruguay conference? I am not at all clear that it has been. Secondly, and perhaps even more important, it should be a major subject at the intergovernmental conferences to be convened in December with the objective of removing the central clauses from the Rome treaty, which gives the CAP such a damaging and powerful position in that legislation.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is fully aware that, for a time, the CAP was the most obvious manifestation of the European Community. We do not argue that it is not protectionist—it is. In a way, it has sent

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that message out to other countries and they feared that, with the coming of 1992, other markets would not be opened and that a new fortress Europe would be built. They feared that we would go the same way with other goods. It is absolutely vital to make it clear that we wanted a change of direction and that, on agriculture, we should become less protectionist, get subsidies down and have more open markets.

The purpose of 1992 is to get barriers down within Europe as an example of getting them down in the outside world. The external tariff on the Common Market is one of the lowest in the world. We shall go in the right way, as we have done in the past few years, to get surpluses down. We shall go in the right way to reduce subsidies and to achieve more open markets. We shall give a much better time to those of our family farms that do not fear competition because they will get a larger slice of the market if less efficient production ceases to be protected.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Does my right hon. Friend realise that her reference a moment ago to giving hope to Poland will give great pleasure to a vast number of people in this country, coming as it does only a few weeks after we celebrated the battle of Britain in which one in seven of the pilots who defended this country was a Pole?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. That is an impressive figure, and we shall remember it again in September with the 50th anniversary of the battle of Britain. Poland has been immensely courageous in tackling economic problems. She has done so as fast as she possibly can and there is solidarity, in the normal sense, among her people and a will to succeed. We are giving as much help as we possibly can through the Community and separately.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is it conceivable that at a major international conference of this order no discussions were pursued about the dangers to peace in the middle east caused by the policies of the Israeli Government and the activities of the Israeli military and police? Was there no discussion about the sufferings of the Palestinians? Did the Prime Minister take the opportunity to try to educate President Bush about the damage done by Zionist pressures to America's real interests in the middle east?

The Prime Minister: Foreign Ministers, and sometimes Heads of Government, discuss the middle east at almost every summit they have. We have had three summits recently—the European Community, where there was an extensive communiqué on the middle east, the NATO summit, and this one, where we did not discuss the subject in such detail. But the United States Secretary of State, James Baker, is active. We are very much aware of the need to get a new initiative going, and the problem is being addressed. The situation is one of the most serious, with no obvious initiative at present. It is difficult to work out precisely the right initiative; every time we come close to getting the two sides together, something seems to happen to upset that. The Government in Israel are not the world's most stable Government with which to negotiate.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her outstanding personal contribution to the success of the G7 conference and the NATO conference the previous week. Is my right hon. Friend sure that the GATT rounds will not be torpedoed by the time factor that has to be allowed for restructuring agricultural subsidies?

The Prime Minister: We shall strain to ensure that the communiqué is translated into fact. It is based on a report from the GATT negotiating committee on agriculture by a Dutchman called De Zeeuw, who recommended that we should all get down subsidies, particularly export subsidies. I hope that that is a good basis for negotiation. I spoke to Mr. Delors afterwards and, as I intimated, he is determined to get action under way and the new regime sorted out.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I appreciate the need to ensure that aid to the Soviet Union is spent wisely—that is quite right—but will the right hon. Lady bear in mind that imposed projects simply will not work? Proposals must dovetail with the efforts of the Soviet Union. If that country is not consulted, or feels, that it is being patronised, the initiatives could create more problems that they solved.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. Of course, the Soviet Union is being consulted and the International Monetary Fund, which leads the team, will go to study the Soviet Union's economy and consult with the Soviets about what could best be done. We have asked for the report to be completed by the end of the year so that we know, and have the best advice, about how the help can be targeted. We shall then have to decide how much of us is prepared to give to that country —we shall do that jointly, as G7. I am sure that this is the best way to go about it: expert advice plus consultation, including consultation with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): My right hon. Friend has made much mention of the important issue of helping the Soviet Union. Was help to the other developing democracies in central and eastern Europe also covered in the discussions?

The Prime Minister: Yes, indeed, because, as I said, we are already giving help to Poland and Hungary and extending some of the know-how to Czechoslavakia. At present, we do not have a particular fund to Czechoslovakia, but we are extending the help we give it. It will probably be easier to get those countries from a centrally planned and controlled economy to a freer market economy because they are much smaller. It is an enormous task to do that in a country as large as the Soviet Union. One of the keys do doing so successfully will be to devolve responsibility through some of the republics that hitherto have had to put every decision back to Moscow for approval.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Prime Minister recall that, in 1978 and 1979, she chided the Labour Prime Minister about going to a few summits? She said that, generally speaking, summitry was a waste of time and that nothing was achieved. Since coming to power she has been to an average of five or six summits a year at a cost to the British taxpayer of £4·25 million, while thousands of people are living in cardboard boxes on the Embankment and at Waterloo. If she is so concerned, why has she set up another three or four photo opportunities

before July next year? I suggest that it is not just the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who should be sacked for making a mockery of collective responsibility; it is time that she left and took the lot with her.

The Prime Minister: I know that it will disappoint the hon. Gentleman when I tell him that we achieve things at the summits that we attend. We have achieved a great deal in Europe, including a repayment to this country from the European budget of about £7 billion. We have reduced the subsidies in Europe and are now tackling the subsidies of the agriculture policies. We are to have a full common market in Europe, which is one of the original aims of the treaty of Rome. The Opposition did not do a single thing about that. We have done a great deal for the environment, which the Opposition did not do. Their only action was to cut capital expenditure at the behest of the International Monetary Fund. We have also kept NATO going, and it is probably because, like the United States, we have been such a staunch ally of NATO that the changes in the Soviet Union have been brought about.

The summits are very productive. *[Interruption.]* A different lot were negotiating then, but now there is a great improvement. We have reduced the European summits to one a presidency. However, because great events were taking place in eastern Europe, we had two under the French presidency. Perhaps we shall have two under the Irish presidency, but I hope that there will not be two under the Italian presidency. In the latter half of 1992, when we hold the presidency, we shall have one.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The trouble with multiple questions is that they lead to multiple answers. I have an obligation to protect the business of the House, and I think that I have called all hon. Members who were not called to put questions to the Prime Minister on 1 May and 28 June except the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr Banks), whom I shall call. I shall allow three more questions from each side and then we must move on because the House has other important business today.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Hon. Members on both sides, whether unregenerate federalists or reconstructed confederalists, will regard with the greatest possible approval and warmth the decision of the Group of Seven to enlarge the scope and responsibilities of Churchill's great creation, the Council of Europe. Has it been decided whether the representation on that council will be on the present delegate basis or whether those serving on it will be elected?

The Prime Minister: There are 17 Council of Europe countries and, as the NATO communiqué states, we are extending that Council so that it will become an assembly of the CSCE, and will take in parliamentary representatives from all the Helsinki accord countries. Anything beyond that is a matter for negotiation, but appointment would be on the basis of the way that delegates are appointed to the Council of Europe. We felt it vital to include in our assemblies people from the United States, the Soviet Union and the whole of central Europe.

Mr. Tony Banks: When does the Prime Minister propose to stop using President Gorbachev as a source of international photo-call opportunities and start extending to him the sort of economic assistance that has been approved by President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl? What is the difference between the attitude of those two Governments and that of the British Government? Will she assure the House that, whatever else she sends to the Soviet Union by way of assistance, it will not be her doppelganger, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

The Prime Minister: The answer is quite simple. Germany has extended a line of credit through her banks. We too have previously extended through our banks a line of credit—which has not yet been exhausted, as I have said several times. The two countries are doing a similar thing.

When we are faced at a meeting with a demand for $15 billion of aid for the Soviet Union with no papers, details or structure, I do not think it right for a Minister answerable to the House to agree without going into the matter thoroughly. After all, it is our taxpayers' money that is being committed.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Many people in this country do not realise how important my right hon. Friend's battle for free trade is for people here. Will she remind the House how much the common agricultural policy costs the British housewife each week?

The Prime Minister: The Council has calculated that the average family of four pays about £16 a week more because of the agricultural support. The farm price review, which was used before we went into the common agricultural policy, would have cost the taxpayer about as much. By one means or another, we have all supported our farmers. If we had not supported them in the early days, we would not have the prosperous and efficient farming industry that we have.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): In view of the absolute necessity for the Common Market countries to present and maintain a united front in discussions on trade matters with the United States and Japan, is the Prime Minister satisfied that her Secretary of State for Trade and Industry can maintain harmonious relations with German Trade Ministers and with the European Commissioner for Trade?

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that this country will maintain an advantageous and co-operative relationship in matters of trade, as in other things, in the European Community. In the past 11 years, the Government have achieved great things in Europe, and we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that there will be widespread gratitude for her personal contribution to the summit—not least for her injection of a much-needed note of realism into the discussion of aid for eastern Europe and the Soviet Union? We simply cannot commit ourselves to carry an economy the size of the Soviet Union's. To do so through forced saving and taxation would have major recessionary consequences for us, while to do so by credit creation would have horrific inflationary consequences for the western world.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but that is not the only point. If the Soviet Union took up credit purely for short-term consumer goods, they would rapidly disappear from the shelves and it would be left with

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an increased debt. We believe that its current total debt is already about £48 billion. Therefore, any extra that we give, on loan, should go to specific targeted causes.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does the Prime Minister accept that every sane person in this country is glad to see the coming together of the peoples of Europe, including the peoples of Germany? When she next meets Mr. Haughey, President Mitterrand and Mr. Kohl, will she feel it necessary to apologise to them for the words of her Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has expressed his great regret and fully withdrawn his remarks. As I have said, they do not in any way represent the policy or beliefs of the Government, or mine. They do not represent any of our views.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on her huge achievements. To avoid a possible misunderstanding with an ally, will she further clarify a comment made in America by one of her Cabinet Ministers, who said that American agriculture was aided to a greater extent than the EEC—especially in view of the fact that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report showed a difference of about 50 per cent. the other way? Does she think that the day will ever come when we have the same standards of accuracy and vision from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that we always have from the Treasury and from the Department of Trade and Industry?

The Prime Minister: The figures that I cited were those of the OECD, with which I think we all agree.

Business of the House

4.34 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week.

MONDAY 16 JULY—Remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

Motion on the Care of Cathedrals Measure.

TUESDAY 17 JULY—Conclusion of remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

Motion relating to the Housing Renovation Grants Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 18 JULY—Opposition Day (19th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion on community care.

Motion on the Social Security Benefits (Student Loans and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations.

Motion on the Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

THURSDAY 19 JULY—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Government Trading Bill and to the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill.

Debate on motion to approve the first report, Session 1989-90, from the Select Committee on the Televising of Proceedings of the House.

FRIDAY 20 JULY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 23 JULY—Motion for the summer Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I welcome the fact that, on Thursday, we shall debate a motion to approve the Select Committee's report on televising the proceedings of the House. Will the Leader of the House confirm that, should the House approve it, that vote will be the end of any debate on the question in principle and that any further debates will simply be on procedural matters?

When will the Government make clear their intentions on the poll tax? It is intolerable that we have had to wait as long as we have, and it is particularly intolerable now, in view of the prevarication on community care. Surely the Government owe it to the thousands of people, the sick, the elderly and those who look after them, to make it plain exactly what the Government are back-tracking on on community care and their intentions on the poll tax.

Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come to the Dispatch Box to deal with a number of matters? He almost needs to be put on permanent standby. First, will he come here to explain his comments and apologise directly to the House rather than by means of long-distance press releases from Hungary, and to spell out the deep Cabinet splits on Europe?

Will he also, if necessary in a separate statement, spell out the further details of the £411 million in tax concessions on the Rover-British Aerospace deal, on which no one seems to be receiving details from the Department of Trade and Industry? He owes it to the House to explain exactly what has gone on. Is it not a peculiar state of affairs that the Government can always

find tens of millions of pounds for undercover deals, but are never able to find the money that is required for the health service or for community care?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That last matter has already been investigated and disclosed as far as is appropriate. There were no hidden tax concessions to British Aerospace or the Rover Group. Their tax affairs have been dealt with strictly in accordance with United Kingdom tax law, with the exception of a contractual arrangement which limits Rover Group's historic trading tax losses. I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already said about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He will be answering questions in the ordinary way next Wednesday and, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already said, he is still in Budapest.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health and the Environment will be making statements to the House at the appropriate time on community care and on the community charge. The Opposition's decision to debate community care next Wednesday may well provide a convenient opportunity for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health to deal with that.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his response to the motion that I shall be tabling on the televising of the proceedings of the House. He is right to say that the vote on that will be yes or no on the principle of whether televising the House should be made permanent. The Select Committee recommends an answer yes to that question, and if it is answered affirmatively, that will be the end of the matter, short of a decision to reverse it. Next year we shall be considering the mechanics of how to give effect to that decision in the most effective way.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should like to get on to the debate on rate capping at 5 o'clock. Therefore, I shall allow business questions to go on for 20 minutes. I ask hon. Members to ask questions about business next week and not about other matters.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House what the arrangements will be if we continue the experiment of televising the House or make it more permanent? When would television resume broadcasting? Does it automatically cease at the end of the Session? If we approve televising, when is it likely to take place in a more permanent way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If we agree with the recommendations of the Select Committee, for the next Session, broadcasting will continue under the arrangements that currently exist, in exactly the same way as at present. The Select Committee on Broadcasting—as it will then become—will be considering in the early part of the next Session the best arrangements to put televising on a permanent footing.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Since the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has just repudiated three pages of his own vitriol, which has been reported today, can I have an assurance that the Secretary of State will not disclaim reports in *Hansard*, on Thursday, of what he said on Wednesday?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No connection of that kind could possibly be drawn.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. and learned Friend intend to draw the attention of the House to the motion on the second report of the Select Committee on Procedure on questions, which will save approximately £500,000? Ought that not to be on the Order Paper, so that it can be put into operation the moment that we return in October?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend knows, I share his affection for the recommendations of the Select Committee on that topic, and I intend to table the necessary amendments to Standing Orders as soon as that is convenient.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I recognise that the Leader of the House cannot speak for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, but will he convey to him that the House expects him not to rely upon a vicarious apology, but to deliver a personal statement next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not for the Leader of the House to make arrangements for statements of that kind. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will no doubt read *Hansard*, as other hon. Members do.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Has my right hon. and learned Friend had time to examine the statement made by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) last week in business questions about the pay of Members of Parliament, which my right hon. and learned Friend said he would consider? Can he say when it is likely that the allowances that we receive to pay our staff are likely to be approved for this year?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Hon. Members' pay is tied, in the appropriate proportion, the national rate for civil service grade 6. Most civil servants with a settlement date of 1 April have settled. The settlement date for grades 5, 6 and 7 is 1 August. Negotiations are continuing. It is not yet possible to say what the revised salary of hon. Members will be. I should make it clear, in the light of what was said last week, that the introduction of merit awards for grade 6 will not affect settlements for Members. I shall look into my hon. Friend's point about staff pay and let him know as soon as possible.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Will the Leader of the House make a statement next week saying whether the Prime Minister and the Cabinet were aware of the contents of the article in *The Spectator* prior to the summit? If they were, did the Prime Minister inform Chancellor Kohl of the article, and the offensive remark of which he would be the subject? Did she know?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is surely clear from the way in which and the speed with which my right hon. Friend unreservedly withdrew his remarks. They were withdrawn as soon as they reached the light of day.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there is a serious and rising problem of under-age drinking, which is often caused by adults who buy drink and give it to under-age people, knowing that its consumption will not be supervised? Is there time for a debate on this serious issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that the House is concerned about under-age drinking, whatever form it takes, but there must be a practical limit to how far we can supervise the extent to which everyone supervises everyone else.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to the request for a statement from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, I emphasise that we do not want a personal statement because that would not be the subject of questioning and would finish the whole issue. The Secretary of State gave an interview related to his ministerial responsibilities—trading relations in Europe. We want a proper ministerial statement, subject to questions.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman must acknowledge the importance of the observation made not once but many times in the course of the afternoon by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—that my right hon. Friend's observations do not correspond to Government policy and have been unreservedly withdrawn.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Is the Leader of the House aware that many Conservative Members would be happy to give up some Government time next week so that the Opposition have the opportunity to make clear their proposals for the replacement of the community charge? Secondly, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many hon. Members are happy to welcome the success of the rents-to-mortgages scheme currently being tested in Scotland? Will he make time next week for an early statement on that policy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer the prospect of a statement on that, but I know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already commended the case for a study of the Scotland experience. I do not think that there is anything that we can do to induce the Opposition to come here and give their proposals for the community charge.

Mr. D. N. Campbell Savours (Workington): The Government have totally underestimated the impact of the statement by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Can we have a statement from him? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not realise that, in every European capital, the Secretary of State will now be held in contempt? He will be viewed with suspcicion and treated with derision—yet he represents British interests. On behalf of British industry, the Government should sack that man, because he no longer represents British industry and trade.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is nothing whatever to be added to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said about that. The Secretary of State's remarks do not in any respect correspond to Government policy. They have been unreservedly withdrawn, and the House will long wish that the day never comes when the hon. Gentleman becomes the spokesman for British trade and industry.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend initiate a debate next week on early-day motion 1263?

[That this House rejects the concept of trial by media; finds the personal attacks, smears and allegations against the national officials of the National Union of Mineworkers by unscrupulous elements of the media and two former employees of the Union offensive; notes that payments have been made to Messrs. Windsor and Parker to make accusations against the national officials; further notes that the Union of Democratic Mineworkers; use bogus Soviet miners to make false allegations against the National Union of Mineworkers; congratulates the miners and their families for their magnificent fight against the Government and the full might of the state machine in the 1984-85 strike which cost the taxpayer £8 billion; welcomes the decision of the NEC to completely clear the national officials of the allegations published in the Daily Mirror and broadcast on Central Television's Cook Report; further notes that the sequestration and receivership of the National Union of Mineworkers' funds did not end until July 1986, and the continued legal actions on the charge of breach of trust against the national officials and trustees was not dropped until 1988; understands the difficulties faced by the Union since the end of the strike in which period all trade union loans have been repaid; and assures the National Union of Mineworkers of its full support in its struggle to defend the British coal industry.]

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this would be an excellent opportunity to discuss the extraordinary shenanigans carried on by the NUM and Mr. Scargill during the miners' strike a few years ago? Is it not truly incredible that 52 Labour Members are prepared even at this stage to associate themselves with and support the doomed and discredited Mr. Scargill?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is absolutely right that there should be an investigation of the serious matters to which my hon. Friend has referred. I am sure that the House will feel that Members of the Opposition who are sponsored by that union should give particular attention to the matter.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is the Leader of the House aware that there has been a second serious spillage of oil in the River Mersey? Does he not agree that the measures taken by the National Rivers Authority are apparently not a deterrent to oil companies which encourage them to take the necessary safeguards? Will he press the Secretary of State to come to the House next week and make a statement on that serious matter so that things can be put right? The penalties appear to be as much of a deterrent as a slap on the wrist with a feather duster.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's propositions in the form in which he puts them; nor can I promise the prospect of a debate. However, I can certainly bring his remarks to the attention of the chairman of the National Rivers Authority and of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Can my right hon. and learned Friend find time next week to allow a short debate on the affairs of the National Union of Mineworkers to allow Opposition Members—not least the Leader of the Opposition—an opportunity to explain the uncomradely haste with which they are all queuing up to stick the knife into the NUM's leader? Only a few years ago, they were lionising him as a great hero of socialism and of labour, and the Labour party has always been happy to accept his funds.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer the prospect of a debate in Government time, but there will be many

opportunities during the debate on the motion for the summer Adjournment and in debates on the Consolidated Fund to addres that issue.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House reflect on his response to the request for a statement on Government policy on the poll tax? May we have an assurance that there will be two statements—one from the Secretary of State for the Environment and another from the Secretary of State for Scotland? If notice is to be taken of the Scottish experience in respect of house purchase, the House should surely have an opportunity to question the Secretary of State for Scotland separately on the Scottish experience in relation to the poll tax and about the fact that 500,000 Scots are still resisting payment.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In so far as the territorial Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales can appropriately make separate statements, that will happen in due course.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend to early-day motion 1263 in the names of 52 Opposition Members.

May I beg and urge my right hon. and learned Friend a third time to allow an early debate next week? That early-day motion is an insult to the people of Nottinghamshire, abuses the privileges of this House, impinges on the integrity of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, and would allow Opposition Members who were right up with the president of the NUM during the miners' dispute to support him still further. If and when he is impugned and has the handcuffs put on him, he will sing like a canary—and God help Opposition Members then.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely understand my hon. Friend's concern, not least in respect of what is said about members of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. As I told the House when the matter was raised on Tuesday, I am sure that all who joined the UDM are profoundly glad that they did so. I hope that their colleagues in the National Union of Mineworkers will continue to take effective action in their own union.

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): In deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), May I ask the Leader of the House to ensure that the Prime Minister attends a further summit. I refer to the summit that is the subject of early-day motion 1231.

[That this House is deeply concerned that an estimated one hundred million or more children will die of hunger over the next decade, if the unequal distribution of food and resources continues; recognises that Britain's commitment to the attainment of a humane solution to this pressing problem will be demonstrated by the Prime Minister heeding the call of the World Development Movement and attending the World Summit dealing with this priority issue on 29th September 1990.]

That summit will deal with the horrific problem of an estimated 100 million children who are dying of starvation. The Government can demonstrate their priorities by ensuring that the right hon. Lady attends that important conference.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot give that assurance, but I promise the hon. Gentleman that the Government share the concern of the whole House about the threat of starvation confronting children. We are contributing £8·3 million to UNICEF this year, plus additional funds in response to special appeals. We are also participating in the preparations for the world summit for children. The question of the attendance of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the world summit has not yet been decided.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): As the Law Lords dance on the point of a needle in determining whether a 1972 Act of Parliament gainsays the provisions of a 1988 Act of this Parliament, may we have a Government motion, and a debate thereon, asserting the sovereignty of the British people in legislative matters, as endorsed in the expression "the sovereignty of Parliament"?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That question raises an immensely fascinating range of propositions. I would rather leave it with the Law Lords' recent judgment on the matter than attempt to comment myself at this moment.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Reverting to an earlier reply by the Leader of the House, does he not accept that a spillage of 15,000 gallons of oil about 1 km long into the Mersey today represents an ecological and environmental disaster? Will be explain why no statement has been made this afternoon? Will he assure the House that the Secretary of State for the Environment will, when he visits Merseyside tomorrow on a scheduled visit, be asked to visit the site of that disaster and to explain why it is that Shell, which was responsible within the last 12 months for an identical spillage, could have allowed such an incident to have occurred again?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I fully realise the importance to the communities concerned of such a spillage. If it is the case that a spillage on that scale has occurred in comparable circumstances to the one that happened not long ago, that is of even more concern. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's suggestions to the specific attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment, who will no doubt consider how he should react.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend himself explain next week what happened to the proposed new arrangements that he promised before Easter, to allow constituents to shelter from bad weather when visiting the Line of Route? Those arrangements have not yet been introduced, and it is high time that they were.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has taken a close interest in that issue, and he will know that the completion of such arrangements seldom proceeds as expeditiously as it should. I shall look into the matter, and I will be in a position to answer him more directly next week.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Surely the burning question of the hour is the poll tax—the so-called community charge. Criticism of it as being unjust and oppressive have been directed at the Government, and clearly it is unacceptable throughout the country. It is certainly unacceptable north of the border, where, according to capitalist law, the poll tax should not be imposed. It comes back to the point that this House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must point out to the hon. Member that we are to have a debate on that issue in a few minutes' time. The hon. Member must ask a question about next week's business.

Mr. Brown: If hon. Members choose not to pay the poll tax, what force of law will be used against them? I am one of those who is not only refusing to pay but telling the working classes not to do so and to fight back. What will the Government do about that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall study the text of the hon. Gentleman's remarks in *Hansard*, to see whether or not they contain a question that I might be required to answer.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Next week's business includes an Opposition day. Can my right hon. and learned Friend say whether the Opposition will set aside an hour and a half, say, of that day to allow Government Members to debate early-day motion 1263, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) referred, and the Scargill factor? Some of the contents of that motion would be deemed illegal in the private sector, and we want to debate that aspect next week.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand why my hon. Friend wants to debate that issue, but I do not believe that the particular device he has suggested is one that it is open to me to adopt.

Mr John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Will the Leader of the House find time next week to allow a debate on the future of the Lomé convention after 1992? The right hon. and learned Gentleman may be aware that more than 70 per cent. of the bananas imported into this country come from the Windward islands through the port of Barry. If the Lomé convention is discontinued after 1992, that will devastate both the economies of our former colonies and trade in Barry. The House has not carefully considered the trading link between Britain and the third-world countries in the run-up to 1992.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As someone who studied the passage of banana boats to the port of Barry from my earliest childhood, I emphasise the importance of the hon. Gentleman's general point. I cannot give him an immediate answer on the Lomé convention, but I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the Leader of the House make a statement tomorrow on the fact that, for the third time in as many months, it has been announced that the drinking water in Norman Shaw South is untouchable and must be boiled before being drunk? If the Mother of Parliaments is to be treated worse than a third-world country, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggest a way in which right hon. and hon. Members can have bottled drinking water provided to them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Lady will be glad to know that the Parliamentary Works Officer has informed the Serjeant at Arms that the Government chemist has now confirmed that the drinking water supply in the northern block of outbuildings has received a favourable test result and that drinking water supplies throughout the building are now perfectly safe and may be used without risk—*[Interruption.]* Let the hon. Lady be patient. Of course, I am no more delighted than she is that such reports have been made more than once in the past few weeks, and I shall certainly follow up the point that she has raised.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Leader of the House make provision next week to allow the House to consider the EC regulations allowing VAT to be charged on electricity? If parish halls and village halls in rural areas do not use a certain amount of electricity, they could be charged VAT, and that would have a devastating effect on the economies of those villages. Will the Leader of the House provide time for us to discuss those important regulations which were introduced only on 1 July? Members of Parliament are now feeling the wrath of villages about VAT on electricity charges.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer the prospect of a specific debate on that, but it seems an appropriate subject to be raised in the debates on the summer Adjournment or the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall carefully keep a list of hon. Members who were not called today and I shall ensure that they will have some precedence at business questions next week.

Summer Adjournment

5.2 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about the arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment, which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Monday 23 July. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 10 pm on Wednesday 18 July. A list showing the subjects and the times will be published the following day. Normally, the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise a discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours—*[Interruption.]* I ask the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) to allow me to finish my statement.

Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order after I have dealt with the Statutory Instruments.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the three motions on statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Companies (Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1368) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Lead in Cattle) (England) Order 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1391) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in Welsh) Order 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1082) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of Inward Investment to Wales, being a matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to a Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you have said that those of us who have been standing all afternoon and have not been called will be given preferential treatment, will you consider extending that to your consideration of applications for the Adjournment debate? I wish to raise the subject of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation review conference which will take place before the House reconvenes.

Mr. Speaker: Let me look at the subject first and then I shall consider it carefully. We have to be fair to each other in the House and a great many hon. Members wish to participate in today's debate. Before we start, let me say that, if hon. Members were to limit their speeches to 10 minutes, I would probably be able to call most if not all of them, but not if I have too many points of order.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would have raised this matter during business questions had I not been misinformed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asked a business question.

Mr. Douglas: My point of order is that the Table Office is not accepting oral questions because it has not been informed—and, to the best of my knowledge, nor has the House—when the House will resume after the summer recess. That is causing considerable inconvenience to us all. The Table Office thought that the Leader of the House might be making such a statement today. Can we have some information now from the Leader of the House, or is he waiting for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to return from Hungary?

Mr. Speaker: It is a bit wide, but the House will be interested in that point of order. I have no doubt that the Leader of the House will consider when he can make that statement, for the convenience of us all.

Orders of the Day

Community Charge

[SECOND DAY'S DEBATE]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[11 July]—That the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 6th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Chris Patten.]*

Question again proposed.

5.4 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): Yesterday, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, advanced the argument that the Secretary of State's powers to charge-cap should be exercised only in the event of illegality or fraud on the part of a local authority, and that short of illegality or fraud, local authorities should be allowed to spend to their hearts' content and the Secretary of State should rely on the principle of accountability and the results of local elections.

The principle of accountability is useful and important, but it should not be followed to its ultimate and logical conclusion. In areas of substantial overspending, a minority looks to central Government for a measure of protection against the excesses of overspending. Charge capping is a useful measure to protect that minority.

A community charge of £400 or £500 can represent considerable hardship to those on modest incomes who are not in receipt of community charge benefit. Hon. Members who say that it is wrong not to follow the principle of accountability to its logical conclusion are eloquent on the subjects of accountability and logic, but any success that we have achieved in regulating our affairs has often been achieved precisely by refusing to follow such principles to their logical conclusion.

Charge capping is useful to protect a minority, and in its influence in areas that are not charge-capped but where the minority is afforded a measure of protection by the influence that can be exercised by charge capping. That applies particularly to authorities that are not charge-capped but that are on the borderline of charge capping.

One example is the London borough of Hounslow, part of which I represent. There has been a Labour-controlled council since 1971. Hounslow has escaped capping in every year except one. Its experience of capping in that year makes it wish to avoid charge capping in future. Hounslow's expenditure is excessive by all the standards except the £26 benchmark. It is among the 12 authorities that have escaped capping by the skin of their teeth. Since the beginning of April, many of my constituents have asked me why Hounslow has not been charge-capped and why they have not been given the protection that has been afforded to charge payers in other areas.

In the local elections, the Conservative group on Hounslow council advanced a programme that would have reduced the community charge from £396 to £296. Its detailed programme would have avoided any substantial or significant cuts in services. It did not win the election, but the council is considering closely whether Hounslow can avoid charge capping for the coming year. The ideas advanced by the Conservative group are of considerable value and will be considered by the majority group, but they should have been considered before the risk of charge capping arose.

The council is considering those ideas in the light of experiences of adjoining boroughs such as Hammersmith and Fulham. I have an interest in the outcome of Hammersmith and Fulham's case because as a resident my charge stands to be reduced from £424 to £325. Hounslow's residents have realised that the charge levied in Hammersmith and Fulham stands to be reduced to £325 and that as a result of the election in Hillingdon the charge has been reduced from £367 to £289. Those reductions have shown Hounslow council, which is on the borderline of capping, that other authorities can provide good services and carefully thought out programmes for significantly less than it is charging.

I was disappointed by yesterday's debate. We spent much time discussing the principles of capping and accountability but little time discussing the appropriateness of the level set by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The debate is being conducted against the background of litigation, but I hope that when discussing appropriateness my right hon. Friend did not feel inhibited by the fact that charge capping will shortly be considered by the Lords of Appeal. It is difficult to discuss appropriateness, although in its judgment the Court of Appeal made it clear that it is a matter for the House. I hope that in future it will be possible to discuss the appropriateness of a capping order without the threat of litigation pending. It is better that litigation has been completed more quickly than in previous years, but it is still not ideal to discuss appropriateness when the orders are being challenged in the highest court of the land.

It is important that the charge-capping power is exercised appropriately and is seen to be exercised so as to allow much discretion and diversity to local authorities. Under the capping orders that have been made, whether we consider the difference between the standard spending assessments and the level of capping, the range of community charges or the gross totals, substantial local discretion and diversity remain. The difference between the standard spending assessments and the level of capping is substantial—£57 million in Avon, £72 million in Derbyshire and £40 million in Haringey. In Derbyshire, it is £72 million on top of an SSA of £448 million and in Haringey it is £40 million on top of £166 million. Therefore, there is a wide margin of difference.

That is borne out by the community charges that have been set in London, which range from £148 in Wandsworth to £502 in Haringey—a difference of more than £350 or more than 300 per cent.

If we consider the total overspending of authorities that have been capped and compare it with the amounts that have been lopped by capping, the same picture emerges. The local authorities that have been capped have overspent by £766 million. The capping proposals would achieve a reduction of only £214 million. Therefore, by the Government's definition, more than £550 million of excess expenditure remains among the capped authorities alone. The considerable powers that the Secretary of State has under the legislation have been exercised with considerable retraint. They have allowed much room for discretion among local authorities, variety in the community charge

and huge differences between what is deemed to be excessive expenditure and the level of expenditure at which capping bites.

That is one of the most important tests of whether the capping procedure has been exercised appropriately but in a way that is consistent with a lively operation of local democracy. Applying that approach of appropriateness, this has been a satisfactory exercise of the Secretary of State's powers.

5.18 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Rotherham metropolitan borough council is not a high-spending authority, but even if it were I should be here to defend it because I believe profoundly in the right of every elected authority to determine the level of expenditure required to meet the needs of the people whom it represents and to answer for that decision to the electorate, not to the Secretary of State. My constituents did not elect the Secretary of State to control the affairs of Rotherham council. They elected councillors whom they can remove at the next election if they do not perform their functions satifactorily.

The Secretary of State said yesterday that Parliament creates local authorities, but it is fair to remind him that democracy in this country began at a local level, because there was democratic local government, admittedly in a primitive form, centuries before the first Parliament was established in Britain. We should keep that in mind.

Even in the exercise of the draconian powers that his misguided hon. Friends have given him, the Secretary of State has managed to get it wrong according to the standards that he claims to have set himself. He alleges that the order is intended to protect charge payers against high-spending authorities. That is manifest nonsense. Rotherham borough council set a poll tax of £334, far below the national average. That was far below the level set by many Conservative authorities and my reaction was that it was too low and would not raise enough money to provide the services that were needed. Nevertheless, I thought, "It's the council's decision; it's not for me to decide and not for the Secretary of State to decide." Far from being a profligate authority, Rotherham borough council—and I say this without wishing to offend—is a tight-fisted authority from time to time, partly because it has been robbed of millions of pounds over the past 10 years by successive reductions in the Government grant.

When I have a 97-year-old woman constituent who cannot get a home help to help out with the cleaning, I do not want any Conservative Member telling me that my authority spends too much money. That is a hopelessly ridiculous position and I hope that the Secretary of State will make an effort to find a proper explanation for his crazy decision.

I do not intend to repeat the statistical analysis that my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) gave to the House in his excellent speech last night. However, it needs to be emphasised that the so-called "standard" spending assessment is absolute nonsense. It is an absurdity. It is even worse than the old grant-related expenditure system—which was pretty awful—but at least the GRE system included unemployment as an indicator of social deprivation. The SSA does not, which is absurd.

When a system arrives at the conclusion that there is less social deprivation in Rotherham than there is in Oxford, in Cambridge, in Cheltenham, in Kent, in Hampshire or in the Isle of Wight, we do not need to go further to demonstrate the nonsense of the system. In the case of Rotherham borough council, the changeover from GRE to SSA has made a difference of £5·3 million, which is equivalent to £26 per head on the poll tax.

Can the Secretary of State explain how the same Government can decide that this year, my authority needed to spend £5·3 million less than they decided that it needed to spend last year? How on earth can that be explained? That is how the Secretary of State has introduced his capping exercise. If that difference of £5·3 million had not been made, the council would have escaped his net. I should like a proper explanation of that at some stage. I do not suppose that I shall get it, but it is fair to ask for it.

The service that will suffer most is, necessarily, education because it is the service that takes the most money. I wrote to the Secretary of State for Education and Science some time back and asked whether he could personally justify the capping of Rotherham when the education authority covering his constituency spends more per pupil than mine, yet his authority has not been capped. My constituents' children will suffer under this arrangement, but the children in the constituency of the Secretary of State for Education and Science will not. I asked for a personal explanation, but he did not bother to write to me. He got the Minister of State to write a nonsense letter, which did not help.

The same Secretary of State is prepared to use the taxpayers' money under his assisted places scheme to send youngsters to private schools, such as St. Peter's school in York, where the fee is £4,872. My authority already spends less than £1,900 per pupil on secondary education and the Government tell me that it must cut that amount. How on earth can that be justified? It is disgraceful that the children of my constituents will have their educational resources reduced below the level that the parents' representatives on the council decided was necessary to meet the proper educational standard. It is absolutely wrong that Secretaries of State should have the power to override a decision made by the elected representatives. That is a gross abuse of power by a power-mad Government. Any Conservative Member who has a real regard for democracy must vote against the orders.

5.25 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I welcome the opportunity to support the stance of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his charge-capping measures. The courts have decided that he exercised his powers properly within the law. He made one or two telling points yesterday. I endorse his point that local government has no powers other than the powers given to it by the House. We must accept and respect that. They devolve from the sovereignty of Parliament and should be considered in that light.

It is often overlooked that, where there is a double mandate—first, to local government and secondly, to national Government—the national Government's mandate must prevail over that of local government.

I recently introduced a ten-minute Bill dealing with universal capping. One of my suggestions was that, when the national Government were fighting a battle against inflation, the local councillors could not be immune from

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

tight fiscal management of their funds. Unfortunately, councillors feel that they are somehow immune, that they can turn their backs on the problems of central Government and the public's struggles against the high interest rates which are necessary to reduce our economic problems. But they cannot turn their backs and say, "We'll spend what we like, how we like," which totally ignores the problems we face as a whole.

The public must look at the local councillor who is as accountable as the Member of Parliament and as the Government of the day. One of the keys to that accountability is laid down in the community charge. The community charge cannot work properly, except in single-tier authorities. The local government elections in May in Westminster and Wandworth proved that, where there is one authority, it is clear what the public are voting for and they recognise where the services come from.

The best example of my point is my own county of Lancashire. The West Lancashire district council reduced its share of the community charge to just below the Government's estimate. Little credit was given for that, because the county council increased its share to £100 above what the Government's estimate was likely to be. As the notice for payment of the community charge was sent out by the district council and had its name on the top, it was the district councillors who stood for election who took the brunt of the public's displeasure over the size of the community charge. It was not their responsibility; the responsibility lay elsewhere. There must be a second plank of accountability in future.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The responsibility lies with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hind: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not set a community charge in Lancashire that was £100 per head more than was necessary. It was set by Labour councillors, in county hall at Preston. The public must realise that, if we are going to make accountability work.

In future I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will bear it in mind that, if accountability is going to work, the public must receive two bits of paper through their letter boxes. The first will tell people that they owe the district council £37, as in my case, and the other will be from the county council telling them that they owe £335. If that were the case, the public would know what they are paying and to whom.

Those county councillors should not be able to sit back and say that they can charge what they will, because they know that it will be another three years before they are called to account by the electorate. Accountability must mean that they have to stand for election more regularly. They should stand for election in the same way that district councillors have to stand, one third each year. However, that is for the future. If that were to happen, the minds of those councillors would be focused. They would concentrate on more efficiency and better value, and they would think more accountably towards the electorate. They would be more careful about the demands that they place on people, and as a consequence, accountability would benefit.

The most important thing about capping is that it focuses the mind on the need for efficiency. Efficiency is something which many local government officers in my experience do not seem to consider. For example, in Lancashire, a P and A report was commissioned which told the councillors that the meals on wheels service and the residential homes were a disaster. Effectively, they were high-cost services which delivered a poor level of service and the council was advised to take positive action.

I am sure that there are many examples of that around the country. Charge capping will focus the minds of local government councillors and officers on those matters, and that will result in better value for money for the public. Without capping, an awful lot of authorities will go their own sweet way, they will not consider efficiency, value for money or the service that is delivered to the public.

Charge capping has one big danger: some authorities may want to maximise the blame on the Government. They may say that they have asked for a lot of money, and the Government are to blame. Those authorities will look for the savings that will hurt the most and cause the maximum embarrassment, as they see it, to the Government. They will not look at efficiency.

The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) referred to home helps and to education. No doubt those areas should be protected. Councils should be looking to make savings in different areas. The total budget in Lancashire is more than £1 billion, and there must be savings which can be made, which should be considered long before the council considers the provision of home helps and education.

Councils must also consider whether they are doing things which are not the function of local government. They must consider whether they are doing things which should be the functions of industry or the voluntary sector or even central Government. In many cases, councils are trying to deliver services which are not their responsibility and should be provided by others.

If we are to have a positive approach and efficiency in relation to the service that is delivered, we will not need charge capping. Local authorities will focus their minds if a third of them are to be re-elected every year, rather than the ridiculous position now, when some counties have a two-tier electoral system. According to the figure given me by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities in a letter this week, Lancashire increased its expenditure last year by 20 per cent. How many of us in the House or in the community at large received pay rises of 20 per cent? That increase in the budget would have translated into an increase of one third on the rates, even before we consider the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): They were cutting grants.

Mr. Hind: Not in Lancashire's case. It was a straightforward 20 per cent. increase in expenditure across the board. When inflation is running at between 8 and 9 per cent., that is completely unjustified. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is aware of all that. Conservative Members realise what is happening, and if we are to have proper sensible local government in future, we must have charge capping. I gladly support the orders.

5.35 pm

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Of all the debates that I have taken part in since I was elected to this House just over a year ago, this must be the most farcical. The Government introduced the poll tax. It was their idea and it has been their failure. At no time has it been supported by the Opposition. We have fought the unfairness of the poll tax. But these orders will drive a coach and horses through the very measure that the Government introduced to bring about so-called accountability for the local electorate. It is farcical that we should have this parliamentary time, short as it is, to discuss such a proposal.

The Government's poll tax levels in London are absolute fantasy. It seems that they have simply been plucked from a conjuror's hat. The standard spending assessment levels do not make sense. They do not add up, and they bear no relation to the actual expenditure or to the needs of each local authority. Therefore, they are bound to produce absurd anomalies.

The poll tax in my borough of Lambeth is £548, while residents in Wandsworth—we hear this over and over again—have to pay £148. However, in the local council elections in May, there was a swing to Labour of 1·5 per cent. The people in Lambeth voted in spite of that high poll tax—we know that it is high, and we did not want that high poll tax—for Labour. They understood the reason for the high poll tax.

Why did the Government see fit to subsidise the poll tax payers in Wandsworth by 300 per cent. more than they subsidised the poll tax payers in Lambeth? Wandsworth is getting £116 per person more in safety net payments. Lambeth is getting a mere £26. Would it not be simpler for the Secretary of State to admit that he is simply trying to score cheap political points? The Government oppose what Lambeth has been doing. If that is not the reason for what the Government have done, the only explanation can be that the SSAs were truly meaningless. If real spending and real needs had been taken into account in my borough, Lambeth would have received over £200 per head in safety net payments.

Lambeth is the fourth most deprived borough in the country. We have 37,000 households on income support and 65,000 people claiming housing benefit. Those are not just statistics: they are people, and families. Those people face the prospect of high poll tax charges which they know are a result of the Government's changes. It is a Government tax.

Since the abolition of the Inner London education authority, Lambeth is the largest education authority in inner London. We have therefore been disproportionally hit in Lambeth by the underfunding of education in London generally. In Lambeth, education will cost £11 million more than the Government have budgeted for. At the same time, on our borders in Wandsworth, with its very low poll tax, a consultation suggestion emerged last week that four secondary schools on the border with Lambeth will be closed. Wandsworth is reducing its education budget. Many parents in Wandsworth will send their children to Lambeth schools. That is a disgraceful manipulation of the education budget in Wandsworth.

As everyone knows, Lambeth suffers also because of the high level of homelessness. Waterloo and cardboard city are in our area. We have the largest emergency night shelter in London—people come from all over London, and Lambeth has responsibility for those people. Lambeth, which has been underfunded and successively rate-capped, with hundreds of families in bed and breakfast, is now being poll-capped.

The sham of the Tory comparison between Lambeth and Wandsworth must be pointed out to show what Lambeth does that Wandsworth does not do. Wandsworth charges four times the amount that Lambeth charges for parental contributions to day nurseries. Meals on wheels in Wandsworth are nearly twice as expensive for elderly residents. Day care in homes for the elderly is free in Lambeth, but in Wandsworth it costs £4·95 a week.

Another unfair aspect for Lambeth is that county hall, the old seat of local government—the Greater London council—was abolished by the Tory Government. The Inner London education authority was abolished by the Tory Government. The London residuary body, an unelected and undemocratic body, received a backdated assessment on the rating value of county hall. As a result, Lambeth must pay back £5·5 million, and the Government have refused to consider centrally funding that reassessment. The whole £5·5 million charge will be payable by Lambeth residents.

Anyone who is seriously interested in fairness must agree that it is unfair that that £5·5 million must go on to the Lambeth poll tax. Lambeth borough has come through enormous difficulties. No one is complacent about services in Lambeth. Neither I nor my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) is complacent about the level of services in Lambeth. We all want to improve the position. Just when there was beginning to be light at the end of the tunnel—not just in my view and that of my hon. Friend—in January 1990 the district auditor himself said:

"Although the council"—

that is, Lambeth—

"faces considerable problems, I am encouraged by recent initiatives to address the underlying weaknesses. This work is a major undertaking for the Council and I am hopeful that the initial progress can be maintained."

Just as we were beginning to see some progress, some real changes and some benefits in the coming year, Lambeth has been poll-capped and attacked again by the Government. After the motion is approved and poll capping is introduced, there will be no effect on the overall economic situation of the country. Lambeth will have to save £8·5 million.

My local authority is responsible and, if the motion is approved, will struggle to make reductions, but at what price? Facilities for the elderly will be reduced, swimming pools will probably be closed, library opening hours will be affected, and there will be administrative chaos. Ironically, those who can least afford the high poll tax that the Secretary of State wants to reduce will be hit hardest. They will be doubly hit: there will be cuts in non-statutory provision and so on. The Government's cynical action will not bring about the result that the Government hope. It will not make people in my borough vote Conservative. They proved that two months ago, and they will prove it even more resoundingly at the next general election.

5.43 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): The local government finance legislation, which was passed a year ago, and the failure of the challenge in the courts, which proceeds day by day, clearly demonstrate that there is no question but

[Mr. Tim Janman]

that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is right to bring forward the orders and to ask hon. Members to vote on them today. I make it quite clear that I shall support my right hon. Friend in the Lobby. One could even make the case that he has been quite lenient in the number of councils that he has capped, and not only in respect of the numbers but in the extent to which he has capped some of them.

As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) rightly said, if we examine the level at which some authorities have been capped and consider the difference between that level and their SSA expenditure per head, we shall note that there is a huge disparity. In other words, even if the ruling party in any of those authorities had set a level just below the cap and the Opposition had suggested a spend more equitable to the SSA, it would still have presented their electorates with a wide choice of what to vote for.

In the London borough of Hillingdon we have seen a practical illustration. The Conservative opposition are actually saying that the cap is over-generous. Now that they have taken power from the socialists—the people of Hillingdon have far more sense than the people of Lambeth—they themselves will be setting a community charge of £25 a head lower than the figure that my right hon. Friend suggested.

It is worth thinking about all the authorities that have not been charge-capped and whether, in future, it will be worth my right hon. Friend considering capping other authorities. Clearly, the impediment to doing that at the moment, and the reason why we are considering only 21 authorities, is the £15 million floor level on revenue budget, which determines whether an authority can be eligible for my right hon. Friend's scrutiny. For example, my local authority, Thurrock, is overspending by, according to my right hon. Friend's Department, £75 a head. On my calculation, when we include extra overcharging for the excuses of costs of collection and non-payment, it is overcharging by £91·77 per charge payer. On the Department's figures, the borough is overspending by 85·4 per cent. On my figures, if we take the overspend of nearly £92 a head, the percentage overspent is considerably more than 85·4 per cent.

Although we are not considering an order to cap my local authority, it and many others like it are massively overspending and probably employing twice as many people as they need and are not contracting out services to the private sector. Thurrock is seeking to build phase 3 of its office block development. According to one of my local papers, that could add anything between an extra £8 and £62 to the charge that each of my constituents must pay. Clearly, there is a strong case for removing the £15 million floor level and capping far more authorities. However, if my right hon. Friend does that, he should not cap any authorities to any great extent. There are three reasons for that.

First, although the concept of local government democracy is fine, in practice it is seriously flawed. In fact, the reality of local government democracy today is farcical. If my right hon. Friend caps more councils, he should do so in a limited sense. That would at least send a message from him and the Government that there is support for people living in those areas and that the Government are prepared to step in and make sure that excessive spending is curbed. It would show also that the Government were on their side and were not leaving the matter purely to the mechanism of the community charge and the accountability that would be increasingly associated with it.

Secondly, if, in each instance, the cap is not great, and, to be fair, it is not in many of the local authorities that we are considering today, it would not wreck the principle of accountability—in other words, a small cap in terms of depth. As my hon. and learned Friend has said, it is unquestionable that the principle of accountability is clearly not diminished.

Thirdly, we should not provide a political hostage to fortune. In the 21 authorities and others that are being capped, and in others that would be capped if the £15 million floor level was removed, the socialists in those administrations and perhaps in some Tory administrations, to protect their empires and bureaucracies would say that they would cut services that residents were receiving rather than cut their own gross inefficiencies and overmanning.

Local government has enjoyed a massive increase in expenditure, year on year in real terms, not only prior to 1979 but even—sadly—since the Government came into power. Although there are genuine exceptions and some local authorities do a good job and are efficient, I submit that the vast majority are extremely inefficient and are ripping off their community charge payers as, in the past, they ripped off their ratepayers left, right and centre.

As well as considering an alternative to extending community charge capping, I ask my right hon. Friend to consider an even more radical alternative and to provide the people of any local authority area with the ability to cap that authority themselves. Perhaps my right hon. Friend could consider introducing a mechanism whereby, if any local authority sought to spend more than the SSA set down by the Secretary of State, it would have to ratify that by a binding local referendum before the expenditure and the budget could be implemented.

That would give the people of the area a real choice. It would refine and extend the accountability principle of the community charge. It would mean that the local people could answer one specific and simple question in the ballot box—do we or do we not agree with the Budget that our locally elected councillors have set for our authority? The local people would have the opportunity either of agreeing and ratifying those spending plans, or of capping the authority themselves and asking it to think again. That would be an interesting and workable extension of the principle of accountability in local government.

Although, as I have said, the concept of local government democracy is fine, today its delivery is seriously flawed. After all, local government exists purely to deliver services. It receives half its revenue, not from the local population, but from central Government. It receives another quarter of its revenue from businesses, which do not have a vote or a say in who is elected to run the local authority. Although some people will obviously change their allegiance when they vote in local elections because of what is going on locally from the party for which they voted nationally, the vast majority of people vote in a local election according to their normal political tribal instincts or because of what is happening nationally.

The percentage turnout also varies between the number who turn out to support the Opposition and those who

support the Government. I am not making a party political point because, when the Labour party was in government in the 1960 and 1970s, it suffered from that when it lost seats in local government hand over fist, and we have suffered the same reverse in the 1980s. The way in which people vote in local elections often bears little resemblance to what is happening or to the key issues affecting the local authority. It bears far more resemblance to what is happening nationally.

In conclusion, although I believe that my right hon. Friend should consider some radical alternatives, he is absolutely right to introduce the orders both in moral and in legislative terms. I shall support them.

5.53 pm

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): I assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I shall take no longer than the 10 minutes to which you have requested hon. Members to try to limit their speeches.

I totally oppose the order and, like others, will vote against it. I am not only opposed to poll tax capping; I am opposed to the poll tax. If the Government had not introduced the poll tax, we should not have poll tax capping now. The Government thought that the problems would be solved when the Secretary of State uttered those magic words, but as soon as the poll tax is introduced, the Government start to cap it. That is a sign of the complete inefficiency of the Department of the Environment.

The Government's method of assessing which authorities to cap is also unfair. No one can say that the standard spending assessment—the SSA, as it is known —is fair. If hon. Members want to know why it is not fair, they need only read the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) in the *Hansard* that is available today. He explained the unevenness and unfairness of the SSA so well. Hon. Members could also consider the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) just a few moments ago when he explained the total unfairness of this capping method.

The authority in which my constituency is situated, Doncaster, is not a high spender; it is a correct spender, and it is a caring council. I do not care how much a caring council spends, but if it is both caring and careful with its money, we should do nothing but support it. However, in March this year, Doncaster metropolitan district council accepted and approved a budget of £190·1 million for the year 1990-91. On 3 April the Secretary of State made an order to cap that budget and ordered a new budget figure of £178·5 million. That means a cut of £11·6 million. That is not a bad cap for a little northern town, is it?

The national average poll tax was £363 per head, but Doncaster's budget, which was approved in council, set a poll tax of £335 per head. That means that Doncaster had a poll tax per head that was below the average for the country. In that case, why cap it? It does not make sense. The reason can be only that the Secretary of State is being vindictive towards Labour local authorities. The facts cannot point to anything but that.

Let us compare some authorities. On 15 February 1990 the Community Charge Transitional Relief Report (England) was laid before Parliament. It set target poll taxes, as they have become known, which raise some important issues. Let us compare the facts with what was included in those provisions. It was said that Doncaster's expenditure was 6·6 per cent. above target. I have to be fair and agree that that is right. It is also true that Doncaster's expenditure above target amounted to £54 per head. I am not arguing about that, but let us consider some of the other authorities that have not been capped.

Milton Keynes' budget was 98 per cent. above target, which meant £79 per head, but it was not capped. The Isle of Wight's figures were 17·6 per cent. or £108 per head above target, but that authority was not capped. The royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea was 16·7 per cent. above target or £189 per head, but it was not capped. There are many others. On those workings, to put it mildly, the Secretary of State's capping has been unfair. As I have said before, the reality is that the Secretary of State was being vindictive.

Doncaster's approved council budget was accepted by most people. I have chosen my words carefully because the budget was not accepted by the leader of the Tory Party in Doncaster. He said that he welcomed the capping. We now come to the May elections. The leader of the Tories had been a councillor since the district was formed in 1973. During that time, the Labour party has never won a seat in that ward. The leader of the Tory party, who agreed with the capping, lost his seat. That shows the local people's approval of the budget. That shows what the citizens of Doncaster thought about London imposing capping on them——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): By how many votes did he lose?

Mr. Welsh: As the Prime Minister says, "If I win by one, I win."

Doncaster should not have been capped. We are proud of our caring authority. We have one of the best nursery schools in all of Great Britain. The capping proposals may damage nursery schools. The Minister may not be bothered about the little kiddies in my area going to school, but I must make it plain that the hon. Member for Doncaster, North is bothered. We want nurseries for those kiddies so that their mums can have time perhaps to earn extra money. Nursery schools are necessary and the poll tax cap may infringe on that service.

Unemployment is still high in Doncaster. We have tried to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. We have done well but still it is not enough. In 1990 unemployment fell to 10·8 per cent. That was still twice the national average but we had brought it down. We have lost many jobs in mining and other industries. It was announced last week that the pit where I worked, Brodsworth colliery, is to be closed with the loss of 700 men's jobs. The Government's statistics did not take that into account. Also Hatfield colliery is to be slimmed down with the loss of another 200 jobs. In one week in my constituency, 900 jobs in the mining industry have been lost. That is what it is all about.

It is more money, not less, that local government in our areas needs. But we shall not get it. We are not begging; we simply ask to be allowed to spend more money for the good of Doncaster. It is Doncaster's money. The Minister has let us down. Most of the Department's junior Ministers have visited Doncaster. All were more than pleased at the way in which the local authority and the people of Doncaster are trying to make Doncaster a better place to work and live and winning at it.

We are proud of the area. We are a bit like the Scots. We are proud but a bit more careful with our money. We

[Mr. Welsh]

do not spend foolishly the authority's money or our own. We never spend a penny where a ha'penny will do. We are not daft.

To show the Minister what Doncaster is like, to get itself going it has urban programme status, a derelict land programme, and an inner-city task force. It is part of an EEC integrated development programme. The authority has been asked and encouraged by Ministers, senior officials and representatives of the EEC Commission to get cracking. Yet the Secretary of State comes along and decides to confiscate £11·6 million of our money. That is a proper disgrace.

What is the truth? I do not wish to blame the Minister if he is not to blame. One must be careful. The truth is that she who must be obeyed has spoken. She said, "At least a score of authorities must be capped." There was only one golden rule: none of the capped authorities must be Tory. That is what happened.

Doncaster, with a community charge of £335, was capped. Luton, with a community charge of £402, was not capped. Southend-on-Sea, with a charge of £420, was not capped. Sandwell, with a community charge of £423, was not capped. That is what it is about. The Government are bumping the poor areas. They ought to be ashamed of themselves. No matter which way the Minister puts his case, the man riding on the South Yorkshire Transport bus will simply look at the figures and reach one conclusion. It will be, "Him in London hates us and won't let us develop our own area."

There is no logic in the capping except a perverse strain of logic that makes it necessary for the Secretary of State to protect the poll tax payers of Doncaster from a below average poll tax. That could happen only through political motivation.

6.3 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I shall keep my remarks as brief as possible in view of the number of hon. Members who wish to speak. I represent a constituency that falls under two capped authorities—Avon and Bristol. I shall address my remarks principally to Avon, but I suspect that most would apply equally to Bristol.

In the run-up to the meeting in March at which Avon set its community charge, there was a great deal of discussion, first of the principles and secondly of the detail of how the new community charge system should work. Labour is the controlling group on Avon county council —I stress controlling group because although nominally the county is jointly controlled by the Labour and Liberal Democrat groups, in practice I have yet to witness an occasion when the Liberal Democrats said anything other than, "Me too."

In the run-up to that fateful meeting, the Avon councillors, not surprisingly, had many disagreements with the Government about the community charge. They made strong representations directly to the Government, civil servants and, indeed, local Members of Parliament about the matters on which they disagreed. But each time that disagreements arose, the House rightly made a decision on that disagreement. By the time that Avon met to consider its community charge, all past disagreements were wholly irrelevant.

That is the point that I wish to make. However much the controlling group on Avon disagreed with the principle of the community charge and the way in which its standard spending assessment had been reached and various regulations promulgated, that was not at issue. What was at issue on that night in Avon house was Avon's budget and the inevitable—I stress inevitable—level of community charge that would result.

The Avon councillors had two clear choices. They could set a level of spending that would inevitably, and entirely by their own choice—only they could avoid it—result in a community charge of £493 in Bristol. Or they could set a level of spending such as that offered to them by the Conservative group, which would set a community charge lower than the amount proposed in the order.

In accordance with what they considered to be right, the majority of the Avon county councillors decided to set the highest level of community charge proposed to them. It is not up to me to justify their decision. No doubt they considered that it was the right decision. They have tried to defend it on many occasions.

The reason why I am so much in favour of the orders before the House is that I represent several of the poorest areas in the city of Bristol, such as Southmead, Lawrence Weston and Manor Farm, all of which are by no standard to be regarded as wealthy. The people cannot afford a high community charge. I represent many people to whom the difference of £2·50 a week per couple, which is the difference between the community charge proposed by Avon county council and that which will apply after tonight's vote, represents a significant proportion of their disposable income. Those poor people in my constituency will gain from the orders.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House should not forget that this decision does not affect any of us personally. We all have a level of income that is considerably higher than that of the people to whom I refer. Avon county council deliberately decided on that night in March to take about £2·50 a week per couple away from such people, when by no standard could they possibly afford it.

The Opposition have argued that the Government are wrong to correct the decision taken by Avon on that night. Since the decision to cap was made, however, people have repeatedly asked how any democratic Government could stand by and watch the deliberate creation of poverty by a local authority. They asked how any Government could stand by and watch local authorities cause a serious radical deterioration in the standard of living of those who are not in a position to defend themselves. Given that the Government have the power, those people questioned how they could stand by and do nothing.

I support my right hon. Friend and his colleagues because their decision to cap has protected the most vulnerable of my constituents. Surely that is the job of any democratic Government.

6.10 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and for Thurrock (Mr. Janman), who has just left the Chamber, believe that people are suffering, but it should be for those people to decide that. The hon. Member for Thurrock argued that a referendum should be held on the poll tax level that the Government had imposed on the local

councils, but his argument is wrong. If one really believes in democracy, one should allow the local council to fix its budget. It should then be left to the local people to decide whether they approve it.

We are not just talking about poverty and a cut in costs; we are talking about cuts in payments and services. There is not one example where that will not happen.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is outrageous that hon. Members should be asked to vote to cut spending by Southwark council, which will affect services in Southwark, when the Secretary of State gave no justification for that decison? Conservative Members do not pay the poll tax in Southwark and they do not know about the need for services, yet they plan to ride roughshod over local people. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a scandal that the Secretary of State did not mention Southwark once when asking the House to vote for the orders?

Mr. Hughes: This may be unique, but I agree with every word of the hon. Lady's intervention. Also unique is my belief that I am the only person to speak today—and yesterday—for the right of his local authority to make its decisions even though that local authority is not of the same political colour as himself. That local authority should choose how to set its budget, and democracy means that the people also have the right to exercise that choice.

The Secretary of State has told us that the poll tax was brought in as a means of bringing about accountability. Everyone has argued, however, that to say with one breath that it is a more accountable system, which allows the people to decide, and then to intervene, is inherently illogical. The right hon. Gentleman's argument is convoluted.

I understand the argument that the Government must limit the total amount of public money spent in the country, but if they had not given so much to the rich in the past 11 years, there might have been more money available for my constituents, who, by any definition, are still poor. I am not prepared for the Government to argue that they are justified in limiting total public expenditure when they have so distorted the balance of benefit derived from that expenditure in favour of the rich and against the poor. The Prime Minister's house is in our borough, and she and her husband, who are millionaires, will save hundreds of pounds. However, people on the basic state pension, without a penny in addition, must pay extra as a result of the order. That cannot be justified, and that is why the Government have found that their policy is so unsuccessful.

I do not seek to justify every decision taken by the majority Labour group on Southwark council. The Liberal Democrats are the opposition and they did very well in May—we won six seats, five from Labour in my constituency. The Tories did not do well. After the general election in 1987, the Prime Minister said, on the steps of central office, that they would have the inner cities for themselves next time. If a Tory stronghold of 8 per cent. on Southwark council means having the inner cities next time round, she needs to do a lot more thinking about the policies to achieve it. At the moment, the right hon. Lady is not persuading anyone that her policies are geared to help the people of the inner cities—the people who matter.

The Government should give local authorities a chance to have a say. They should not be fettered by Government impositions. We will then have real democracy; the turnout at elections will increase, and we shall have proper accountability.

People want simple things—decent basic services. The inner-London boroughs should never have been capped this year because, having taken over education from the Inner London education authority, the amount they needed was unquantifiable. Southwark certainly should not be capped when, since the end of May, it has been 200 teachers short and it cannot find nursery teachers, and specialist music teachers, and it sends classes home. We should not be capped when we cannot keep our streets clean or provide decent services in our public parks. I hope that the Minister is listening, as he represents part of London. I know that he was put in his job belatedly and that all this was not his idea—I do not charge him with that.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): He voted for it.

Mr. Hughes; I know, but unfortunately, many people vote for things with which they do not inherently agree. The pay-off for some of them is preferment, and that is more important.

Southwark should not be capped when it needs so much money for housing maintenance and the renovation of empty properties. We need so much money for social services, but, for the first time, we will now have to charge people for home helps. We need more sheltered housing. We need to employ more people to prevent children from being abused, and we need more help to alleviate drug problems. Southwark should not be capped when our libraries are to be closed and our swimming baths kept shut. How can we be capped when the local authority is taking on more charges every day?

This is an absolutely crazy system. Last year, the cost of collecting the rates in Britain was £181 million and the cost of collecting rubbish was £446 million. This year, the cost of collecting the poll tax is more than double the total cost of collecting rubbish throughout the land. That is madness. Last year in London, it cost £44 million to collect the rates and £106 million to collect the rubbish. This year, refuse collection will cost £119 million, but poll tax collection will cost £141 million.

So far this year, Southwark has collected 33 per cent. of its poll tax, but at the same time last year it had collected more than 80 per cent. of its rates. The business rate is still being paid, but the new system does not allow local authorities to administer it. Southwark is now to be capped, but we have been given no reason for that decision. We persuaded the Government to increase the amount that Southwark could charge, but no reason was given for that decision either.

The Government are intervening halfway through the council year to set a new budget. That causes chaos, as well as great harm to my local community. When the Minister makes his announcement tonight, I hope that he realises that, as long as the Government keep the poll tax and keep on capping local authorities, they have an ever-increasing chance of losing the next general election.

6.17 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I shall keep my contribution brief, as I know that a number of my hon. Friends want to participate in the debate. I hope that Conservative Members will not take advantage of my

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declaration by seeking to catch your attention, Madam Deputy Speaker, so that they can keep the debate going until 6.30.

My local authority, Wigan metropolitan borough council, is to be capped despite the fact that, in England, 106 local authorities have levied a poll tax higher than that of my authority. In 1989-90, the Government set a rate support grant settlement for my authority of £74,578,000. One year later, despite the increase in inflation, the introduction of the Children Act 1989, the introduction of care in the community and charges to the authority resulting from the Education Reform Act 1988, the standard spending assessment set was £54,231,000.

In 12 months, the Secretary of State has determined that my local authority can provide additional services when its allocated grant is £20,500,000 less than that set in the previous year. That is not only financial nonsense but totally disrupts the provision of services in my authority. Eastern Europe is throwing over Stalinism, but the Government are acting in a Stalinist fashion by their gross interference in local government. With the poll tax and the poll tax cap, the Government are interfering in the provision and funding of services. The Government wish to intervene during the financial year to reduce local authority resources without reducing their commitment to provide services at an adequate level.

The Government have been exposed over the last two days of debate. It is no wonder that they wanted fewer Members to participate in it. Each time an Opposition Member has spoken, he or she has exposed the bankruptcy of the Government's policy on poll capping. More importantly, the contributions of Conservative Members have exposed the draconian nature of the Conservative party in the 1980s and 1990s. The Government are bringing more and more powers towards the centre, dictating and determining decisions that should be left to local decision-making processes. They show total contempt for the principles of local government.

If, throughout the end of their term of office, the Government maintain such interference in local authority decision making, I predict further Government losses at the local government elections next year. They will sustain substantial losses at the next general election, because they will not be forgiven for the way in which they emasculated local authority expenditure and deliberately connived to cut back on local authorities in the north of England.

It is no surprise and no coincidence that, in the band from central Yorkshire to Merseyside, the substantial majority of councils caught in the rate-capping exercise have been Labour local authorities that have set on or below the national average for poll tax. All of them have set a poll tax substantially below that of the majority of Conservative councils in England.

We are expecting the Government to introduce their care in the community proposals by 1 April next year, but due to the Government's draconian measures, my local authority has had £1 million arbitrarily withdrawn from its social services budget. That will mean the closure of homes for the elderly, deferring the opening of a special care unit for the mentally disabled in the community and the introduction of charges for day care, home helps and day care centres for the mentally handicapped. Those are not "bleeding stumps"—by withdrawing grant to my local authority, the Government, by diktat, are cutting into its basic services.

I feel sorry for local authority members, who are volunteers working in the community. They give up time and effort from work, factories and families to provide community services. They are continually harrassed, harangued and tackled by a Government who, at every turn, attempt to reduce their ability and democratic right to provide levels of service based on the community's needs. Therefore, I ask the House to vote against the proposals on the basis that they are draconian, unworkable and totally unfair and unacceptable to the people of Britain.

6.21 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): In his speech yesterday the Secretary of State failed to justify why hon. Members should vote to impose a poll tax cap on Southwark council. None of the hon. Members who spoke in favour of the orders said why it would be right to cap Southwark council. Perhaps it is understandable that they have not talked about the poll tax or services in Southwark because, of course, they do not know anything about them. They do not live there, pay the poll tax there, use the services there or see the need for services that are not there. They know nothing about it. Therefore, perhaps it is fitting that, in commending the orders to the House, the Secretary of State did not even mention Southwark and why we should be prepared to justify poll tax capping there. To do so would be unfair, unjust and wrong.

Many Tory councils have far higher poll tax figures then Southwark's original poll tax of £390. For example, Windsor and Maidenhead has a poll tax of £466 and Wokingham has one of £454—the Secretary of State knows the list. The Government say that what counts is the amount of spending above the standard spending assessment. The Secretary of State knows that many councils spend more, in percentage terms, above their standard spending assessment than does Southwark council.

Capping is wrong for Southwark because of the costs it will impose on the council of rebilling all the residents of the borough and recalculating the rebates for those on benefit. It would be a huge administrative diversion and a waste of public money. The rebilling alone will cost more than £80,000.

Some Conservative Members talked about poll tax capping in the cause of efficiency. How can it be efficient to make a council, halfway through the financial year, suddenly make massive cuts in its services and budgeting? That throws all the borough's financial planning into chaos and means that short-term decisions have to be made. It is not easy for an organisation the size of Southwark council to make £11·5 million cuts halfway through a financial year.

I was talking to the chief superintendent in Peckham police station the day before yesterday about the worrying increase in crime in my constituency and the need for better street lighting, increased services for young people, better youth services and leisure facilities, and more resources for victim support schemes. However, none of those improvements can go ahead if we are poll tax-capped. People locally know the problem and the need for resources, but they are being prevented by the

Secretary of State's arbitrary action from planning and building up those services to improve life in the inner-city area.

Most of the cuts will fall on education and social services. We had a debate in the House recently about the chronic teacher shortages in primary schools in Southwark. The Secretary of State for Education and Science acknowledged that there was a grave problem and children were being sent home from school. Children go to school, but they do not even know whether they will have a teacher or be sent home. How can we attract teachers into inner London? We must provide extra housing, creches and a stable education service to attract them to teach in a district that will otherwise be under stress. How are we to do that when education will take the brunt of the cuts caused by the poll tax cap? During their term of office the Government have done many terrible things, but one of the worst in social services was planning to shelve community care proposals and use the most vulnerable people as political pawns to deal with Government difficulties over the poll tax. That is absolutely shameful.

The poll tax is fundamentally wrong and unjust, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said. Capping doubles that injustice and disregards local democracy. The people who live and work in Southwark know more about what they need than the Secretary of State does. They elected representatives to make decisions about local services. Poll tax capping shows a disregard for local democracy and vital public services. I hope that the Minister will never again issue press statements about inner-city regeneration. How can he regenerate inner cities when he is undermining the infrastructure on which they depend?

6.27 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Tonight's debate and the orders on which we shall vote at 7 pm are an admission of the Government failure. They show the Government's failure first and foremost to persuade Conservative councillors that they should make sufficient cuts to bring the poll tax levels in Conservative-controlled districts down to the predicted figures that we heard about when the poll tax was introduced. I am timorous about mentioning the name of the previous Secretary of State for the Environment—I imagine that he may be the previous Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by the weekend—who predicted in November 1987 that the poll tax would, on average, be £178. It is now double that figure.

It is galling for Ministers because their constituents want public services—basic education and social services care—as much as they want reasonable taxation. Therefore, Ministers were unable to persuade local councils to lower their poll taxes to the level that the Ministers wanted. The consequent pressure by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State to use people as examples was intolerable.

Mr. Stern: I accept that in most areas there is a choice between services and the level of the community charge. What would the hon. Gentleman tell the people of Bristol who have to pay huge poll tax bills and have the dirtiest streets in the country?

Mr. Blunkett: My answer to that is as simple as my answer to all questions about poll tax capping. It is our job to make democracy work better, not to abolish it. In our last debate on the issue a Conservative Member made the classic statement that poll tax capping could be removed when democracy worked better. As my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), said yesterday, we have made proposals to make that happen. We intend to introduce annual elections and to make the councillor's job easier. We shall provide for greater participation by people in the running of their services.

The Government's failure lies not in persuading Conservative, Labour or Liberal councillors to cut services but in the basic principles of the poll tax. The previous Secretary of State, the right honourable unmentionable, pronounced on 25 March that poll tax capping could not be justified. In a Radio 4 interview he made it clear that it was the job of the electorate to determine poll tax levels.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Has he yet withdrawn that statement?

Mr. Blunkett: No, not yet, so we can presume it is still his view.

It is a correct view, because it is in line with the poll tax principles enunciated by Conservative Members, who said that it was supposed to bring accountability. The basis of the poll tax has failed. The Government also failed in setting an average poll tax of £360.

The Secretary of State and Conservative Members have admitted that the standard spending assessment is flawed and will have to be revised. I hope that the eventual review of the poll tax will include a clear statement about improving the formula for SSA and its distribution. Without that there can be no accountability and no judgment by local people about a reasonable level of efficiency.

The poll tax is flawed on the issue of fairness about what people pay and what they get. The Secretary of State has admitted that the assumptions on which the grant allocation was made were also faulty, because the amount that local authorities spent this year, and were predicting to spend, was £3·8 billion greater than the assumptions for grants.

Above all, the Government have failed on the cap itself. As we spelt out yesterday, because of the difficulty that is being experienced in collection, the cuts will not be made on poll tax ceilings. Last week the *Municipal Journal* conducted a survey which showed that, while there would be a £216·7 million cut in poll tax, an increase in collection difficulties would cost authorities £327 million in uncollected tax. That is a crazy way to organise a supposed cut in taxation and action against inflation, which is one of the arguments that has been advanced in the debate.

Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said that Brent people would be dancing in the streets. They may dance in the street for another reason, because a recent ICM poll puts Labour 16 per cent. ahead of the Conservatives. That would justify people dancing in the streets. They certainly will not dance to celebrate increased bureaucracy and higher administrative costs or to rejoice at having experienced 11 years of local authority cuts, penalties, grant reductions and changes in the assessment levels.

Some authorities such as Islington are being capped simply because of the change in the grant-related assessment formula relative to the standard spending assessment, and the difference between the SSA in

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November and the one in January. That is a crazy way to hold people to account for determining what happens to their services.

It is unmistakable bias to cap authorities such as Calderdale, Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham, which have below-average poll tax levels. That is inexplicable to an authority such as Calderdale which had imposed upon it a poll tax of £244, which is fourth from the bottom. The tax in Windsor and Maidenhead is £449 and authorities throughout Surrey and Buckinghamshire have poll tax levels that are double those being imposed in other areas. What sort of services are some authorities expected to provide compared with those provided in the south-east?

The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said that none of us is affected by the cap, but he has missed the point. Of course we can afford to pay the poll tax, we are all recipients of services and some of us actually send our children to state schools. We know exactly what poll tax capping will mean to those who will have their education services reduced. Many people have elderly parents and cannot afford to place them in the most prestigious private residential homes and would not want them to be in such places. Those people want their elderly parents to be supported in the community by day centres, home helps and special aids and adaptations and by the range and choice of services that local authorities now provide. Councils do that by spending on services.

That is what the debate should have been about, but in his hour long peroration yesterday the Secretary of State did not talk about services at all. The debate is not about poll tax levels, which vary enormously and the highest of which have not been capped. The debate is about whether the Government will inflict their cuts and their ideology on those who failed to vote Conservative in the local elections. All the mumbo-jumbo that we heard yesterday about court cases and the football match where penalties were taken during the game rather than after extra time and in which the goalkeeper was removed by the referee so that the other side could win is irrelevant.

The Secretary of State has said that he determines what is excessive. That is like "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" where words mean what one says they mean. He is saying to children and parents that they will have the standard of education that he determines and not the one that they want.

I have been invited to speak at Roedean, and I have carried out research into that school. The fees are £2,700 a term and there are incidental expenses for music and sporting activity. I do not know what those things cost, but altogether the charges are certainly more than £2,700 a term. The average state secondary school cost is between £1,500 and £2,000 a year. We can also compare what people want for their children. It has already been said that the average cost to us all of assisted places is £3,400, and that people receive charitable relief on the money that they spend on their children's education. All that we demand is that people should be allowed to choose for themselves, but the Government have decided to choose what is right for those people and their parents and families. They must have decent standards of service.

The people that we represent cannot opt out and buy in the private market, or discard public service; they are dependent on the level of service provided by their local authority. Millions of people throughout the country will be affected by what is happening tonight. They will have their services reduced without any choice and without the right to decide. To take away the ballot box is to take from most people the last vestige of control over what happens to their own lives in their own community, because they do not have the wealth to use their money as their vote in the market place.

The debate is about ideology—I do not duck that issue—and about decisions on what happens to individual men and women. It matters to every one of us. Conservative Members who have spoken gave the game away. Eulogising about the cutbacks in Hillingdon, the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) admitted that £2·5 million would be cut from the £32·8 million budget of the social services committee. He may think that he is speaking for Hillingdon council, but some of us would like to feel that we have a right to speak for the elderly and infirm people who will suffer from a 7·5 to 8 per cent. cut in services. Even the hon. Gentleman admitted that, under the present standard spending assessment, it would not be possible for Hillingdon council to reduce the community charge without changing the level of services provided—that is a euphemism for cutting services.

The hon. Gentleman went on to say that there would probably be some job losses. I think that that is a considerable underestimate. What is more, he announced that there would be an increase in education spending. I mention Hillingdon only because it is being held up as a paragon of virtue. Hillingdon is doing what the Secretary of State for Health has been doing: it is cutting education services to pretend that it is spending more money on them. The policy is to close schools, cut adult education and increase charges, then spend slightly more on other schools and proclaim the cut as not a cut but an increase in service. That is what the Department of Health is doing across the country.

Above all—my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) mentioned this—the idea of chopping the community care proposals to try to lower poll tax levels by an average of £15 a head is a shoddy, shabby move, and one that I hope that the Government will come to regret. It affects the people who most need help. Their needs do not go away; their problems do not change; their family pressures do not alter because they happen to be saving £15 on the poll tax.

The daftest thing of all is the formula on which our authorities receive their grants to provide our services. There is something called the social deprivation index—it is known officially as the all-ages social index. On that are predicated the decisions about what authorities will receive. Can anyone imagine an index that has as the worst off those authorities that have benefited most from Government aid in one form or another, and penalises those in the most rundown industrial parts of the country? According to an answer given on 27 June, Wandsworth was eighth in the index, Kensington and Chelsea ninth and Westminster 12th; Rochdale was 45th, Calderdale 77th and St. Helens 87th. Barnsley, which was 172nd on the list, is poll tax-capped and penalised. While the people of Cheltenham can live in comfort with adequate grant to look after their gardens, Barnsley, Rotherham, North Tyneside and St. Helens face cuts in education and social care on an ideological whim of the Prime Minister's, imposed by the Secretary of State.

There is an alternative: it is democracy. There should be no cuts, no capping and no erosion of the right to decide locally on services, but a removal of central authoritarianism and of the right to decide from the House of Commons and from Whitehall. A decision must be taken to put back that which we have all fought to achieve—the right to choose for oneself.

6.44 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): I was asked to explain the criteria that the Secretary of State had selected. Those criteria were based on overspending above-standard spending assessment—the estimate that the Government make of how much it is appropriate for local authorities to spend. The SSAs were applied equally to all authorities in the country. The criteria were in the distribution report that the House debated and approved. Preceding that debate, 100 different papers of analysis had been circulated, and 40 meetings were held with local authority associations to determine whether those criteria were appropriate.

The new SSAs differ from the old grant-related expenditure assessments—the previous method of assessing need—in that they place a new emphasis on additional educational needs and on the needs of ethnic minorities. Those criteria, surely, should commend themselves to the Labour party. Clearly, they remove any disadvantage that the old system may have caused inner-city areas. That is well demonstrated by the Government's assessment of need for the inner-city areas: in Islington, it is £1,172 per adult; in Haringey, £1,181; in Lambeth, £1,392; by contrast, the figure for Wandsworth is £982—fully £400 below the Lambeth figure.

What happened between the old assessment and the new one will, I hope, be of interest to Opposition Members. The borough of Brent has a new needs assessment 20 per cent. above the old one; Southwark's is 26 per cent. above the old figure; Islington's is 28 per cent. above—I do not know what the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) referred to. Haringey is 20 per cent. above and Lambeth 26 per cent. above its old assessment. I admit that the northern metropolitan boroughs do not do as well out of the new system as the inner-city areas—not only London but Liverpool and Manchester, where there are single-parent families, ethnic minorities and strongly identified additional educational needs.

However, the northern metropolitan boroughs do not do all that badly. All their new assessments are above the old GREAs. For example, Rochdale is £49 per adult above, and Rotherham £38 above. I admit that Wigan is the lowest, at £10 above, but Doncaster is £36 above——

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Portillo: I wish to keep going, as I have not intervened in two days, except on the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott).

I want to disabuse the House of one more idea—that the northern metropolitan boroughs have set low community charges. Let me also make it clear that capping applies to budgets and not to community charges—to what councils are spending, not to what they are charging. The reason for that is obvious. In the first year, many authorities are receiving funds from the safety net, or receiving special grant because they are authorities with a low rateable value. When the help given in the first year, and the help that in the second year will be given by the taxpayer, is stripped out, community charges for the northern boroughs do not look half as good. The lowest figure is that of St. Helens, at £433; Calderdale's is £460; Barnsley's is £480; and Rochdale's is £458. In case the House thinks that I am directing my fire at the northern boroughs, I am not being so exclusive. In Southwark——

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Portillo: In a moment.

In Southwark, if we strip out the grants that are being made this year from the safety net and additional factors, the figure is £607. In Greenwich, the figure is £700.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What about Westminster?

Mr. Portillo: The House may know that Westminster makes the biggest single contribution to the safety net of any borough in the country—£75 per head—I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has kicked the ball into his own net.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Will the Minister acknowledge that the increase in the budget placed before the people of St. Helens in March this year was less than the rate of inflation? Will he also acknowledge that, if the formula used for GREA had been used this year in St. Helens and Westminster, St. Helens would have received a substantial increase in Government support and Westminster would have received substantially less?

Mr. Portillo: I have given the hon. Gentleman the facts. If St. Helens were not receiving help from the safety net and in grant, the charge would have been £433. That helps to illuminate a point that seems to have troubled the House—why charge capping is compatible with accountability. It is because, in the first year, when the Government arranged for many authorities to be protected by those special arrangements—I am not even mentioning for the moment the transitional relief which goes to the charge payer—it is not clear to the electorate how high those community charges are. It has been demonstrated today that that is not clear to hon. Members either. They do not understand how high the community charge is in their areas.

We took the criterion of spending 12·5 per cent. above the new assessment of needs, the SSA. That 12·5 per cent. was in line with the same criterion that we used in the case of rate capping over many years. It can hardly have been a surprise to anybody that we used SSAs as the basis for capping, because SSAs were designed with great care to represent the needs of local authorities. Haringey's director of finance issued a report dated 2 March 1990 in which he said that the council must be extremely vulnerable to be subject to community charge limitation on the basis that the £573 may be considered to be excessive. The treasurer apparently knew, so I do not know why the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) thought that it would be a surprise.

The assumed community charge, as was made clear by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, was not the basis of capping; it was the basis on which the Government gave welcome and valuable help to people to compensate them for the change from rates to the

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community charge. It took account of massive overspending by local authorities under Labour control in the past. Now the Labour party seeks to ram down our throats the fact that we made a realistic transitional relief provision based on that overspending. But we also made it perfectly clear that that would not be the basis on which we would cap.

Counsel representing Derbyshire county council in the courts recently made it perfectly clear that he was not accusing the Government of political bias, so I am surprised that Opposition Members have sought to run that one. If counsel representing Derbyshire made it clear that he was not accusing the Government of that, I do not know why Opposition Members seek to do it here. Perhaps it is because the standards of proof here are less rigorous than in a court of law.

My next question is: are the caps attainable? The hon. Member for Dagenham gave the game away entirely when he said that, if the local authorities had known in advance how charge capping was to apply, the vast majority of charge-capped authorities would have had no difficulty in avoiding the cap level.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) said:

"I know that my party's group in St. Helens . . . believes that it can provide the same level of service for the lower amount."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. 350.]

Apparently it can be done in St. Helens.

My hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) said:

"there was and still is a budget on the table that would bring Calder Valley's expenditure down to a figure below the charge-capped rate with no loss of services or jobs."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. 373.]

My hon. Friends the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) and for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) made similar points. My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) explained how Hillingdon today had better management techniques and had abolished all those unwelcome committees that consume money.

If the SSAs were wrong, one would think that other authorities in the north of England would have had difficulty in staying close to them. But Bradford is only 3 per cent. above its assessment of need, Manchester is only 3·9 per cent. above its assessment of need, having said some months ago that it would be 30 per cent. above, and Conservative-controlled Trafford is 2·6 per cent. below our assessment of what it needs to spend.

It is clear that our assessments of need are not wrong, the criteria are not wrong—it is the spending which is excessive. That point was made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) and my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman), who both said that the Government were using their powers moderately.

Why should the Government choose to cap at all? First, the Government must have a view about the level of public spending. That point was extremely well made by my hon. Friends the Members for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). The hon. Member for Dagenham ignored the point and the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), who is a member of the Labour Treasury team, is mystified by the point, which gives me some misgivings about the conduct of their financial policy.

Secondly, we need to protect the charge payer. The hon. Member for Dagenham recognises that capping is needed in extremis. The hon. Member for Southport said:

"There is much argument about whether reserved powers to cap are ever justified and, although I am in danger of contradicting myself, I suppose I must come down in favour of such powers."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. 348.]

He was absolutely right. It is a point that was well made.

Why so? Because it is clear that some authorities have taken advantage of the changes in the system in order to blame the high levels charged on the Government and the change in the system, not on their high spending. Some authorities—many of my hon. Friends talked about Derbyshire—clearly face no election in the foreseeable future, so they felt that they could pile on the charges. Many authorities were receiving special help with the charges—the safety net payments and the grants made for low rateable value—so the community charge was distorted. Many boroughs expected to win the coming elections out of a misplaced traditional loyalty to Labour whatever they did and in many places large numbers of electors faced reduced charges because of the benefit that they were receiving, which was much more generous under the community charge than under the rates and because of transitional relief.

None of that took account of the charge payer. It was only Conservative Members who mentioned the interests of the charge payer. In particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) said that he felt desperate on behalf of the charge payers of Lambeth. My right hon. Friend for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said that many people were brought into penury by the heavy rates and the community charge in Brent. In other words, the problem did not begin with the community charge, but long ago with the rates.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) said, thank goodness the Government had not messed about with a small reduction. He wanted a £99 reduction because that was £198 per couple in his constituency. My hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) made similar points. Our concern has always been with the charge payer. We have heard nothing at all throughout the debate from Labour Members about the concerns of the charge payer.

I have no doubt that the community charge will achieve its objective of increasing local authority accountability. We have seen that already in the moderate increases in Scotland in the second year. We have seen it in London, not only with the defeat of left-wing Labour councils at the recent elections, but also in the relative moderation which has been shown by one or two Labour and SLD-controlled councils which have been concerned about re-election and have set lower charges.

In time, the effect that we have seen in Scotland and in London, affecting not only Conservative boroughs but Labour ones too, will spread to the rest of the country. But for the moment there are factors that obscure accountability—the special grants that I have talked about and the safety net; the changes that have been made to the system, giving boroughs the opportunity to blame the system, not their own overspending; the counties not facing election, and the fact that the counties are not seen as responsible for the level of spending for which they are in fact

responsible. Some councils this year have abused those factors in order to impose swingeing burdens on their community charge payers.

Some councils are clearly planning to do the same next year, but we give this promise. The Government will not stand idly by and let that happen. The Government must protect the community charge payers, because we care about them and the Labour party does not. This year capping has been worth up to £198 per couple and next year we are prepared to take action once more if authorities continue to behave in this unreasonable way. For that reason I have no hesitation in commending the draft orders to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 210.

Division No. 290] **[8.59 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 6th June, be approved.

It being after Seven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to Order [10 July], to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the remaining motions.*

Question put,

That the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) (No. 2) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 18th June, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 207.

Division No. 291] **[7.14 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert

Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*

Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put,

That the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) (No. 3) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 2nd July, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 299, Noes 201.

Division No. 292] **[at 7.26 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan

Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric

Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I understand it, under the doctrine laid down in "Erskine May", on a Division it is usual for voices to be followed by a vote. As you may recall, there has been some considerable argument about ten-minute Bills on that point. As I understand it, the Liberals called a vote on the first order, yet the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) was in the Tory Lobby on all three orders, which suggests that he did not follow the group voice and that the Liberals are badly split, which is, to say the least, disturbing.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman is making a political point. He knows full well that it is not a point of order with which the Chair can deal.

London Underground Bill *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant document: Third Report of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) of Session 1989-90, New Parliamentary Building (Phase 2) and the Jubilee Line Proposals (HC334).]

7.39 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Mr. Speaker has selected the instruction in the name of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore):

That it be an instruction to the Committee on the Bill to have regard to the need for regeneration of local communities and local industries in and around the areas of London Dockland and Lower Lea Valley.

Mr. Thorne: I have read the instruction and I have considerable sympathy with the terms in which it is expressed. I will listen with great interest to what right hon. and hon. Members have to say in that connection. The instruction has considerable merit.

London's rail services play a vital part in the city's economy. There has been unprecedented growth in passenger demand on the underground and it is widely accepted that new and improved services are needed. Two main types of improvement can be identified: those that seek to tackle congestion in central London, and those provided to meet the needs of new developments.

Last year, the Government commissioned two major studies: the central London rail study, which concentrates on congestion and ways to tackle it, and the east London rail study, which focuses on the needs of docklands. The enormous scale and rapid pace of the regeneration of docklands now far exceeds what was expected in the early to mid-1980s, when the current programme of investment was planned, which led to the construction of the docklands light railway. The east London rail study examined the options for improving rail access from central London to docklands and beyond.

The preferred option was for an extension of the Jubilee line from Green Park via Waterloo, London Bridge and Canary Wharf to Stratford. Over this last section, the route could go either via Greenwich Point or via Brunswick Foreshore. By linking to the existing Jubilee line, which runs through the west end to north-west London, with its important connections to the rest of the underground system at Baker Street, Bond Street and Green Park, the benefits of the extension could be increased. New connections would be provided in the central area at Westminster, Waterloo and London Bridge. In addition, the proposal would benefit commuters travelling to the west end and docklands, as well as many residents of inner south London, who are not currently served by the underground.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I welcome my hon. Friend's proposals most warmly. Will he commend to the engineers, despite the technical difficulties, the needs of wheelchair users? There might be a way of having an emergency walkway to ensure that wheelchair users of the London underground—and especially of the new extension—can get out in an emergency.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend is a well-known champion of the disabled. I will ask the engineers to take careful and special note of what she has said. However, we are extending an existing line, so to some extent we are inhibited by the standards already laid down.

The proposal is to extend the Jubilee line from Green Park to Stratford. Stations at Westminster, Waterloo, London Bridge, Canada Water, Canary Wharf, Canning Town, West Ham and Stratford would not only provide access to the areas they serve, but would provide important interchanges with other lines. The Bill also provides for other stations at Southwark and Bermondsey, and I shall return to those proposals a little later.

The extended line would be a major east-west trunk route, fed from major routes into London and offering a fast, high-capacity service with direct connections between docklands and numerous important strategic locations in London, including direct connections to the west end, to west and to north-west London, via Westminster and Green Park. The line would offer direct connections to Waterloo, serving the commuter suburbs to the south-west of London and giving access to the proposed channel tunnel terminus. It would offer direct connections to London Bridge, serving the commuter network to the south and to the south-east of London, and direct connection to the commuter lines from Essex via Stratford and West Ham. The Bill provides for an extension in tunnel south of Green Park as far as Canning Town. From there it would run on the surface parallel to the existing tracks for British Rail's North London line to Stratford, where it would terminate.

The proposed extension has raised a number of concerns, which the promoters acknowledge and are addressing. The first concern is the re-routing of existing Jubilee line services into Charing Cross. Heavy passenger flows are expected between the existing and new sections of the Jubilee line. To meet that demand, it would not be possible to provide a service from north-west London to Waterloo and docklands as well as a service to Charing Cross. Accordingly, it is necessary to close the existing service on the Jubilee line between Green Park and Charing Cross. However, passengers who currently change from the Jubilee line on to the Northern or Bakerloo lines at Charing Cross, and the many British Rail passengers who join the Jubilee line at Charing Cross, will be able to do so at London Bridge or at Waterloo.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Does the hon. Gentleman regret the fact that after that part of the line is closed there will be a loss of service? Transport 2000 strongly wanted that line to be kept open. Is the hon. Gentleman supporting its closure?

Mr. Thorne: Yes, with regret. I should like to give happier news to the right hon. Gentleman. Unfortunately, if we were to try to feed trains into Charing Cross as well as round to Stratford, we should severely impair the efficiency of the line. The matter is always open to future consideration, but the original intention was that the line should form part of the Fleet line and should travel on the north side of the Thames. This is a wonderful opportunity for it to go to the south; and, of course, the docklands light railway was subsequently introduced.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that a third option could be available when the Green Park-Charing Cross section is replaced? There could be an interchange between Waterloo, East and Southwark stations. That would provide an additional opportunity for people to change from the underground to British Rail services and would alleviate congestion, which will be considerable when channel tunnel traffic comes to Waterloo.

Mr. Thorne: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern for his constituents and I sincerely hope that a way will be found for stations to be built at Southwark and at Bermondsey. Studies are going on at present. We must establish that the demand is there and that it will be possible to use those stations sufficiently to justify the considerable cost involved in building them.

As part of the arrangements for providing station facilities on the proposed railway extension, it is proposed that the station at Westminster should be rebuilt with two ticket halls. The eastern ticket hall would be on the site of the present station, with the western ticket hall being under the junction of Parliament street, Great George street and Bridge street. The subject has been considered by the New Building Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services), which the promoters have met and to which they have given evidence on a number of occasions.

Concern has been expressed about the siting of the western ticket hall beneath the road junction adjacent to the Palace of Westminster, which could lead to an unacceptable disruption of the working of Parliament. The construction of the ticket hall would involve raising the road level by 1 m on to a temporary road decking similar to that built at Oxford Circus during the construction of the Victoria line in the 1960s.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am sure that my hon. Friend does not for a moment wish to mislead the House. I am sure that he will acknowledge that that was only one of many issues over which the New Building Sub-Committee expressed concern.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend is right. The Sub-Committee passed comment on that issue. However, I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that it was generally in favour of the Bill, subject to its own conditions. It is intended to meet two of the major conditions.

Mr. Orme: I speak as a member of the Sub-Committee. There was fundamental disagreement between the Sub-Committee and London Transport over the siting of the interchange. We had alternative proposals, which our advisers told us were feasible, to transfer that interchange to St. James's Park. That is our recorded view, and we maintain that view.

Mr. Thorne: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. However, on financial and various other criteria, it was considered that the present proposal was best. I believe that the Services Committee was prepared to accept that on the basis of the recommendations from the available experts.

It has therefore been suggested to the promoters that one possible solution would be to move the western ticket hall to a site beneath Parliament square if the House should wish that. Accordingly, if this alternative site were to be the preferred solution, the promoters would be prepared to move the western ticket hall for the new station. To that end, powers have been included in an

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additional provision which would enable the promoters to take and use that part of Parliament square which would be required for that purpose.

By including proposals for an alternative site for the western ticket hall, the promoters believe that they are acting in accordance with the wishes of the Services Committee as set out in paragraph 49 of its third report entitled "New Parliamentary Building (Phase 2) and the Jubilee Line Proposals", which is House of Commons Paper 334. If, however, other arrangements were eventually found to be acceptable to the Committee on the Bill, the promoters might not need to seek amendment of the Bill so far as it relates to the new station at Westminster, as such other arrangements as are mentioned in the Select Committee's third report should be capable of implementation under the Bill as deposited.

After construction of the new station, Parliament square would be restored as near as possible to its present condition. Construction of the western ticket hall under the square would, however, affect the small trees growing on the north side of the square and they would need to be removed. The promoters intend to replace the trees after completion of construction work, and to that end they are consulting the arboricultural officer of the City of Westminster. If the site of the western ticket hall were to be built beneath Parliament square, the promoters would also consult the royal botanic gardens at Kew about suitable replacements for the lost trees.

At Waterloo there will be a Jubilee line station and an interchange with existing services.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): The hon. Gentleman has just referred to Parliament square. It seems strange that the Minister and London Underground appear to want to accommodate the docklands and the investment in that area, but want to shift additional people into this already congested area. Could the promoters not find additional money to take account of the New Building Sub-Committee's recommendations? The hon. Gentleman did not say how long Parliament square would be disrupted. Can he give us some idea of how long that disruption would last?

Mr. Thorne: Consideration has been given to the matter, and the best possible route is now agreed to be through Westminster to Waterloo. The line cannot adequately serve Waterloo without passing through Westminster. There are great advantages in having a connection to the District and Circle lines and that is the main factor. The original intention was that the line would extend along the north side of the Thames via Charing Cross. However, now that the channel tunnel terminus is to be built at Waterloo, it is important that such a facility should be there. That is one of the main reasons for the change of direction. However, that does not mean that the existing tunnel will be blocked up. It will be left so that, if in future it is desirable to extend in that direction, that will be possible.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the hon. Gentleman answer my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond)? How many years is Parliament square expected to be turned into a bomb site? Can he give us a firm idea of the calculations and the source of those calculations and tell us whether they come from London Transport or a firm of contracting engineers? can he enlighten the House about that?

Mr. Thorne: The whole period for the construction of the extension is 53 months—approximately four and a half years. However, only part of that time would entail major works in Parliament square. One would expect that it would be heavily worked for two years, but for the remainder of the period there would certainly be some form of work in the area.

Mr. Cormack: It is quite clear from the evidence that we received that Parliament square would become a building site, or a bomb site as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) described it, for a good four years. That was clear from all the evidence that we received. It is important that my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), who is seeking to get the support of the House for the measure, should not try in so doing to give us a rosy picture of what will happen. There will be major disruption, as Westminster city council has made quite plain, for about four years.

Mr. Thorne: There are two kinds of disruption. One is disturbance to the soil, which will clearly take place within the area. Major steps are being taken to surround the site with appropriate wooden cover so that it will not be too much of an eyesore to those at ground level. Admittedly those who view Parliament square from a height will have a less attractive view. The other disruption must be to traffic. The working is being arranged so that the minimum of disruption is caused to traffic. Certainly during rush hour peak periods we would not wish to have heavy vehicles moving in and out of the site. That will mean that a certain amount of the spoil will have to be stored on the site while it is being extracted until more appropriate times to remove it.

It is clear that there will be disruption; I do not seek to deny that. There is always disruption where there is building work. It is a question whether that disruption is tolerable and acceptable. We, like everyone else, must face the need for some disruption if it brings lasting improvements for the travelling public.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): We should be more specific when we are talking about the time factor. The House would not welcome being misled. Clause 7(3) states quite specifically:

"Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above, the Company may, for a period not exceeding six years from the date of the passing of this Act, narrow and stop up".

The Bill is requesting at least six years.

Mr. Thorne: I am of course talking about 53 weeks being the contract period from the time that the work starts. It is not 53 weeks from now. The Bill will have to progress through the House and receive Royal Assent. Contracts will then have to be let, and that will obviously have to happen before any work can start.

These days, contractors have been fairly reliable. I know that there have been some problems in constructing tunnels elsewhere, but there is considerable expertise. I do not think that it is beyond the ability of engineers to make a fairly accurate forecast of the time that the project will take. I am confident that the estimated figure of 53 weeks is not unreasonable.

Mr. Ray Powell: The request in clause 7(3) says

"not exceeding six years from the date of the passing of the Act".
Bearing in mind whatever time the House takes and the Committee, if one is appointed, will take, the Bill means six years from the time the Act is passed.

Mr. Thorne: Certainly. Time will be required for contracts to be put out and to be let. I should have thought that that could easily take six months. We are talking about a total of five years. It is only wise for a Bill to allow for any eventuality. Ground conditions are clearly an important factor in tunnelling, and that is one of the great points about the Bill. Subsoil structures between the north of the Thames and the south of the Thames are quite different. It is only because of the extra expertise that has been acquired in recent years that we are able to contemplate tunnelling. That is one reason why the original proposal was to go along the Fleet line on the north side of the Thames. It would be imprudent merely to ask for the bare minimum time that is required in case some snag is encountered. That is the reason for the six-year period.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman will agree that the extension involves tunnelling and road diversions near important historical buildings and will therefore call for the most careful standards of work. Can he say why completion of the parliamentary offices, which were built in Bridge street, adjacent to the House, and adjacent to the proposed works, and where the same high standard of work was required, was many months overdue? Would not the problem that occurred with those buildings be likely to recur in exactly the same location with the same required standard of work? Are not we talking about possibly scraping through in six years, with a bit of luck?

Mr. Thorne: The hon. Gentleman takes a pessimistic view. There is a difference between contracting work above ground and mining work beneath it. Miners are fairly reliable and accurate. The forecast of 53 months is fair. It is sensible to want a little latitude in case there is a problem, but I see nothing unreasonable in what is requested. The times that have been quoted are perfectly fair and reasonable.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Redmond *rose*——

Mr. Thorne: I must start to make some progress. I have given way on many occasions. I must get on.

Mr. Redmond: I think that what you mentioned will be slippery Joe. Leaving that matter to one side, I wonder whether you could——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would not ignore the Chair but would make his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Redmond: I wonder whether, Madam Deputy Speaker, the sponsor of the Bill would explain to the House why there is a need for Parliament square to be disrupted. The hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that, away from the congestion of the city, a place could be set aside where all the dirt and muck from the tunnelling could be disposed of without disrupting an already crowded city. There is no need for Parliament square to be disrupted. If the hon. Gentleman and London Underground representatives were to go to Yorkshire, they could recruit a team to do the job for them —whichever job is eventually decided—without any disruption of Parliament square. Why must Parliament square be disrupted?

Mr. Thorne: It is required to be disrupted, because, technically, it is believed that it is the best place to remove the spoil. Much of the spoil is to be removed by barge from various places along the route, and I shall refer to them later. That is a technical point, which I am sure could be argued in some detail before the Opposed Private Bill Committee. It would be wrong of me to second-guess the questions that the Committee will ask in its thorough examination of the Bill.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am sure that my hon. Friend would wish to point out that, of course, no spoil would come out at Parliament square. Tunnelling for the line between Green Park and Waterloo would come from the Jubilee gardens site. No spoil or muck from the tunnel will come up into Parliament square. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, the Parliament square works relate to the excavation of the ticketing hall.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must respond to an intervention before he allows another intervention.

Mr. Thorne: I accept what my hon Friend says. Obviously, some material will be removed. It depends on what the Opposed Bill Committee decides: whether it is to be located at the intersection of the roads or actually in Parliament square itself, and therefore how much spoil is to be removed.

Miss Hoey: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will go into great detail on where the spoil will be. He is saying that it is all very well for the Westminster area—it will not have spoil—but the Jubilee gardens area, which will be affected by the measure, will have spoil.

Mr. Thorne: I must now get on with my speech.

At Waterloo, there will be a Jubilee line station with an interchange with existing services—Northern, Bakerloo, Waterloo and City and Network SouthEast services. A considerable number of petitions from individuals and local interest groups have expressed concern about the proposals in the Bill and the effect that the works will have on people living in the vicinity. London Underground has met and plans to have further meetings with those concerned to explain the works in detail and the steps that are being taken to mitigate environmental effects. A particular concern in the Waterloo area is the temporary loss of public open space for use as a work site in Jubilee gardens. That work site will be used to construct the main tunnels west of Green park and east of Waterloo station.

Tunnelling spoil will be carried along the tunnel to Jubilee gardens, from where it will be taken by barge along the river. That will require the occupation of part of Jubilee gardens for three to four years. Other construction sites will be necessary at Tenison way and part of the Bull Ring, which will serve the Waterloo station construction works. It will be necessary also to have further major work sites at Ewer street in north Southwark and at Old Jamaica road, east of London Bridge station. Those sites are

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essential to enable the construction of the tunnel from Waterloo to London Bridge and beyond to Canada Water in the Surrey docks.

The promoters of the Bill are working closely with all affected borough councils to draw up a detailed code of construction practice that will regulate the construction of the works, including measures to control construction noise, vehicle movements and other matters associated with the construction of a major underground railway.

Two proposed stations south of the river, at Southwark and Bermondsey, have been the subject of press speculation this week about their eventual inclusion in the project. The promoters wish those two stations to be built and are anxious to make the best possible case in terms of transport planning and local benefits so as to meet the Department of Transport's formal approval criteria. The Department has asked for further information, which London Regional Transport is now providing.

Between Canning Town and Stratford, the Jubilee line extension will be constructed alongside the existing service of British Rail, known as the north London line, which runs from Richmond to north Woolwich. It is proposed to construct a station at Canning Town to provide an interchange to the docklands light railway station, presently under construction, and the existing British Rail station. As Canning Town will be a major transport interchange point in the east end, it is proposed to construct a new bus station just to the south of the A13 where that road crosses the north London line.

The construction of the bus station will inevitably result in the acquistion of certain properties in Victoria Dock road. London Underground is in negotiation with the interested parties with a view to purchasing certain properties in advance of Royal Assent. To the north of Canning Town, it will be necessary to acquire property in a limited number of other locations in order to construct the extension. London Underground is in discussions with the landowners concerned.

In opening the debate, I said that there was a choice of route on the docklands section from Canary wharf to Stratford, which could run either via Brunswick or on the north Greenwich peninsula. Representations have been made by the owners of the land on the Greenwich peninsula, which they are to redevelop for housing, that the route across it would provide considerable benefit to persons living in the area. London Underground has studied the propositions and believes that to be the case and that, in addition, the new alignment would provide further high capacity public transport——

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Some expenditure has been mentioned and, obviously, the Government are intending to put X amount of money into the project. If the Government are involved, the question of a hybrid Bill comes into the discussion. In connection with that, may I ask whether permission to spend money can be given before the measure has received the approval of the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair; it is a matter for debate. That question should be addressed to the hon. Member who is speaking on behalf of the promotors.

Mr. Thorne: The new alignment would also provide further high-capacity public transport river crossings for the whole of that part of London, which is an area notorious for its inadequate cross-river capacity. The Greenwich peninsula is intrinsically difficult to serve by public transport and is poorly served at present. Improved public transport access would substantially enhance the prospect of the area being redeveloped for housing.

In addition, the promotors understand that a large car park is to be constructed near the proposed Jubilee line station on the railway on the Greenwich peninsula. That will enable cars bound for the docklands development area and for central London to be intercepted and thus would help to reduce traffic congestion on the busy inner-London roads in that area and in central London generally.

The change of route would result in the exclusion of one proposed station from the railway, at Brunswick. The proposed site for that station is adjacent to a station that is to be built as part of the Beckton extension of the docklands railway. That area will therefore be served by public rail transport. There will be provision for interchange between the proposed Jubilee line extension and the docklands railway at both Canary wharf and Canning town. It therefore seems to the promoters that there are substantial transport benefits to be achieved by adopting this revised route.

I have stressed the promoters' attempts to meet concerned local people and to analyse their concerns openly and fairly. In contemplating this project, London Underground Ltd. was always sensitive to the fact that such a project in central and inner London could have an impact upon people and on the natural and built environment. On their behalf, an independent consultancy has carried out an environmental impact assessment, and an environmental statement has been produced and sent to all petitioners. London Underground Ltd. has accepted the mitigation measures suggested in that report.

Extensive consultation has taken place with local authorities, statutory bodies, residents and interest groups, and affected occupiers so that their concerns could be established and responded to. This consultation is continuing and will go on up to and beyond the start of construction works.

Mr. Cryer: Is the environmental impact survey available to hon. Members? Have any attempts been made to circulate it to hon. Members? I have not seen it. I understand that copies are available in the sense that some hon. Members have got hold of them, but I also understand that the survey is not in the Vote Office. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that omission should be rectified?

Mr. Thorne: As the survey is detailed, it is more appropriate that it should be dealt with in the Opposed Private Bill Committee. When the Bill returns to the Floor of the House, there will be an opportunity for hon. Members to make further comments, should the need arise. If the hon. Gentleman would like some further information, I shall do my best to ensure that he receives it at that time.

The final topic I wish to touch on is that of the contribution of developers to the funding of the extension. It is a project on a massive scale: the cost of constructing the work in the Bill is estimated to exceed £1,000 million.

From the date of starting construction, it is expected that the project will take some four and a half years to complete.

There is to be a substantial contribution from Olympia and York, the developers of Canary wharf, and a further contribution from British Gas, the owners of the land on the Greenwich peninsula, and from Regalian Properties plc.

The proposed extension to Stratford would provide a major addition——

Mr. Orme: How much approved public expenditure will the Government make available in the first three years? We are entitled to know that.

Mr. Thorne: The right hon. Gentleman must ask the Minister that question. Olympia and York has offered a substantial contribution, which I believe totals £400 million over the period. No doubt the right hon. Gentleman will wish to put his own questions later.

The measure would bring widespread benefits to many who live in, work in and visit the capital. The promoters therefore ask that the Bill be given a Second Reading so that they may be allowed to proceed, and put to the Opposed Bill Committee their case for the provisions of the Bill and also of the additional provision.

8.16 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): First, I thank the Chair for accepting the instruction tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), other hon. Members representing east London constituencies, and myself. As it is unlikely that we shall reach discussion of the instruction—for procedural reasons—I should like to put it on the record by reading it. It states:

"After Second Reading of the London Underground Bill, to move, That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill to have regard to the need for regeneration of local communities and local industries in and around the areas of London Dockland and Lower Lea Valley."

Such an instruction should not be necessary for Bills connected with public transport.

Secondly, I thank the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) for saying that he had great sympathy with our instruction. I sense that his sympathy comes from being the Member of Parliament for a constituency on the eastern side of London. In addition, through his experience on the Greater London council, he has some understanding of the need for proper strategic planning in London. I wish that I could say the same for his hon. Friends on the Front Bench. The lack of such understanding is the reason why the instruction has been tabled.

Nearly three miles of the line is in Newham. I shall come to details affecting the borough later, and am joined in those views by my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). This is a London issue and I shall begin by expressing my personal views, as a London Member as well as an east London Member, about the strategic issues relating to transport in London.

The Bill has aroused mixed feelings in those of us who take an interest in transport in London. Undoubtedly, any investment in the London underground is welcome at the moment. Those who use or who try to use the District line will know what I mean. Many other issues also worry hon. Members. However, the Bill is not one of our first strategic priorities. Indeed, one might even say that its genesis does not lie in transport strategy at all. It comes from the needs of a developer, to which I shall come in a moment, which have arisen because of the lack of planning on the part of the Government and the London Docklands development corporation. That is incontrovertible. One of the problems with the LDDC is that it does not set out specifically to regenerate communities or local industry. That is one of the reasons why we tabled the instruction.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Is my hon. Friend aware that several requests from me for a meeting with the Reichman brothers, the directors of Olympia and York which is building Canary Wharf, have drawn a blank? I have been unable to acquaint them with my anxiety that building the Jubilee line should not add to the uprooting of local industry and the intolerable disturbance that the community is already suffering. Upwards of 9,300 people have lost television reception as Canary Wharf has risen. They could not see the world cup. Apparently the directors of Olympia and York do not feel obliged to help with those problems. Although we welcome an addition to public transport, I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that, as the line will not be built in an empty space, but a community lives there, its interest and well-being must be taken into account.

Mr. Spearing: That is the authentic voice not only of Tower Hamlets but of the Isle of Dogs, which is where one of the stations will be. It had local industry. Metropolitan Foods in my constituency has been told by the LDDC that its undoubted losses cannot be covered by public funds. We also hear that the LDDC's budget for this year will not be published until September. If any local authority in London did not publish its budget for this year until September, it would face a court case, prison or even worse. We believe that that is not good enough.

An extraordinary statistic sums up the imbalance in London planning. When the late Lord Cross, who chaired the Select Committee in another place which dealt with the establishment of the LDDC, commended the LDDC to the House, he said that he wanted mostly houses with gardens in London and hoped that there would be a time when conditions were such that they could be built. That was on 1 July 1981. He said that the houses should be for rent.

The figures produced by the docklands consultative committee of London boroughs a fortnight ago show that 2,000-odd dwellings for rent have been built. Another statistic shows that £2,000 million has been invested in transport infrastructure or earmarked for it. That includes the amount for the Jubilee line. If those figures are correct, an extraordinary £1 million is spent for every dwelling for rent built so far in the docklands area. One can understand the anxiety in east London about ever more transport infrastructure, welcome though it is in some ways because, we hope, it will be publicly owned.

Even the Government admit that the line is not the priority. We are awaiting the result of the so-called central London rail study. There is a choice between crossrail and the Chelsea-Hackney line. Although the line proposed in the Bill goes through central London from Green Park to London bridge, it is part of the so-called east London rail

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study. We believe that that study was produced as a result of the Government's non-planning and the need to bail out Canary wharf.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) told us that the people who are spending £400 million on the railway and on producing such an enormous building in her constituency have not met the current proprietors of Canary wharf. They picked up the tab from the original promoters, who found that even with Swiss finance and First Boston they could not find the money. They were induced to take up another option. I do not know what additional letters of comfort or suggestions the proprietors received from the LDDC. We believe that it was a close-run thing.

The company has discovered that the docklands light railway is not sufficient for its development needs, so it has come along to the Government and said, "Please give us a tube. We will give you £400 million towards it." Perhaps the Minister will confirm that £100 million of that is cash down and £300 million will be paid when the line is built. At 1989 prices, the Government are contributing an estimated £700 million in addition. I should correct that statement. It is not the Government but either the farepayers or taxpayers of London who will pay. I presume that there will be some input from London Transport. If not, the money will come from the Government.

I hope that the Minister can clear up a problem. I recall an answer that I was given to a question that I asked some time ago about the origin of the money for the line. Normally one would expect that it would be part of the infrastructure vote for London of the Department of Transport. I understand that the money will not come from that source and that the arrangements have been changed. I have heard stories about a contingency fund. Perhaps the Minister can clear up that matter now or in Committee.

It has already been said that civil engineering contracts have a habit of being somewhat more expensive than originally expected. Everyone knows that the ground conditions in south London are different from those of north London. The line crosses under the Thames in three places. Irrespective of the method of funding and its ins and outs, who will stand the tab if the estimates are exceeded? Will it be, pro rata, the developers and the Government, or will the entire extra cost be paid with public money?

I have said enough about the genesis of the railway. Most of us in east London believe that the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), formerly Secretary of State for the Environment and now chairman of the Conservative party, could have called a public inquiry on the development at Canary wharf but did not do so. That is positive proof that the Conservative party does not care about proper strategic planning for London. A development where 50,000 people may work is of enormous strategic importance. Having agreed it, this controversial Bill has been brought before the House.

At the beginning of the debate a good deal was said about Parliament square. I shall not dwell on that for long, but I wish to suggest a solution. When I saw the plans about six months ago I said to London Transport, "Why Westminster? Lots of people want to go to Charing Cross. It is a main line British Rail station with many interchanges. Why not take it on from there and go to Waterloo via Temple?" Of course there must be an interchange with the District and Circle lines—no one would disagree with that—but it could be at St. James's Park, as the Services Committee suggested. What about Temple? London Transport said, "We shall have to think about that. Oh, the curve is too sharp."

I looked at the maps in the Private Bill Office and found that the curve underneath Pall Mall is designed for 300 m. I got out a schoolboy compass and did some work. I think that it might be possible for the line to continue from Charing Cross, bend towards Temple and bend again somewhere under Waterloo. If that were possible—this is a Committee point—it might solve a good many of the problems.

The disadvantage for some hon. Members might be that they could not get on the train at Parliament square. I could not get on it to go to my constituency. Hon. Members would have to walk all the way to Trafalgar square—800 yd. That may seem a long way, but it is about the same distance as from the Members' Entrance to the bridge across the lake in St. James's Park. That brings the objection on distance into perspective.

I hope that that matter will be considered in Committee. A line of the alignment which I have described—perhaps the track will have to be longer or the curve greater to slow down the trains—would probably cost much less than extensive works in Parliament square. Such development would also provide a much valued connection direct to Charing Cross.

My hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East and for Newham, North-West have similar thoughts to mine about how the proposed development will affect Newham. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West is particularly interested as he shares the projected route with me. The London borough of Newham and many businesses in the area have submitted petitions and the views that I intend to express are those of the borough and of my hon. Friends—except when I express a particular personal view.

I agree with the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) about disabled access. It would not be possible easily to redesign the Jubilee line to accommodate disabled persons. However, London Transport has said that any completely new line in London will be designed to accommodate them. Whatever new tunnels are built, it would be useful if they were large enough to enable disabled persons to use the tubes. Disabled people of Newham and West Ham would like to visit the west end via the Jubilee line and, providing safety restrictions are upheld, I do not see any reason why the tunnels to be constructed should not accommodate tubes large enough for such people. I hope that the Committee will consider that.

With the Jubilee line entering the London borough of Newham from the Greenwich peninsula, there is the hope that construction will provide possible future branch lines—to the north Woolwich area. The diagrams show that a step-plate junction is planned and I hope that the Committee is assured that such a junction will be built. Building a junction underground after the trains are running is not only difficult, but may even be impossible.

A step-plate junction would provide two route options. First, a branch could be constructed over the existing north London line, to which the hon. Member for Ilford,

South referred, as far as north Woolwich and perhaps beyond. Good planning might take that line on to Woolwich Arsenal. Secondly, a branch could be constructed towards Custom House on the north side of the royal docks and onwards to Barking. I agree with the London borough of Newham that those options should be part of the proposed route, because that would provide good value for money as construction would be over existing track.

Those routes could be developed either by inter-running the existing north London link—I know that the transport inspectors have some doubt about that, but there is inter-running elsewhere and it should be considered—or along parallel lines. I believe that there should be facilities for freight to run at night even if inter-running is available on both lines. What will happen in the royal docks area is a matter of speculation, so we should keep our options open.

The rail corridor from Canning Town to Stratford is already wide with four tracks. It is proposed that that corridor be dedicated to the Jubilee line. In future I hope that there will be room for a possible channel tunnel link.

The London borough of Newham and the hon. Members who represent it are concerned about the amount of land that is included within the compulsory purchase area. We do not understand the extensive areas so designated and we do not understand why arrangements are not made for works to be done on a pro tem basis. We do not understand why everything should be compulsorily acquired, especially in respect of the land at West Ham.

At Canning Town there are also a number of controversial purchases of existing firms that employ local people. Those local industries have survived and they want to expand in the area. Whether the instruction is passed, I hope that the Committee will make it clear to the promoters that those firms and their employees must not be disadvantaged. The hon. Member for Ilford, South and the promotors claim that the local people will be advantaged as a result of the new bus station and railways. Even if that is so, we must still see to it that nobody who is displaced is disadvantaged in any way. Unfortunately, the LDDC has not done that, but the Bill must ensure it. I am sure that the petitioners and the borough will consider that matter closely in Committee.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): What will happen at the Canning Town interchange is especially important, because when the station and bus interchange are built, the value of the surrounding land will go up considerably. If London Underground has bought more land than it needs through compulsory purchase, it will be the one to benefit from that increase in value. The management of London Underground should be leaning over backwards to ensure that the people of the area represented by the hon. Gentleman do not believe that too much land is being compulsorily purchased. They should be given the information to ensure that that does not happen.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for underlining my point. The amount of land to be purchased at Canning Town may not be that great, but the demands of the local industries are important. One firm has a gantry crane and one does not put such cranes up afresh for tuppence. It is important to take into account such displacements.

The point raised by the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) has even greater relevance in West Ham. At Canning Town there will be only three underground railways: the docklands light railway, the Jubilee line and the north London line, unless it is displaced as the borough suggests. At West Ham there will be four railway lines, presuming the Bill gets through. We shall have the existing north London link, the Jubilee line, the District line, when it is running, and in addition, British Rail has sensibly said that some of the trains on the Tilbury line will stop there. Four electrified railways will cross one another at right angles, so the surrounding land will be extremely valuable.

The land to the north-west of West Ham station in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West forms part of the lower Lea valley area to which the instruction refers. That area is in the process of being changed, which requires careful planning. Good strategic planning and borough planning should ensure that the plans meet the needs of the people of Newham, not the needs of developers coming in on the back of a new railway line.

As is well known, Newham, statistically, is the second most deprived borough in the country, but that is not so as it is rich in human talent. Morally, the land belongs to the people of the area and it should be developed for their benefit. The plans include a possible depot for the railway just south of Stratford. The railway must have a depot, of course, but perhaps it could be built further north or covered over so that the space above could be used for something else. Those important points must be decided by the Committee.

To the north of the land affected in the lower Lea valley is Stratford—a junction already known because of the channel tunnel controversy. Only this week a Committee of the House referred to its inability to evaluate the potential of Stratford as a future channel tunnel international station—not terminal. The Jubilee line is due to terminate there. It would provide a fast service if it were constructed from Waterloo and London Bridge straight to Stratford.

I hope that there can be some safeguard there—perhaps a three-decker arrangement: the Jubilee line, the north London line, roads and other railways north to south on the lower level, with plenty of space for development and a connection to crossrail that we hope is coming in a few weeks' time. That will probably be announced after we go away for the summer recess if the Government run to form. I hope that it will be announced before the recess. For the east-west, on the next level, perhaps there could be a channel link using the Ove Arup scheme or whichever route is chosen. There could be a third deck on top of that for passenger circulation and motor traffic to give an excellent and well-designed interchange.

There is the land available and it makes strategic sense for the line to go there. There is plenty of land further north, so perhaps the railway could be built there in the Lea valley area. It could join up with other tube railways further north. However, I shall not pursue that argument because it is a wider strategic issue.

I have spoken enough to show that the Bill has had a mixed reception. It is not the first priority for strategic transport investment in London, which must be the

[Mr. Spearing]

crossrail. London Transport, the Bill's promoters, has not looked as carefully as it might at some of the alternative alignments in the west end, particularly those that would avoid the complications of using Parliament square. Above all, unfortunately, the genesis of the railway has been based not on the regeneration of communities or industries, but on the needs of developers who may have been under some misapprehension that transport was to be provided when in fact permission had not been given.

The Bill has had a mixed reception from those of us in east London. If the line is constructed, we shall look carefully at the detailed planning, because it should serve the people of east London.

8.43 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak early in the debate. I wish to place on record the appreciation of the members of the New Building Sub-Committee for the complimentary comments by the Leader of the House as reported in *Hansard*, 10 July, column 281. To save time, I shall not attempt to repeat many of the issues raised during that short debate, but I wish to record my sincere appreciation of the members of the New Building Sub-Committee who conscientiously attended weekly meetings to delve into the depths of the problems that the Bill will present to the House.

The Committee fully appreciates the dauntless hours of work which the Clerk, Mr. Robin James, devoted so meticulously to ensuring that the Committee was kept fully conversant and informed of all the details necessary to enable members to discuss and decide issues of this complex and controversial Bill, especially where it affected hon. Members and their accommodation.

The Minister for Public Transport intervened earlier and referred to the spoil that would be brought up in Parliament square. If spoil is not to be brought up in Parliament square, why was the New Building Sub-Committee told that numerous lorries would be fed into the already congested traffic around the square on an hourly basis once the site was prepared and soil excavation taking place? If spoil is brought up in a building site, particularly in the centre of London right outside the precincts of the House, it will not only be unsightly, but will result in a large amount of muck being brought from the site by lorries onto a congested road. The Minister should address that important issue.

I spoke briefly on Tuesday to oppose the business motion because I thought that three hours was far too short a period for us to discuss a Bill with such serious implications. Opposition Members and, I am sure, members of the New Building Sub-Committee would declare their support for more and better facilities in London. However, I should like to address the Bill's effects on Parliament and Parliament buildings.

Mr. Cryer: I have looked through the report of the Committee of which my hon. Friend is the Chairman. Was there any explanation from the promoter about guaranteeing the position of the Sessional Orders? My hon. Friend mentioned extra lorries, spoil and congestion in Parliament square. Clearly, Sessional Orders must be maintained. I wonder whether the promoters went out of their way to explain to the committee what provision they planned to make to ensure that Sessional Orders would be applied throughout the period of possibly six years during which the works will disrupt Parliament square?

Mr. Powell: That is an important point. I recall that my hon. Friend raised the issue of Sessional Orders during our debate on the Queen's Speech. He took a spot that I was hoping to take, because it was the first time that the television cameras had been used in the House. It is the Serjeant at Arms's responsibility for ensuring that access to and from the precincts of the House is not contravened by any order. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me for not giving him a full reply now, but I want to refer to Sessional Orders and remind hon. Members that we should ensure that we have right of access to and from the House, later in my speech.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): My hon. Friend mentioned a three-hour debate. There is no suggestion that this Second Reading debate should be confined to three hours. This is the first part of the Bill's Second Reading. I assume that, if it had been an official Government Bill instead of an unofficial Government Bill, we would have demanded more than a day to debate the important issues relating to it.

Mr. Powell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is one of the members of the New Building Sub-Committee and devoted an hour or even two hours every week for the purpose of discussing this complicated Bill and how it affects the House. I am glad that he raised this point because three hours, or even a day, spent on debate is not enough when we consider that the Sub-Committee has taken months of deliberation. It has placed pressure on, and had meetings with, the Minister of Transport and others to ensure that hon. Members have a full and comprehensive knowledge of what is proposed and how it affects the House.

Mr. Cormack: I am grateful to my hon. Friend—I deliberately call him that in this context. Does he recall that when the Sub-Committee first began its deliberations, its members had no prior warning of what was going to hit them. So great was the consternation and disgust that one member—a Government Whip—walked out in disgust.

Mr. Powell: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. Within a matter of days of that happening, the Chairman said that the opinion expressed by the throwing down of papers and walking out was entirely different from the opinion held a week or two later, after we had met the Minister to discuss the Bill.

Mr. Cryer: It appears that the Government Whip was so disgusted that he threw down his papers and walked from the Committee. We can well imagine the cascade of papers that were thrown from Government offices and the number of people who walked out after reading in *The Spectator* the interview of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Powell: If I were to travel down that road, you would soon bring me to order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I can well imagine what would happen if people took such action.

Mr. Redmond: Perhaps my hon. Friend will tell us about the disruption that is likely to be caused in Parliament square. The sponsor of the Bill and the

Minister failed to do that. I am still not convinced about the need to have a bob-hole in Parliament square. When a pit is sunk, all the waste travels up the shaft and the coal that is extracted travels along the tunnel and up the shaft. The waste outlet could be away from Parliament square. I can see no need for a bob-hole. Perhaps my hon. Friend or the Minister could deal with that.

Mr. Powell: The Committee deliberated on that, and we employed consultants to look for alternative sites. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) used to be a miner, and I am the son of a miner. If a mine were being sunk in Wales or in my hon. Friend's constituency, spoil could be brought up well away from the shaft. My hon. Friend spoke about a bob-hole. Great disruption will be caused when a ramp is placed around the roadway.

I hope that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will bear in mind what I and other hon. Members have said before you decide on the closure. If the Bill becomes law, it will affect everyone who works in the House. It will turn Parliament square into a building site for at least five years. Six years is the period mentioned in the Bill. It will also involve rebuilding Westminster station and will have serious implications for Parliament's new building project. That means that the only chance for hon. Members to acquire the sort of office accommodation that is taken for granted in foreign legislatures will be lost.

Hon. Members need new accommodation. When we met the Secretary of State for Transport and members of London Underground, we noted their spacious offices. Would they like to work in some of the offices in which hon. Members have to work? Some of us represent 60,000 or 70,000 constituents and have to work in an office that is like a little box, which we have to share with a secretary and sometimes a research assistant. About 40 hon. Members sometimes gather in the Cloisters of the House, where there is not much room for anything more than spare library books.

If the public were fully aware of the accommodation available to Members, they would share the anxiety felt by the New Building Sub-Committee about the proposals, which could delay the completion of phase 2 of the new building for five or six years. Many Members of my age will not be here in five or six years to enjoy such offices. If the Bill had not been presented, if Parliament square had not been selected for use as a building site, and if there had not been changes in the proposals for Westminster station, phase 2 would be well on the way to completion.

Mr. Dixon: Does my hon. Friend agree that the New Building Sub-Committee was opposed to the new Jubilee line because of its connections with the District and Central lines? London Underground did not accept the alternative put forward by the New Building Sub-Committee, that the connection of the Jubilee and District and Central lines should be at St. James's station. Does my hon. Friend agree that that was because London Underground has its headquarters at St. James's and did not want to experience the disruption that it is prepared to inflict on hon. Members?

Mr. Powell: My hon. Friend is right. That was discussed in Committee.

Between November and last May, the Committee carried out an inquiry into the effect of the Bill's proposals on the work of Parliament.

Mr. Cryer: I gleaned from the evidence provided by the Committee that, although London Underground claimed that it had looked at alternatives, no serious calculations had been made about the engineering difficulties, the potential of the Committee's suggestion or the cost of any alternative to having the interchange in Parliament square.

Mr Powell: With all due respect to my hon. Friend, that is not entirely true. The Committee appointed two experts —Sir Alan Muir Wood and Mr. Reginald Jenkins—to devise two alternative routes for the line through St. James's Park station.

Mr. Cryer: May I put the record straight? I was not saying that the Committee did not investigate; it did. My point was that London Underground—which is the Bill's promoter, and on which the main burden was placed to examine all the alternatives and give evidence to the House —plumped for a big hole in Parliament square without having done any homework on the alternatives. Would that be correct?

Mr. Powell: That is correct. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) referred to a Conservative Member throwing down his papers the night that the proposals were made to the Committee because he thought that Parliament square—indeed, Westminster and Parliament itself—should not have been involved, and that there should have been an alternative. That is the reason why he left the Committee in disgust. At that meeting, the Committee expressed the opinion that London Underground should at least have informed its members. Hon. Members were not aware of the proposals, although we had heard rumours about them. I believe that London Underground presented the proposals in the hope that they would go through with a nod and a wink—and of course, without the New Building Sub-Committee. It had not given a thought to the possibility that the New Building Sub-Committee and the proposed phase 2 should be considered.

Mr Redmond: It is important that this point be cleared up. When the Bill's sponsor was giving his reasons why the Bill should be given a Second Reading, he told me that the alternative proposed by the New Building Sub-Committee was far too expensive. If that was the case, one would assume that the costings had been calculated. If my hon. Friend is saying that no serious estimates were made, that is very disturbing.

Mr. Powell: When the proposals were presented to the New Building Sub-Committee and the specialists whom it appointed for advice, our specialists offered us the alternatives, which we presented to London Underground, which then costed them. It was not aware of—indeed, had not considered—alternative proposals until our consultants had given their advice. One suggestion will affect the environment, and the other will cost more money; I assume that that is what my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) is referring to. The proposals were based primarily on the alternative sites suggested by the New Building Sub-Committee.

The Committee published a detailed report, which is available from the Vote Office. I urge any hon. Members who have not already done so to acquire a copy and to read at least the summary of its conclusions. The report is 99 pages long. I would not expect hon. Members to go through all the graphic details, but if they read the

[Mr. Powell]

summary of conclusions I am sure it will give them an idea of what the New Building Sub-Committee had proposed. I will not try to summarise the report, but I shall pick out a few key points. The House should have been given at least a day to consider a Bill of this magnitude.

In expressing its apprehension about the Bill, the Sub-Committee did not adopt a "not in my back yard" approach, and was careful not to express a view on the merits of the Jubilee line proposals. The Committee will support any sensible attempt to improve London's chronic transport problems, but surely it is right for proposals to be scrutinised to ensure that they show proper respect for the rights of those affected by them.

Individuals and companies affected by a private Bill are able to petition Parliament. That gives them the right to appear before the Committee considering the Bill to argue their case against it. But the House cannot petition itself, so we thought that the best way to safeguard the interests of the House was to use our powers as a Select Committee to conduct an inquiry and produce a report. Our report is not special pleading for Members of Parliament; it is a responsible attempt to ensure that hastily drafted proposals from London Underground do not result in Members of Parliament and the constituents who visit them suffering intolerable conditions for years.

The report concludes that the Bill should proceed at least to its Committee stage, but subject to certain conditions. It is no secret that members of the Sub-Committee were reluctant to give even a qualified approval to the Bill. We remain worried about the noise and inconvenience, the dust and vibration that we may have to suffer in the immediate vicinity of this building for five or more years. We are also worried about the implications of doubling the number of passengers leaving and entering Westminster station in an area which is already very congested, particularly at the height of the tourist season.

London Underground has told us that the new building project will not be delayed as a result of its construction work. I wish that I could be sure that it is right, but I am sceptical. The buildings which make up phase 2 of our project surround the underground station, and they all come within the limits of deviation contained in the Bill. Therefore, the Bill will give London Underground the power to demolish or alter those buildings as it likes in the construction of the station immediately below them.

If the proposals go ahead, I hope that London Underground's architects and the Property Services Agency's architects will be able to dovetail their proposals so that the two schemes can proceed in tandem. However, one would have to be very optimistic to assume that such an enormously complicated exercise would go smoothly.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend makes an important point, because there could never be sufficient money to replace any of the buildings in this vicinity. Has London Underground given any details of the sort of insurance cover that would be available in the event of an accident? It is obvious that London Underground could not carry the sort of costs that might be occurred if, say, Westminster abbey or the Norman Shaw building, of which we have such great expectations, were damaged. What sort of premiums would be required to safeguard such buildings?

Mr. Powell: London Underground has not offered much up front on insurance cover for any buildings that might be damaged. It will not even say whether it is prepared to fund a raft over Westminster station. Therefore, I cannot tell my hon. Friend whether it will be in a position to pay compensation or guarantee to replace any buildings or parts of buildings that might be demolished.

There is no way in which London Underground can guarantee that its scheme will not delay the new parliamentary building. That might be delayed for several years. There is a strong likelihood that there will be delays. Quite apart from the problems that we all know beset the building industry and which we have recently experienced in respect of phase 1 of the new parliamentary building, there is the question of how long the Bill will take to obtain Royal Assent, if it ever does.

London Underground has planned on the assumption that the Bill will be on the statute book in mid-May 1991. The Bill will have to pass through both Houses and both Committee stages within 12 months. Anyone who has followed the progress of recent controversial private Bills, such as the King's Cross Railways Bill, will know that that is a completely unrealistic timetable. If hon. Members ask my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) about details of the way in which private Bills can be delayed, I am sure that he could go into graphic detail.

We are concerned about London Underground's assumption that Royal Assent could be given by mid-May 1991. Until the Bill is passed and we are aware of what London Underground is promising, very little, if anything, can be done by the New Building Sub-Committee to progress our plans for the development of phase 2. That is why the Committee objected so realistically to the proposals.

Mr. Redmond: It is not true that we seek to delay private Bills. Due to the system that operates within this place—the Government's involvement and the practice of slipping private Bills through to avoid public inquiries—it is right and proper that controversial Bills should be adequately discussed in Committee and on the Floor of the House, in an attempt to make people aware of what is transpiring. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that such a controversial Bill, which will affect so many people in London, but do virtually nothing to resolve London's transport problems, deserves the maximum debating time and publicity to ensure that all people, whether they live along the line or on the other side of the river, are aware of what will take place. Money has been squandered; it is not being put to the best possible use.

Mr. Powell: I hope that my hon. and close Friend will not think for a minute that I was criticising him and his colleagues, who objected so strongly and realistically to some of the proposed private Bills presented in recent months. I am glad that he is here to make his observations on this controversial private Bill. The House would do well to consider some of the alternatives to the present private Bill system.

For all the reasons given by the Committee that I have outlined, the Bill is potentially bad news for the House and for those hon. Members who work here. Therefore the Committee thought that it was our duty to our colleagues to at least consider the possibility of building the Jubilee

line interchange somewhere other than Westminster—I am getting to the point that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) referred to.

London Underground assured the Committee that the interchange had to be at Westminster for engineering reasons. We rejected that, and we were proved right. We engaged the services of two experienced engineers, who devised two alternative routes for the line through St. James's Park Station. The fact that London Underground's headquarters is above St. James's Park station—as my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) mentioned—may not be unrelated to its unwillingness to contemplate siting the interchange there.

In due course, London Underground conceded that the two alternative routes were feasible in engineering terms. Unfortunately, each had a disadvantage of cost or inconvenience, and the Committee eventually had to accept that Westminster was marginally the better location from a strictly operational point of view. We then had to decide how the new building project and the interests of Parliament could be safeguarded.

We decided that, if the Bill is to proceed and if the interchange is to be built at Westminster, because of the benefits for transport policy, London Underground should undertake to meet three important conditions. It has done so in respect of two, and we are grateful for that. One is to implement a particular design scheme for Westminster station that will be reconcilable with plans for the parliamentary building. The details are set out in the report. The other is to implement all the recommendations relating to the Westminster area in the independent assessment of environmental impact commissioned by the promoters.

The third condition, which we feel is crucial, is that London Underground should bear the full cost of building a concrete raft across the site, which would be enormously important in physically separating the London Underground works below the raft from the parliamentary works above. In theory, it will permit each set of works to proceed separately, and allow for accommodation of superior quality to be erected above the railway.

London Underground has offered to pay for rafting over an area approximating to that of the existing ticket hall, at an estimated cost of £1·5 to £2 million—but not for the rafting required over the rest of the site, the cost of which is estimated by London Underground to be a further £6 million to £7 million. That is not a satisfactory response to our request.

The Services Committee, under the chairmanship of the Leader of the House, concluded:

"it would be little short of disastrous, from the point of view of the House's interests, if the Jubilee Line proposals were to proceed without satisfactory assurances from London Underground that funds will be forthcoming to enable a complete raft to be built."

That is strong language, but it is entirely justified.

The Committee added that such an undertaking

"would be some recompense to the House for the disruption and delays which will almost certainly be attendant upon the London Underground proposals."

I hope that the sponsor of the Bill will be able to give the House the undertaking that the Services Committee considers essential. If by any chance London Underground is still unwilling to do so, and if the Bill receives its Second Reading, I trust that it will be made a requirement in Committee that the promoter gives that undertaking as a condition of the Bill proceeding any further.

Another major issue of concern is London Underground's proposal to build a new west ticket hall. In its original form, it would involve erecting a 3 ft high metal ramp across the junction of Bridge street with Parliament square. The Services Committee regards that scheme as completely unacceptable. It would be an eyesore and likely to slow traffic, thus contributing to congestion. It might also contravene the Sessional Orders of the House, which require that passage through the streets leading to the House be kept free and open, and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passage of Members of Parliament to and from the House.

Under the original proposal, the raft would have ended immediately beside the palace gates. I understand that those responsible for arranging ceremonial occasions in Parliament square involving the Brigade of Guards and the Household Cavalry are also unhappy at that proposal. The Services Committee suggested two alternatives. One is to build the whole of the new ticket hall beneath Parliament square itself, thus removing the need for excavations. The other option would be to use a technique called flush decking, which would not impede traffic to the same extent. We do not express a preference between those options, but are content for an Opposed Bill Committee to decide between them.

Mr. Cryer: What my hon. Friend is saying answers a question that I asked some time ago. It appears that London Underground provided no assurances about any potential breaches of the Sessional Orders. As my hon. Friend knows, I take a great interest in the Sessional Orders—at times, more than most. It is clear that London Underground does not appreciate their significance and importance. Has London Underground given an assurance that all future designs and considerations in its proposals will take into account Sessional Orders? It seems to me that my hon. Friend's Committee has been making all those requests but has received very little response from London Underground.

Mr. Powell: There has been no response from London Underground on whether it will accept the alternative that has been suggested by the Committee on the option called flush decking, which we understand would be quite an innovation in this country, although it has been employed successfully in other countries. To my knowledge London Underground has given no such undertaking.

As for the Sessional Orders, particularly the one in which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and the New Building Sub-Committee were interested, the Serjeant at Arms is on that Committee and was well aware of the problems. As it is his responsibility to ensure that Sessional Orders are carried out, I take it that he has taken due cognisance of what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Orme: My hon. Friend has outlined some of the difficulties that the development will cause in Westminster and in Parliament square. Does he agree that the Committee of which I am a member and of which he is the distinguished Chairman was told by its technical advisers that it was not necessary to have the interchange at

[Mr. Orme]

Parliament square—that it would be feasible for it to be moved to St. James's park—but that London Underground did not accept that proposal?

Mr. Powell: My right hon. Friend is quite right. I am glad that he has emphasised that point. There is still time before we conclude the debate tonight for assurances to be given by the Minister or the promoter of the Bill that they will at least consider yet again the alternatives. If the alternative proposals were accepted and the building site was situated at St. James's park, it would be possible to avoid the problems that would beset the House in future because of the proposed development in Parliament square.

The rest of the report concerns our architects' preliminary proposals for phase 2 of the new parliamentary building. I hope that hon. Members will read that part of the report, but as it does not relate directly to the Bill I shall not deal with it in detail now.

I should like to refer to the Bill itself. We received the proposals and outline of the Bill only today. They refer to the fact that there were 95 petitions against the Bill. That is quite a number of petitioners. I shall not go into depth and detail about the people who petitioned against the Bill. I shall say only that Westminster city council was appalled at the proposals. Some of the members of Westminster city council with whom we discussed the matter said that they would be petitioning strongly against it.

I know that several of my hon. Friends would like to participate in the debate, and I do not want to go on indefinitely, but if the Bill is given a Second Reading, the Opposed Private Bill Committee will carry a burden of responsibility heavier than that usually carried by such Committees. I hope that it will perform its duty wisely and fairly and take full account of the Services Committee's reports. I hope that, when hon. Members express an opinion on the Bill, they will at least have referred to my Committee's report. It has studied the Bill at length and in detail, and I hope that hon. Members will benefit from it.

Mr. Freeman *rose*——

Mr. Cormack: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely it would be right for more hon. Members to have an opportunity to participate in this important debate before the Minister speaks. The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and I had the honour of serving on the Committee. We gave hours of our time to it, because sometimes it met two or three times a week over a six-month period. It would be better if hon. Members had the chance to speak before the Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It is for the Minister to decide when the speak, but on private Bills it is quite normal or a Minister to give the Government's view at a fairly early stage.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you can see, several hon. Members wish to participate in the debate, including at least one member of the Committee that considered the Bill extensively. As there is only an hour left of the allotted time, I hope that you will bear that in mind should a closure motion, although it would be terribly mistaken, be moved. I hope that such a motion would be rejected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman said, time is getting short, and it would be far better if we got on with the debate.

Mr. Freeman: It might be for the convenience of the House, and with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I deferred my remarks until other hon. Members have had a chance to speak.

9.28 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am sure that, on this non-party issue, I speak for all hon. Members when I say that I very much appreciate my hon. Friend's gesture, which was entirely typical of his courteous approach to parliamentary matters.

I had the honour of serving on the New Building Sub-Committee, which was chaired with much distinction by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). His comments may give hon. Members who do not have the privilege, or chore, depending on how they look at it, of serving on such Committees some idea of the amount of work that they do on behalf of the House. Members of those Committees must give up much of their time. None of us minds that, but I hope that nobody will think that in discussing the Bill we are being over-parochial.

The New Building Sub-Committee, which is part of the Service Committee, is given a duty by the House of Commons to consider, without fear or favour and in a bipartisan, non-party spirit, issues affecting the House of Commons and the well-being of its Members. It is not being narrow or insular for us to have concentrated in our report on the impact of the Bill on the Palace of Westminster. In concentrating on that impact, we were seeking—I believe this to be true of all members of the Committee, regardless of party affiliation—to ensure that Members can serve their constituents as well as possible. It is difficult for hon. Members to serve their constituents as well as they might in the conditions that many of them have to tolerate now. It will be well into the 1990s, approaching the turn of the century, before every hon. Member has a room of his or her own—basic minimum facilities which legislatures throughout the world take for granted.

I do not entirely approve of our procedures here; we waste a great deal of time. However, it should be said that this Parliament sits for many more weeks and for longer hours than virtually any other Parliament. It is important, therefore, with the additional responsibility that we have thrust on us as constituency welfare officers, that hon. Members should have an opportunity to do their work not in great comfort, but with a degree of privacy that our constituents have the right to expect.

It was with that basic thought in mind that we sat down together to study this proposal. It was one day last autumn——

Mr. Orme: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although he has outlined the position of our own Parliament, it was not special pleading by Members of Parliament? We shall not necessarily be disrupted, but 30,000 more people will arrive in Parliament square each day if the interchange is built. We are talking about 9 million or 10 million people a year in the centre of the capital. We are talking not only about the House of Commons and the House of Lords, but about Westminster abbey, about St. Thomas's, about the Methodist church,

about the Queen Elizabeth centre and about Whitehall, which are all within the area that will be disrupted to an extent that I believe hon. Members have not yet realised.

Mr. Cormack: That was one of the points that exercised us. In the cross-questioning, it became apparent that the point had not similarly exercised some of the planners at London Underground. This is not just Parliament's backyard. Parliament is not only the people's supreme palace—and we are here to serve the people—but the focal point of the kingdom. People come here not only from all over the country, but from all over the world. Many people in the Commonwealth—I know it is no longer called the British Commonwealth—still look to Parliament square as the focus of many of their aspirations; it has a special meaning for them.

Before the helpful intervention of the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), with which I very much agree, I was saying that we were suddenly taken aback one day last autumn.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman should not apologise for concentrating on the impact on Parliament with which he is especially concerned. Parliament is an important building, it has an important function and it is the centre of people's attention. Like me, the hon. Gentleman has been present for most of the debate, and it clear that the disruption that is focused on our immediate environment will extend along virtually all this line. The objections to the line in Westminster are echoed by the complaints about the disruption to ordinary people's lives, which are brought to the House again and again by hon. Members whose constituents are affected.

Mr. Cormack: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right. I am concentrating my remarks on Westminster because of my position on the Select Committee, but I accept what he says.

One day last autumn, we were suddenly taken aback when the proposals were unveiled to us. The Committee was deeply angered and shocked. The reaction of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) has already been described. It became apparent that London Underground had not thought through the impact of its proposals or taken into account Parliament and our national responsibilities. I am bound to say that subsequently we had a number of much more sensible and fruitful meetings with London Underground. Like the hon. Member for Ogmore, the Chairman of the New Building Sub-Committee, I am grateful for two of the undertakings that have been given.

Taking up a point raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), from the outset none of us took a narrow view. It is so tremendously apparent to anyone who lives in London for any part of the week that there is a need to improve public transport in London. None of us could possibly deny the importance of the underground in the context of London's transport needs.

There may be many views about Canary Wharf. I felt that the Secretary of State at the time should have called that project in, and I said so at the time. However, I had an opportunity to take the all-party arts and heritage group on a visit to Canary Wharf recently. It was a good group with hon. Members from both sides of the House and from the other place. We were impressed by the quality of the construction and the thought that was going into that development. It is not one that I would have wished for, but it is happening and I pay a genuine compliment to those responsible for it.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said that, with 50,000 people working daily at Canary Wharf, there must be better transport links. I do not deny the need for this particular rail link. However, I question the manner in which it has been brought about and whether the interchange which will affect us most of all is sensibly situated.

We must look very carefully at the effect on the area of four and a half, five or six years' disruption. I do not believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) paid enough attention to that point. He seemed to dismiss it rather too cavalierly. I am sure that that was not his intention because, after all, he is a Member of Parliament and he will suffer like the rest of us. When we cross-examined the people who gave evidence from Westminster city council, it was apparent that those extremely experienced gentlemen were deeply disturbed about what would happen in Parliament square hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month, for a minimum of four and for a maximum of six years.

As the hon. Member for Bradford, South said, those of us on the New Building Sub-Committee know better than most what slippage means. We have incurred a good deal of wrath—undeservedly, I believe—from our colleagues because phase 1 of the new building, which should have been ready for occupation this autumn, will not be ready for occupation by hon. Members until a year after that. We heard the good news the other day that the contractors hope to complete their handing over by Christmas or early next year. It remains to be seen whether they can keep to that timetable. If they can, we shall be surprised as well as grateful. However, it will be after the next summer recess before hon. Members can enjoy the new amenities and conveniences.

We more than most understand what slippage is all about. We have to face the possibility of six years' disruption during which time Parliament square would be a major building site. Hour after hour, lorries, laden with I do not know what, would be slipping into the traffic. That caused our witnesses from Westminster city council great concern.

Mr. Orme: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members will recall that a few weeks ago traffic was reduced to one lane along the Embankment because of resurfacing. I travel that way from the Barbican, and on two or three occasions I was stuck in a traffic jam which lasted for up to 15 or 20 minutes. Virtually everything had stopped around Parliament square. That traffic must pass through Parliament square because there is no other route. It must cross the Thames, and it must go round the square as it heads north, some of it into the country. What will be the effect of a minimum of eight lorry movements an hour in and out of a building site in addition to the congestion that already exists?

Mr. Cormack: I tremble to think about that. Like the hon. Gentleman, I come in that way every morning from my London home. Like him, I was delayed many times while the necessary resurfacing took place. We had precisely the same experience when Whitehall was resurfaced earlier this year. I compliment those responsible because they did it as quickly as it could conceivably have

[Mr. Cormack]

been done, and they seem to have done a very good job, but for several weeks there were interruptions. That was for just a few weeks, and we all knew that that job would be accomplished. With Parliament square, however, we are talking about four, five or six years, with lorries moving every hour. It could be catastrophic.

We all know what happens when it rains in London—the whole place seizes up. Traffic is held up when people come to demonstrate in Parliament. I am not talking about those who come with the deliberate attempt of causing disruption, which only occasionally happens, as it did one day last year when a group of students sat in the road. That is very rare. Most people who come here behave in an extremely sensible and law-abiding manner. Nevertheless, there are many of them, and it is their right to come. One can imagine what matters would be like with the lorries as well.

It is incumbent on those who are promoting the Bill to think, and to think again, about whether the two alternatives that the Committee proved to be feasible should be considered. I hope that, if the Bill goes to the Opposed Bill Commitee, that Committee will call for evidence and look at the matter very critically indeed.

Miss Hoey: I accept that there will be great disruption in the Westminster area. Presumably, when the construction is in progress, many people in the Westminster area will choose to spend their lunch hours crossing Waterloo bridge and spending time in Jubilee gardens. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that even that will not be possible because Jubilee gardens will be completely ruined for perhaps eight years? Does he agree also that that would be an even greater disruption for the people of London than what would happen in this area?

Mr. Cormack: That is possible. I shall not be drawn along that line because I do not know as much about that matter as the hon. Lady does. I believe that that area is in her constituency, or certainly is adjacemt to it, and she knows a great deal about it. Of course I know Jubilee gardens, but I am not an expert on it. That is why I am concentrating my remarks on the area for which the House has given me and my colleagues a certain responsibility.

Another point that has not been taken into account is the security aspect. There are two sides to that. First, there is the building period. We all know what happens when there is a security alarm. I was dining very close to the Carlton club a fortnight ago, and I saw the chaos and confusion. Thank God nobody was killed there, but there was major confusion. What happens if people need to get quick access to and egress from this Palace during the period of the construction?

Secondly, what concerns me more—I have raised the matter on several occasions in Committee—are the 30,000 extra people day after day being disgorged around the Winston Churchill statue—incidentally, it will be taken away for five years—with all the other implicit problems from a security monitoring point of view. That problem has not been sufficiently taken into account. The factor that has most affected our lives during the 20 years in which I have been in this place has been terrorism. It has transformed our lives and what we can and cannot do around here.

Mr. Ray Powell: How could ceremonial occasions such as the opening of Parliament take place with a ramp around the square? Will the hon. Gentleman comment on that point?

Mr. Cormack: I shall refer to the ramp. That is yet another factor. One thing that I am adamant about is that, if the construction is to happen and if Parliament square is to be disrupted in that way, it will make the problem far worse if there is a ramp—it would compound it a thousandfold—because vehicles would have to go up and down as they went around.

Like the hon. Member for Ogmore, I have a great affection for our ceremonial occasions. I believe that they mean a lot to people. The state opening is a great and glittering occasion which means a lot to the people of this country. I would hate to see Her Majesty have to come here in a motor car for four or five years instead of in the procession to which we are all so happily accustomed. I well remember the state opening in February 1974 when she did come in a motor car. It was very subdued—and we know the reason. Nevertheless, in October of that year, when the hon. Gentleman's party was returned to government again—*[Interruption.]*—we all said how splendid it was to have a real state opening again. I do not want four or five years without a proper state opening——

Mr. Cryer: We well remember that October also.

Mr. Cormack: I will not be drawn into that.

I fail to see how we could possibly mount the normal state opening or any other great ceremonial occasion involving Westminster and Westminster hall if there were a ramp.

Many factors must be taken most carefully into account. The Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) agonised over that. The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) has described how much care, thought and trouble went into the report. After agonising over it, taking evidence and trying to push aside our own prejudices—we all have them—we came to the conclusion outlined in paragraph 51:

"As we have said above, the decision on the Jubilee Line proposals in relation to Westminster has not been an easy one. However, we believe that *if (and only if) the various conditions we have set out in paragraph 44 above, including those relating to funding of the concrete raft, are met*, the adverse short-term impact of the proposed construction works should be minimised, and there may be long-term benefits for the House in terms of the new building project. We therefore recommend that, subject to the acceptance of these conditions, the bill should be given a second reading and submitted to the scrutiny of the Opposed Bill Committee."

It is important that hon. Members do not infer from that that we are backing the Bill. We are giving extremely qualified approval to a proposal that affects Parliament. I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South to those words "and only if". I stress that it is a unanimous report, unanimously endorsed by the Services Committee, which is presided over by the Leader of the House, which in itself is an important point. Unless my hon. Friend can give me and the rest of the Committee an assurance that the concrete raft provision will be met—I shall not repeat the details because they have been graphically described by the hon. Member for Jarrow—I cannot conceivably do other than oppose the Bill tonight. If my hon. Friend can give me that assurance, I am prepared to sit back and to see the Bill—possibly—be given its Second Reading.

The Committee stated:

"and only if . . . the Bill should be given a second reading". There is a lot of misunderstanding about parliamentary terminology both outside and inside the House. To give a Bill its Second Reading is not to give approval for a certain piece of legislation. It is simply to say, "All right, this is something that merits careful consideration." I have frequently voted for a Second Reading on the condition that the Bill is amendable. If it is amended, I shall vote for it on Third Reading. During my time in the House, on several occasions I have not voted on Third Reading for a Bill that I supported on Second Reading. Indeed, on occasions, I have voted against a Bill on Third Reading, having voted for its Second Reading. There is nothing peculiar or incompatible in that.

Mr. Spearing: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a more important distinction? Whereas with a public Bill the position is as he described, in private legislation, subject to reference from the Chair, a Second Reading passes the Bill on for examination by Committee. It is within the power of the Committee either to require changes, if it agrees that the Bill should continue, or to dispose of the Bill. There is a great distinction between Second Readings on public and private Bills.

Mr. Cormack: Indeed there is. I was coming to that. The hon. Gentleman is a much greater expert on private Bills than me. Most of my experience has been in public legislation. The hon. Gentleman is right. The process of scrutiny to which the Bill will be subjected if it receives a Second Reading is of fundamental importance. We said that it should be submitted to scrutiny. Scrutiny means detailed examination, not a cursory glance. It means the most detailed examination.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) has already said that there are 95 petitions against the Bill. I am not sufficiently expert to know whether that is an all-time record, but it is a figure that has not been reached in recent years. A great many people have expressed various anxieties. As the Chairman of the Committee made plain, that does not include Members of Parliament because we cannot petition Parliament. If we had the opportunity, we would certainly make the number up to 96 because we have concerns about Parliament square.

There is massive concern about the Bill. It has been expressed by a range of bodies, from heritage bodies, such as English Heritage, to which Parliament has delegated authority over historic buildings, to Westminster city council, amenity societies, and local residents' groups. One could go on and on. A great many people are anxious about the Bill.

I do not envy hon. Members who will serve on the Opposed Private Bill Committee if it is established. They will have to devote many hours to go into details with the petitioners beside which the hours that my Committee devoted will pale into insignificance.

Mr. Orme: The hon. Gentleman refers to the decisions and recommendations of my Committee. He will be aware, because he was present at the sitting of the Committee when we finally discussed the Bill, that it was made clear that the alternative suggestions and proposals to move the station from Parliament square to St. James's park were put on the table. We had received information from our assessors and the engineers who examined the proposals. We have not moved from that position.

Mr. Cormack: That is how I understand the position. The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. He, the hon. Member for Jarrow and I are in accord. Our names are on the blocking motion for that reason. I fully understand why the two Government Whips on the Committee could not add their names to the blocking motion. However, I do not give away any secrets by saying that they support us. Indeed, it is a unanimous report.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The hon. Gentleman and I and others on the Committee spent many hours discussing the merits or demerits of the proposal. At no time did we envisage that such an important Bill would be allocated only three hours for Second Reading. If we had realised that, we should have recommended that the Bill be given more than one session on the Floor of the House before being given a Second Reading.

Mr. Cormack: I was not present for the debate the other night, but I know that the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Gentleman and others were present. I agree with him. Three hours is not long enough. I do not say that to criticise my hon. Friend the Minister. Many hon. Members have genuine constituency interests on this matter. I have spoken properly and deliberately about my parliamentary responsibilities, as did the Chairman of the Sub-Committee and as will the hon. Member for Jarrow, if he is called. We do not represent London constituencies, but the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) do, and so do other of my hon. Friends. It is important that everyone who has an interest has an opportunity to state his view.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most disturbing aspects of the Bill, as with the King's Cross Railways Bill, is the attempt by its draftsmen and promoters of the Bill to oust the general law? Clause 14, in common with the notorious clause 19 in the Kings Cross Railways Bill, seeks to give a privilege and waive the otherwise adequate safeguards of planing consent for listed buildings. The promoters are trying to get them out of the way to ride roughshod over our heritage and other aspects of that which we want to preserve. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is reprehensible and that such a clause should be struck out?

Mr. Cormack: I entirely endorse what my hon. Friend says. He and I have a shared interest, as do many other hon. Members, in historic buildings. Many of us have struggled hard to get the law and its protective facilities extended, and to have anything like that set aside for purely commercial reasons is wrong.

My hon. Friend has highlighted yet another extra burden that will fall upon hon. Members who are appointed to the Opposed Private Bill Committee. I hope that they will read carefully what has been said this evening and will consider that they have an added obligation to examine and to scrutinise to ensure that nothing goes by default.

We are dealing with an area of London that boasts some of the most interesting, attractive and important historic buildings—in Parliament square we have some of the most important buildings in the world. It is vital that whatever is done should not endanger their stability or structure.

[Mr. Cormack]

I have asked a number of questions of the people at London Underground about the effects of any works on the Clock Tower. I well remember that when the underground car park of the House was constructed many detailed questions were asked about that work. Those people have sought to assure me that there will be no danger, and I genuinely believe that they have tackled the matter carefully. They certainly believe what they say, but it is important to consider that matter. If we look across the square to Westminster Central hall, for example, we soon realise that some buildings are not in such fine fettle as this House.

In response to the intervention of the hon. Member for Jarrow, may I say that it is important that everyone interested in the Bill should have an opportunity to explain his or her fears and misgivings and to ask questions. It is incumbent upon the sponsor of the Bill to come before the House before the Bill receives its Second Reading with clear, comprehensive and reassuring answers. I sympathise with his predicament, but, after all, he took the job on voluntarily. I want him to know that I do not think that he made a sufficiently reassuring speech when he introduced the Bill. My hon. Friend can, of course, seek leave to speak again, and I hope that he will. He will have to make quite a long speech as he must touch on all the points raised. I have no intention of doing anything other than going into the No Lobby if I cannot have that categorical assurance that we have sought in our unanimous report, submitted on behalf of the House.

What is being proposed will change the centre of Westminster for the life of one Parliament, if not two. People may be elected to this House who serve their entire parliamentary career without seeing anything but a building site. If we are to have such an upheaval, and with it the dust, noise and dirt about which our constituents often complain to us when large constructions are under way in our constituencies, a national public benefit must derive from it. I am not yet fully persuaded that it is essential for the station to be here for that benefit to accrue. I await further persuasion, but this evening, or whenever the vote is taken, I cannot support the Bill, or even abstain from voting, unless the assurances that we have sought are, to the very last letter, jot and tittle, answered satisfactorily by my hon. Friend the Minister.

10 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful for being called to speak.

We have heard contributions from both sides of the House on the importance of the Bill to this building and city. I hope that the hon. Members for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and others will excuse me if, partly because they made their case well, I follow the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and address the issues that affect not just those who work here, but those who live here all the time. I do so with some justification as, of all the boroughs and constituencies through which the line, if built, will pass, it travels for a considerably greater length through mine. Therefore, there are more people affected by the Bill who live and work in Southwark and Bermondsey than anywhere else.

The prospect of a new line is a great opportunity, which should come to various groups of people. It should clearly come as much if not more to those whose home is London as to anyone else. That is why I was happy to associate myself with the initiative of the hon. Member for Newham, South and my other colleagues who are Members for the London Docklands development corporation constituencies and the wider docklands area, and with the instruction that has been selected. After a decade of development in the docklands, there is a feeling that the docklands programme got off on the wrong foot because it was not specifically targeted at regenerating the communities of inner, south-east and east London.

I am glad to say that ever since I have been in the House—seven years and more—successive Ministers for Public Transport and Secretaries of State for Transport have conceded that there is a great need for public transport provision in south London. One of the Minister's predecessors, now the Minister for Overseas Development, conceded that south-east London was a white hole on the transport map. The tube map of London shows that that is certainly the case.

The figures given in a written answer last year by the Minister's immediate predecessor, now the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, stated that there were 244 London underground stations north of the river and only 29 south of the river, which confirms the point. The issue is particularly important for people who live in communities such as mine and those of the hon. Members for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) and for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), the majority of whom do not have any private transport and so depend enormously on public transport.

The idea of the Bill has been in the air for several years. It originally came as a proposal for one part of the regeneration, but was initiated in its present form by Olympia and York. It had been on the drawing board in different forms. It was a welcome proposal, particularly when last autumn the Secretary of State announced that the line was to have the go-ahead. He said:

"I am pleased to be able to give the go-ahead to the first major addition to London's Underground network since the Victoria line was approved, a quarter of a century ago."

He continued:

"This will greatly support regeneration of docklands; it will relieve congestion on roads and the existing rail network including the docklands light railway; and it will further strengthen public transport links with BR lines at Waterloo (including the new Channel tunnel terminal) and at London Bridge. The new line will also much improve accessibility for areas south of the Thames in Southwark and Bermondsey and in London's east end in Tower Hamlets and Newham that are not now well served by public transport. I know how welcome this news will be to those areas."—[*Official Report*, 16 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. *398*.]

The announcement of a new tube line serving the docklands communities, where public transport by any definition is poor, was welcome. It was good to see in the Bill and in the statement produced in the last few days by the Bill's promoters in support of Second Reading the following fairly carefully phrased sentence:

"It is envisaged that there will be stations at Westminster, Waterloo, Southwark, London Bridge, Bermondsey, Canada Water, Canary Wharf, North Greenwich, Canning Town, West Ham and Stratford."

Obviously, I am able to speak specifically only for my constituents but I know that people in the Isle of Dogs, some of whom have written to hon. Members, want the line as well because they need better public transport. The

Jubilee line users group also supports the proposal. As the Minister knows, one of the alternative modes of transport in the jigsaw, the river bus, does not now stop at as many places in docklands as it once did. That means that we depend even more on the underground system.

It therefore came as a surprise to me—the Minister told me a few days ago that it surprised him, too—to see in the national press on 10 July stories from which I shall quote two headings. The headline in *The Times* said:

"Tube line may be dropped".

The headline in *The Daily Telegraph* said:

"Threat to new Jubilee stations".

Two articles by transport correspondents said that it was possible that the Southwark and Bermondsey stations would not be built.

I am grateful for the discussions that I have had with the Minister and his predecessor. A further meeting was envisaged before this debate. When we met earlier this week, the Minister confirmed that it was their policy to build those stations. When I met the Minister's predecessor in April I was accompanied by the chief executive of Southwark and relevant officers and the then leader of the council. The Minister appeared to support the proposals and it seemed that they could be justified on economic grounds and that the money could be provided. More than £400 million of public money has been committed by the Government to a line that includes all the stations on the list that I read to the House.

Rightly, there have been detailed appraisals of the line as a whole and of its component parts and weighty documents contain the most recent conclusions. The appraisals, one more clearly than the other, justify the stations south of the river, Southwark and Bermondsey. They make it clear that the justifications are not simply micro-economic: the stations are crucial to the regeneration of the whole area.

We truly need a new line to link the rail head termini at Waterloo and London Bridge to the new opportunities in docklands. It is, however, equally important for people living in the inner city to be able to take advantage of the job opportunities that are arising in docklands. It is just as important for them to be able to travel a few miles to obtain jobs as it is for commuters to be able to travel into London from Kent, Sussex and Surrey; indeed—as the Minister would probably expect me to say—I consider it more important.

The Minister and his predecessors have been courteous enough to receive the alternative appraisals that have been commissioned by my local Council. I have it on good authority that the London Underground estimates of local benefit were, in fact, underestimates—that the potential advantages in terms of job prospects and, in particular, the number of users are greater than is suggested by the figures presented formally to the Government.

Let me present my figures—a short litany which, in my view, makes an overwhelming case for the building of the Southwark and Bermondsey stations. If Bermondsey is not built, there will be a distance of 2·7 km between London Bridge and the proposed Canada Water station: that would be the longest distance between any two stations on the extension, 60 per cent. longer than the mean distance between stations. If Southwark and Bermondsey stations are not built, Southwark will be the only one of the four docklands boroughs—Southwark, Greenwich, Tower Hamlets and Newham—without any new stations committed, although it has by far the longest stretch of line. Greenwich has North Greenwich, Tower Hamlets has Canary Wharf and Newham has Canning Town; Southwark, with more than 5 km of line, will have no new station at all.

If stations are not built at Southwark and Bermondsey, the relationship between the borough and the area served by the station and the line—the ratio of station to line, as it were—will be far worse than in any other borough. None of the other comparisons has produced such a disadvantageous ratio as that of one station for every 2·6 km of line.

Perhaps more telling than any of those figures, however, are the calculations about the likely use of the stations. According to the figures supplied to me by Southwark Officer, no doubt derived from London Underground, the anticipated use of both Southwark and Bermondsey—taken separately—will exceed the use of 12 stations that are already on the line: Stanmore, Canons Park, Queensbury, Kingsbury, Wembley Park, Neasden, Dollis Hill, Willesden Green, Kilburn, West Hampstead, Swiss Cottage and St. John's Wood.

Even Baker Street station has fewer users than are anticipated for the Southwark station, as have five other stations on the new line: Canada Water, North Greenwich, Canning Town, West Ham and Stratford. We find ourselves facing the ridiculous proposition that, according to forecasts, Southwark's passenger usage would be greater than, or equal to, that of 13 out of 16 existing Jubilee line stations and five out of the nine committed new stations, while the forecast passenger average for Bermondsey station is higher than, or equal to, that of 12 of the 16 existing Jubilee line stations.

Mr. Spearing: Apart from what I have read in newspaper reports, I have seen nothing about any reduction in the number of stations. All the literature showered on us by London Regional Transport has featured the two stations. The hon. Gentleman may not realise that we do not understand why there was ever any doubt. When did he learn that there was any possibility of the withdrawal of the stations? It looks to me like the old docklands light railway-Canning Town thing all over again.

Mr. Hughes: If the hon. Gentleman will give me another minute and a half, I shall give my conclusions on that point.

Southwark station's proposed passenger usage is roughly equal to that of Earl's Court or Elephant and Castle—hardly quiet, cosy suburban stations. Even Bermondsey station, which it is anticipated will have less use, will be equivalent to Marylebone or Edgware Road—again, not small stations. The Minister rightly said when I met him the other day that we do not want another Mornington Crescent. A helpful officer of Southwark council, with the help of London Underground, did some research for me. In the spring of 1988, the latest period for which we have figures, Mornington Crescent had about 2,000 users during peak morning hours. It is anticipated that Bermondsey will have at least 80 per cent. more.

We have all the figures and the evidence appears to stack up. I have not yet found anyone who is not in favour of the stations. London Underground is in favour of stations at Southwark and Bermondsey. The London borough of Southwark is enthusiastically in favour of them. Olympia and York, in its letter to Members, said:

[Mr. Hughes]

"Firstly, it will bring fast efficient public rail transport to south and east London, especially improving across-London transport services for people living in Newham, Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich."

It goes on to say:

"It will also enable people living in Canning Town and Bermondsey to get to the West End and to reach other parts of London faster."

The Minister has told me explicitly, and he has also put it in writing, that not only was the line planned on the assumption that there would be stations in the borough of Southwark at Southwark and Bermondsey, but the Government's policy is that they should be.

To paraphrase a phrase from somewhere else, if all those people are for us, who then is against us? There is only one possibility. It can only be the Treasury. I have not asked. It may not formally have considered the matter. I hope that it has not. I hope that it will be for us, too. There is certainly no logical case for anybody not to be for us.

For decades before I became a Member of Parliament for Southwark and Bermondsey my constituents were waiting for a decent east-west rail link. It would be folly to have an underground line without any stations on one of its longest stretches. It is like planning a bus route with no bus stops or a motorway without slip roads. It would be madness indeed.

I hope that the arguments are so convincing that the Minister realises that we had better have the line.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Ridley will be speaking next.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is being mischievous again. I have not yet seen the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the Chamber tonight, but I accept that his appearance would cause a bit of a disturbance.

Mr. Skinner: I assume that the hon. Gentleman intends to go on until the end as he has a lot of things to say, but I just heard the caucus of the 1922 committee say that Ridley was on his way out and I assumed that, if the debate were to continue for any length of time, he would be joining the hon. Member on the Back Benches.

Mr. Hughes: It would not cause me any dissatisfaction if the Secretary of State became a Back Bencher this weekend. I just hope that he does not join these Benches, although I do not think that he would. But we hear that there is to be a reshuffle, so the Prime Minister will have every opportunity to take speedy action. Those of us who shadowed him when he was Secretary of State for the Environment would certainly say amen to that.

The line also raised several wider issues. The hon. Members for Staffordshire, South and for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) mentioned the environmental issues affecting Westminster. One of the key issues is the effect that the Bill will have on the environment. It will be significant wherever work is taking place and not merely where stations are being built. For example, there will be vent shafts, digging for disposal of waste and the removal of Waste, some of which will be taken away by barge and some by road.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall and I share responsibility, as her constituency covers the major part of Waterloo and mine covers the rest, for a significant piece of rare green space by the river which will be lost for five years. So the environmental effects are all-important, and I shall list the matters that I hope the Minister and the sponsor of the Bill will realise need to be considered, and that we are concerned about.

Like the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), I hope that clause 14 will be dropped from the Bill. Such a clause found total disfavour with the Committee on the King's Cross Railways Bill, as it sought to take away the normal planning controls. The Committee has made its position clear on that issue, as did English Heritage, which asked for Members' support. The Minister has been sympathetic to such issues in the past and I hope that he will make his position clear. All the safeguards that are built in to protect the environment must not be swept away in the Bill, and I hope that we shall hear no more about that.

It is imperative that we have quiet trains. The *Evening Standard* today states:

"London Underground is to spend more than £500,000 smoothing out the shake, rattle and roll of its trains."

Loads of people will say amen to that too. London Underground

"have already promised that when the new Jubilee line extension is built through south-east London and on to Stratford by the mid-1990s it will be a 'whispering railway'."

[Interruption.]

Mr. Cryer: Hon. Members are standing just beyond the Bar chatting, and it is intrusive. I think that they are talking about ways to get rid of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, but that is their business and I hope that they will do it elsewhere.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be helpful if any hon. Members who are talking but who are not in the Chamber were to carry on their discussions elsewhere.

Mr. Hughes: I could not hear what the hon. Members were saying, but they are certainly all prospective contenders for office, so they might have been discussing the Secretary of State.

Quiet tube trains are important, and I hope that that investment goes ahead. As the quotation from a London Underground spokesman stated:

"All we have to do is to find out how"—

meaning, how to achieve it.

For the convenience and comfort of many Southwark residents, it is of paramount importance that we have a resilient track as the line is often near to the surface. I calculate that we need just under 4 km of resilient track in Southwark and it is important that that is costed for and built in at the beginning.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The need for quiet trains would be echoed by the Institution of Civil Engineers, which is in favour of the Bill. It is in the process of building a new underground lecture theatre that will be close to the underground line, as it is proposed at present. It would be interested in quiet trains, and hopes that the final alignment of the underground railway will take full account of the new works in progress at the institution.

Mr. Hughes: I hope that the institution will offer its services not only in self-interest, which I understand, but in the interests of the rest of us. The line will go by Guy's hospital, under important churches south of the river and under many housing estates where people live close together. The prospects of an underground line under their homes is worrying enough, let alone the regular thud and

rumble of trains. That hardly suggests to the individual that the proposals will be of real benefit. So far, London Underground has given no commitment in that respect. Perhaps the Minister can say whether it has now done so. If it has, I welcome that and shall be delighted to hear of it. If the Minister wants to intervene, I shall be pleased to let him do so.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that, inevitably, my contribution to the debate must be brief because it concerns the financing of London Regional Transport.

Our policy is that there should be stations at Southwark and Bermondsey, but we must justify that commitment through the appraisals that are expected in October. We made it clear from the word go that they are needed, but I hope that the appraisals will clearly justify constructing those two stations.

It is Government policy that those two stations should be built, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates also that the question of the concrete raft must be addressed in the same way. That is a point for the Committee. The Government understand the strength of the arguments about not only the two stations but the raft. Once the plans for phase 2 of the parliamentary building are known, it will be open to London Regional Transport to discuss and to negotiate with the Department of the Environment the construction of the raft.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful for the Minister's clarification. I appreciate that the Bill is not from the Minister but technically and in substance is a London Underground Bill. However, problems arise when, after a lengthy gestation, a Bill comes before the House with problems still unresolved.

I support the proposals for the line, but I cannot tonight vote for a Bill that does not incorporate a commitment to two stations which were always part of the plan, but which may now not be constructed. In that respect, I am in a similar position to other hon. Members who say, "We are not against the concept of the line but we want to know on what terms it is to be constructed."

The chairman of the parliamentary Labour party, who is also a member of the New Building Sub-Committee, the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), made the point, as have other hon. Members, that we have a limited time in which to debate many points of view, but that the crucial issue has been the subject of questions that we have all asked, and to which we should have received answers by now.

It is not as if we have not asked those questions before. It is not a matter of popping questions at the last moment. We have consistently asked questions in the hope that we should receive answers before tonight. We could then have said, "Fine. Thank you. You have reassured us, and we can now co-operate, collaborate and proceed."

Mr. Cryer: Right hon. and hon. Members also want to see the necessary provisions included in the Bill. We shall then know that we have something more than an assurance subject to a great many qualifications. If no amendments are made in Committee by a tiny handful of right hon. and hon. Members, there will be no Report stage. Unless the features in question are included in the Bill at this stage, there is a real risk that it could pass through this House without the alterations that will add credibility to the assurances that have been given.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) makes a valid point. I say to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and to other hon. Members that they should give thought to reassuring the whole House. I do not want to see the absence of public transport in south London. I want to see more public transport there, but I also want to ensure that the accompanying issues are resolved. I am sure that the hon. Members for Vauxhall for Deptford and for Newham, South, and other hon. Members, hold the same view. We must have answers.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I assumed that the Bill comprised not just text but the deposited plans that several hon. Members have consulted on a number of occasions in the Private Bill Office. Those plans relate to phases 1, 2, 3 and 4, lines of deviation, and so on, and include the two stations mentioned tonight. However, in a helpful intervention, the Minister said that depending on the result of assessments of which I was unaware until a few minutes ago, it may be that, ultimately, those two stations will not be built. Therefore, are the deposited plans part of the Bill? If not, we cannot consider whether we should support it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for debate, not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Hughes: I hear what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that point clearly causes concern. The Minister and the promoters will be aware that there has been no opposition to the stations that were originally planned being constructed.

Returning to noise, I am told—it seems to be a perfectly valid point—that the United States' noise standards for resilient track are higher—a 35 decibel limit rather than 40 decibels here. I hope that those standards will be adopted for the Bill.

I endorse the point made by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson): there must be facilities for disabled people. When building new public transport we must ensure that everybody can use it. I do not pretend that there is one perfect answer—I know that lifts are planned at some stations—but I hope that this point will be taken on board and that we shall not find ourselves behind the times on that important issue.

Concerns about planning have been expressed at my constituency meetings. We want the powers of local authorities to control noise, traffic, access and matters affecting communities to be retained, but the Bill says to local authorities, "You cannot have those powers." A parallel is that when outline planning permission is obtained, the details are left to the local authority to regulate. If the House gives the Bill a Second Reading, it surely should not mean that we are removing local authorities' powers to regulate detailed planning matters.

It is important that the line is a part of the rail network. I do not doubt the Minister's good faith, but the Bill must be followed with a Bill for a link with an extended east London line. If we are to regenerate the rest of Southwark down to Lewisham and Peckham, there must be more east London line. We might have had such a Bill last year, but it was not presented. However, it must be presented this year, and the chief executive of the London Docklands development corporation agrees with its importance. There is the possibility of an inner-rail circle round London and I hope that that will be available.

Mr. Freeman: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. The House will know that the Government strongly support the Bill and hope very much that it will be given a Second Reading. The east London rail study mentioned a Bill for the Jubilee line. That is an important first step. The hon. Gentleman is right to mention not only the docklands light railway to Lewisham extension but the east London line extension—two matters to which the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) attaches much importance, as I do. They are part of the east London rail study. They must be subsequent to the Bill, which is important and which the Government support.

Mr. Hughes: The Bill is not a single proposal standing in isolation. It must link parts of London that have no decent public transport, thereby linking people with places of work and development. That point was made in a different context by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South.

We will need a decent code of construction practice. We must ensure that work is carried out at proper times and that the arrival and departure of vehicles is properly controlled. Unless there is proper enforcement, the best code in the world will be to no avail. The problems of air pollution, noise pollution, soil pollution, dirt on pavements and roads and all the knock-on effects of congestion must be considered. I hope that there will be a mechanism to enforce construction practice.

It is no good expecting hard-pressed local authorities suddenly to divert all their resources to monitoring what happens in Parliament square, at Waterloo station or by London bridge. They have other things to do, so they will not be able to carry out such monitoring. I hope that hon. Members realise that it is important that we give local authorities the help, which must come from somewhere else.

Mr. Cormack: It is difficult to enforce rules and if they are transgressed, it is difficult to put matters right, as we all know from our constituencies.

Mr. Hughes: That is true and I hope that the specific points will be taken on board.

We are now at a difficult moment in the debate. We were provisionally allowed only three hours. Many hon. Members have perfectly valid and proper points to make. I can speak for other hon. Members with whom I have discussed this when I say that many of us do not want the Bill to disappear. We do not want to put it off; we want the Bill. However, we want a Bill that contains assurances and on which hon. Members have had a proper debate. The right hon. Member for Salford, East made the point that for a Second Reading debate, the House usually has a period of about six hours until 10 pm.

This is probably the most significant private Bill some of us have debated, especially for people who live south of the river. We have seen how controversial these matters are north of the river. We have seen that the King's Cross Railways Bill generated either the longest or the second longest sitting ever of a Committee on a private Bill.

It is important that we have sufficient time for all the points to be put on Second Reading and I hope that it will be possible for the House to be able to hear those points soon. I hope that it will then be possible for answers to be given, and then we can proceed to Committee and come out with a clean, tightly ordered and generally satisfactory Bill that meets the concerns of hon. Members of all parties with constituency, parliamentary and wider interests. That is the objective of this debate. The task before us is to ensure that we enable that to happen.

No hon. Member is unwilling to co-operate with all who have done the work. I pay tribute to the work done by many groups such as London Underground and my borough council. However, the work must be put into effect to get a decent product. We need a decent product because this is our only opportunity to get it right. If we get it wrong, it will be too late to do anything about it. It will be no good to say after the event, as people have said about motorways, "It wasn't big enough. We didn't think of that." We must ensure that we deal with all the issues at this stage.

I hope that the House is clear about the concern over the Bill and that Ministers are clear about the specific concerns of hon. Members. I hope that the promoters realise that they have a lot more work to do and that all hon. Members will realise that we have an opportunity to do that if we are all given the chance.

All of us who have concerns have already spent considerable time on the Bill. We do not come tonight for the first time to express an interest. We have spent hours on the Bill because we are concerned that we get the right product. It is important now that we take on that effort, that we co-operate across the parties——

Mr. Thorne *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I cannot accept the motion at this time because I think that the House will want to hear the views of the Minister, of the Opposition Front Bench and of the Chairman of the Services Committee.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Other hon. Members want to speak and——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have had three hours of debate on the Bill. I accept that some hon. Members have not been called, but is not it right to say that this is a long Second Reading debate? I cannot understand why the motion has not been accepted——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety to bring the proceedings to a conclusion. However, it is a matter for the absolute discretion and judgment of the Chair. It is not an easy matter to decide. However, the House will want to hear the views of the Government, of the Opposition and of the Chairman of the Select Committee. I call Mr. Simon Hughes.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose——*

It being three hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion, the debate stood adjourned, pursuant to Order [10 July].

Debate to be resumed on Thursday 19 July.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Further to the point of order that I raised earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the closure is not allowed and we cannot have the Second Reading today, is it not clear that a small number of hon. Members, none of them from London and most of whom are Labour Members——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not seek to challenge or to debate my ruling. It is a matter for my judgment. These are not easy matters to decide, but I have used my judgment and ruled accordingly.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. John Marshall.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that second thoughts are sometimes better than first thoughts. Many people in London tonight will be distressed that the House did not come to a decision on the Second Reading of the London Underground Bill. It is a vital Bill to improve London transport, and it should be allowed a Second Reading.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I draw your attention to the fact that earlier, while you were not in the Chair, the Minister tried to rise but one of his colleagues on the Conservative Benches, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) who is a member of the New Building Sub-Committee——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cryer: I am trying to help you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is trying to be helpful. However, we should not debate the ruling from the Chair. We have rules. It is a matter for my judgment. It is my responsibility, which I accept entirely.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I very much hope that we can move on, and that hon. Members will not challenge my ruling.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): In no way am I challenging your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I would find it useful to know how often there has been a full three-hour debate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is persisting in seeking to debate my ruling. We should move on now to the defence order.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I very much hope that it is a point of order.

Mr. Hughes: It is a point of order. I would not seek to incur your displeasure or to be thrown out of the Chamber —particularly on your birthday, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, on a number of occasions when this difficult matter has been decided by the Chair and when the Chair has of course sought to be fair, we have talked about the amount of time taken up by the Second Reading debate. My clear understanding from previous occasions is that, when a matter has been before the House on Second Reading for this length of time—three hours—in my short experience a closure has always been allowed. I find it difficult to understand why, on this vital matter for London, you have not allowed a closure tonight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My ruling is not unprecedented.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time.

I felt that the House would wish to know the views of the Government, of the Official Opposition and of the Chairman of the Services Committee in respect of a Bill that has a significant impact on our affairs in the House. I have ruled on the matter, and we really should move on.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are being besieged with points of order because the Minister who is due to open the next debate is not available. Conservative Members are raising points of order to allow time for the Minister to arrive.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. One point of order at a time. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) often throws me a lifebelt. However, once again it has rather hit me on the head. We really should now move on.

Service Discipline

10.43 pm

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household): I beg to move,

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 5th June, be approved.

On behalf of the House, I begin by paying tribute to the late hon. Member for Knowsley, South, who, alas, is not in his place today.

The purpose of the order is to continue in force for a further year the Army and Air Force Acts 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957, which together provide the statutory basis for discipline in the three services. The House will be aware that it is a long—

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will the mumblings of the deputy Chief Whip, who is aspiring to higher things, be replaced by the Minister, who is still a Minister unless there has been a secret reshuffle that we do not know about?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I call Mr. Garel-Jones.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The House will be aware— *[Interruption.]*

10.45 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On another point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Conservative deputy Chief Whip *[Interruption.]* I am asking you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not Conservative Back-Bench Members, whether it is in order for the Government deputy Chief Whip to start to move the order and then to give way to the Minister of State to continue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The motion has been properly moved, and I have called the Minister to continue the debate. Mr. Archie Hamilton.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Before I start my remarks, I should like to express our deep sense of sympathy to the widow and child of the late hon. Member for Knowsley, South, who, of course, has previously addressed the House in this debate. His regrettable and early death is something that we all bitterly regret and it is a great loss indeed for the Opposition Front Bench.

The purpose of this—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are not taking part in the debate and who are engaging in noisy conversation at the Bar of the House please withdraw from the Chamber quickly and quietly?

Mr. Hamilton: The purpose of the order is to continue in force for a further year the Army and Air Force Acts 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957. Those Acts together provide the statutory basis for discipline in the three services. The House will be aware that it is a long-established practice for service discipline to be fully reviewed every five years by means of the consideration of an Armed Forces Bill and for the disciplinary code as then enacted to be reviewed annually in the intervening years by an Order in Council which is itself approved by resolution of each House. Those arrangements were endorsed by the Select Committee examining the last Armed Forces Bill in 1986.

The constraints of military discipline mean that the legal status of the men and women of the armed forces is special, and it is right that it should be subject to approval each year by Parliament. Unless they are reviewed by Acts of Parliament, the three service discipline Acts will expire on 31 December 1991. The House can therefore expect to have an early opportunity to consider service discipline procedures in depth.

The House will, of course, understand that I cannot anticipate the specific provisions of the next armed forces Bill. There is, however, one aspect on which a general observation might be appropriate. Since the passage of the 1986 Act, we have continued to monitor closely changes in civilian legislation that have a bearing not only on the disciplinary systems of the three services but on other matters covered by successive armed forces Acts, especially those affecting civilians overseas, who are subject to service laws by virtue of their employment or as dependants. It remains our general intention to reflect such changes by means of amendments to the service discipline Acts in so far as it is sensible and practical to do so.

Discipline is well maintained in the services and service men and women recognise that it is in their interests that it should be. This annual debate on the continuation order inevitably tends to highlight those rare areas where discipline has fallen below the very high standard that is demanded. Since the services are drawn from the population at large, they cannot altogether escape the trends occurring in society at large. It is clearly right, therefore, that they pay considerable attention to providing practical advice, education and counselling to service men and women who have problems, especially relating to alcohol or drug abuse or concerning their personal life.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): As a member of the Select Committee to which the Minister referred a moment ago, may I ask him whether he is satisfied that the care and protection of the children of service men matches the development in the care and protection afforded to children in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, I think that I am satisfied on that front. That is one area to which the welfare organisations pay considerable attention. Obviously, we are mindful of the families and recognise the importance of looking after them as well. We are confident that that is being done competently by the welfare organisations at the moment.

In addition, we are indebted to the voluntary and other agencies that play a vital role in providing welfare services to members of the forces and their families, especially overseas. Whether in support of NATO or in other tasks, our armed services have an essential role in safeguarding our interests and our freedoms. I happily take this opportunity to pay tribute to their profes-sionalism and dedication.

A fair and equitable system of discipline is essential if we are to maintain good morale in the forces—a crucial factor, given the demographic trough. It is our responsibility to ensure that the system of discipline, on

which the efficiency and effectiveness of their work so much depends, strikes a sensible balance between the rights of service men and women as citizens and the extra constraints which must necessarily be imposed.

That is what the services discipline Acts seek to do, and I therefore invite the House to approve the order.

10.53 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I echo the Minister's praise for the men and women who serve in the armed services. I shall say more on that later. Secondly—and more particularly—we were pleased to hear the Minister's kind remarks about our colleague, Sean Hughes. As the Minister is aware, Sean's death was a major shock to all of us. We suspected that he was getting better, and we hoped that he would be among us again very soon. Our thoughts this evening must be with Sean's wife and daughter. In the time that he was a member of our defence team, he made a major contribution to our policy changes. I am sure that I speak for all hon. Members when I say that everyone in the House will miss him, because he had only friends in this place.

The debate is about an order that provides a statutory basis for disciplining the three services, as the Minister has explained. In his speech on this matter on 14 July 1988, the then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), drew attention to a pamphlet entitled, "The Armed Forces: Your Rights and Responsibilities". He said that a copy would be given to all new recruits to enable them to understand their rights and responsibilities. The Minister described the pamphlet in the following terms:

"it covers rights in regard to injustice or ill-treatment, equal opportunity of employment in the armed forces, voting and injury on duty." —[*Official Report*, 14 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 677.]

In his speech on the order on 28 June 1989, the present Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement said that the pamphlet was to be updated, expanded and circulated to all new recruits. Why circulate the pamphlet only to new members of the forces? Why not circulate it to everyone in the forces so that everyone knows where the Government stand on the matter?

No hon. Member tolerates bullying, cruel initiation ceremonies or any other unacceptable behaviour. Such behaviour must be stamped out and any misdemeanour must be dealt with fairly but rapidly. One of the problems is that we cannot possibly know the real extent of bullying in the forces. How could we? Many people who are subjected to bad treatment are too afraid to report incidents because the retribution could be even worse than the original bullying. While accepting the difficulties, can the Minister tell the House whether to the best of his knowledge the position is improving or deteriorating?

Most service men are well aware of their responsibilities and duties. They are members of a special group in society. They need extreme discipline to carry out some of the dangerous tasks that they have to tackle. While we praise the vast majority, questions must be asked about the activities of a few. I re-iterate that most of our forces personnel are highly self disciplined. However, it does not take much to make morale sag. Morale can be lost either by unacceptable activities or, worse, by suggestions and exaggeration about the magnitude of the problem. We must not fall into the trap of purporting to know what we do not, but I wish to mention some of the realities.

Several matters worry the Opposition. We are worried about the premature voluntary retirement rates. The rate was about 22,500 in 1987-88 and 27,000 in 1989-90, an increase over two years of 21 per cent. We recognise the need for a substantially smaller armed force but we are worried that to allow the armed forces to be reduced by attrition will result in an imbalance in the mix of personnel.

In its 19th report the Armed Forces Pay Review Body also drew attention to those anxieties when it stated:

"We are concerned with any problems in recruiting or retaining certain groups, for example, those with specialist skills."

Reductions should be carefully planned in order the keep the right balance of skills and expertise in the services.

One of the difficulties with maintaining service morale is that there is considerable uncertainty about the future role of the armed forces. The Government should recognise that their continuing refusal to discuss in public the "Options for change" study has a profoundly detrimental effect on service morale and consequently on recruitment and retention.

The recent NATO communiqué called for smaller and restructured active forces and it will scale back the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to see any connection between what the hon. Gentleman is saying and the motion before the House.

Mr. Boyes: You may say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but, with respect, discipline in the forces is affected to a large extent by morale. I argue that if morale is high the possibilities of discipline problems are reduced. That is affected by the quality of life and the expectations of forces personnel.

The report also mentioned the development of multinational corps. What will that mean for the British armed forces? Will it mean shorter tours and a greater dependency on reservists? Will a reduced requirement for training lead to the Ministry phasing out all low-flying training below 250 ft?

My main concern is that we retain well-trained, highly disciplined armed forces. I do not believe that the majority of hon. Members share some people's fears about increasing indiscipline. We accept that our armed forces consist of self-disciplined, motivated people on whom we might have to depend at some time.

Again, I thank the Minister for his kind remarks about our colleague, Sean Hughes. We also endorse his kind remarks about our forces and the duties that they must undertake.

11 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I join in the expressions of sympathy from all parts to the House to the family of the late hon. Member for Knowsley, South, who will be greatly missed.

I do not think that the occasion of the renewal of the Army Act 1955, the Air Force Act 1955 and the Navy Discipline Act 1957 should be a parliamentary formality. My hon. Friend the Minister said that when preparing the next Bill on the armed forces he will seek to amend disciplinary legislation to take into account contemporary realities.

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

I want to draw two such realities to the attention of the House. The first is the defence of military installations in the current IRA terrorist campaign. This is a national emergency, and it affects the disciplinary arrangements for our armed forces. Has the Ministry of Defence considered whether the disciplinary code under which our reserve forces operate could be amended in view of that terrorist emergency to permit them to conduct guard duties on military installations at risk from IRA attack?

It is anomalous that part-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment should be engaged in guarding installations as well as other vital military tasks. By virtue of a lack of appropriate legislative framework, however, the home service force, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment squadrons and the Royal Air Force police voluntary reserve and other reservists are specifically precluded from undertaking this task. If they were enabled to carry out those guard duties, it would release valuable regular personnel and the defence of such key military installations would not be so dependent upon the use of security firms.

In January, I put this point to the director of Royal Air Force security at a hearing of the Select Committee on Defence. He said that there were grave difficulties with this proposition; and adduced the argument that he had legislative difficulties in mind. I believe that the appropriate legislation makes provision for the call-out of reserve forces, other than for normal training, but solely on the assumption that it will be done when either "national danger is imminent" or

"a great emergency has arisen."

In my judgment, this country faces a terrorist emergency and should take all the necessary measures to combat and to defeat the threat.

The second aspect of the contemporary defence scene that needs examining in relation to discipline and the legislative framework is that Her Majesty's Government are likely to have to use civil air transport assets and merchant shipping more in future as an economy measure, in the light of the "Options for change" exercise. We have powers to requisition ships and civilian aircraft in times of emergency or war, but it is not clear that we can compel either merchant seamen or civil air crews to fly to a war zone or regions where they are at physical risk. There is a danger that they or their unions will refuse to go to such destinations.

If we are to take up from trade merchant ships and civil aircraft in an emergency or war, we must be able to compel the relevant personnel to perform whatever military tasks are required of them. Such legislative provisions do not exist, and they should. That is another matter which my hon. Friend the Minister of State should consider and on which he should report to the House as soon as possible, if he cannot do so when he winds up.

11.6 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): My contribution will be exceedingly brief. I pay tribute to the late hon. Member for Knowsley, South, Sean Hughes. All hon. Members are saddened by his passing.

Our security services face double jeopardy in their job of preventing terrorism in the most grave and difficult circumstances. Part of the tactic to defeat terrorism is to reassure the community at large that our security services are subject to the civil law. In practice, I and many others have seen the difficulty of that position.

Two members of the security services were charged with acquiring, in a manner that was not totally legal, a montage of terrorist personnel. It was acquired not, as many people believe, from a locked, but from an unlocked display cabinet in Dunmurry police station. Two soldiers decided to remove a montage from the cabinet when Dunmurry police station was under reconstruction because it had been bombed by terrorists. They removed it not because they wanted to pass it on to loyalist paramilitary organisations, but because one of the soldiers involved was under serious threat from terrorists, and had been warned that he was. He had conveyed this information to members of his family, and had taken the montage in order to alert them to the people who might be on the lookout for him, to murder him. One might say, "There but for the grace of God go all of us who served in Northern Ireland," because we have frequently acquainted our families with the likely threat to our lives while serving in the security forces.

In this instance there was an inquiry about photographs of terrorists being circulated and, to put it in colloquial terms, the soldier was caught out. In order to show that the law was impartial—I do not mean this in a derogatory sense—the soldier was sentenced to a year's imprisonment. The judge in the civil court acknowledged that the soldier had no intention of passing the montage to loyalist paramilitary organisations. However, no account was taken of the fact that that young man was under considerable pressure and feared for his life.

That young soldier has been criminalised. He will serve a year in prison, and when he is released he will not be accepted back into his regiment, and it is likely that he will not have the means to protect himself against a terrorist assault. That is double jeopardy. Hon. Members will have heard me say that I have never experienced bad apples in the Ulster Defence Regiment, but I have encountered many bruised apples, people who have been damaged by the continuing threats, pressures and stress that they face every day.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have never before been unable to hear an hon. Member for the chatter going on at the Table in front of me. Would you please suppress it?

Mr. Maginnis: I have used one example to demonstrate the double jeopardy faced by members of our security forces. However, I am making a point not specifically about soldiers in the Ulster Defence Regiment but about all our soldiers serving in Northern Ireland under the most difficult circumstances. Will the Minister consider the difficulties that they face in circumstances which after 20 years are perhaps no longer unusual but are certainly difficult? Will he make certain that everything is done to ensure that members of our security forces who are trying to protect their lives and those of their families are not made subject to the civil law in a way that criminalises them? If we do not face that problem, we will demoralise the people who have to carry out the difficult task of fighting terrorism. That can only be bad for the morale of our troops.

I leave the Minister to ponder the problem—and to reassure the House that, as they do their difficult job, our troops will not face that double jeopardy of being subject to both civil and military law.

11.15 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I, too, will be brief.

I share the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), and look forward to the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister on the case that he mentioned. I imagine that they will have to be made in writing; I should very much like to see a copy, for I find that case—if indeed it is as represented by the hon. Gentleman—deeply disturbing.

I wish to make three points. The first relates to the Home Service Force, of which I am a serving member: indeed, I have just returned from a drill night with my unit. As my hon. Friend knows, the point at which a soldier becomes subject to military discipline is the point at which he is attested. The HSF is a small organisation with a very low budget, but we think that it offers good value for money. In my view, our ability to recruit adequate numbers—the majority of HSF units are under strength at present—would be greatly enhanced if we could cut down on the inordinate amount of paperwork involved. Typically, it takes seven months to process the documents before a man can be attested and taken into a unit. Men become disillusioned: in theory, they should not be allowed to be equipped with kit and to go on exercises until the paperwork has been completed.

My second point concerns the new management strategy for defence. It seems to me that the discipline aspect is missing from this very interesting and well-laid-out document. The new strategy presents an enormous opportunity that can be exploited; however, it also presents a considerable danger. That danger stems from—perhaps "lack of understanding" is putting it too strongly—from, rather, a failure to take full account of the difference in terms of discipline and many other factors between members of the armed forces and the other employees for whom such systems are devised.

Let me give a simple example. One of the issues on which the document focuses is the importance of accounting for the way in which time is used. No limit of any sort is placed on the extent to which those who are fully subject to military discipline can be worked; when they are working in Ulster, for example, they may be on the job for all the hours that God gives, except for the minimal number required for obtaining food and sleep. Conversely, when a unit whose members are working extremely hard for much of the time is not fully stretched, it is not reasonable to expect those men to account for every last hour: indeed, it may not be cost-effective for them to try to do so.

Having read a number of articles and examined the new management strategy quite closely, I think that we should be very careful—especially at this crucial time, as it goes into its next stage of implementation—to trade off the upside against the downside when making our assessment. On the one hand, it is genuinely possible to give unit commanders powers to have more control over their unit in ways that are useful to them; on the other hand, there is the real risk that we may generate a good deal of unnecessary, wasteful and resented paperwork. That is a difficult balance to strike and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will take careful account of that.

Thirdly, I welcome the confirmation in my hon. Friend's opening speech that we are to have the quinquennial Armed Forces Bill next year. I was glad to hear him say that the Government would consider developments in the civilian community and, in particular, in legislation sponsored by other Departments. One of the things that most concerns me about the feedback that I get from serving members in the armed forces, who are subject to the military discipline which, among other things, requires them to go wherever they are posted, is the way in which they are disadvantaged by much of the legislation sponsored by other Departments. I could run through a long list. For example, social security regulations often have residence in the United Kingdom qualifications, from which those magic words "or service abroad under the Crown" are omitted. I had a recent case involving legislation on student grants which also contains a United Kingdom residence qualification. So it goes on.

I hope that the Government will see the Armed Forces Bill as an opportunity to ensure that, in ways that in most cases involve only small sums of money, the armed forces are not disadvantaged in the many reforms and advances that the Government introduce through their many Departments by virtue of the fact that they are subjected to military discipline and, as a result, have to go wherever they are posted.

I leave those three thoughts with my hon. Friend. I suspect that he will not be able to reply to them all in detail tonight but I hope that he will write to me on my first point and that he will take all my points into consideration.

11.21 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I offer my simple tribute to Sean Hughes. He was in every sense a fine, decent and honourable Member of Parliament.

As I mentioned in my intervention, I was a member of the previous Armed Services Bill Select Committee, and I would be most pleased to serve on the next one. On the basis of that experience, I offer a few brief comments on what the Minister said.

For example, the Minister said that the discipline Acts embrace not only the members of the armed services, but the civilian employees and the families of our service men. As a result of my experience, I came to assume that the term discipline includes, for example, redress of grievance procedures as well as disciplinary procedures. It also includes adequate welfare and counselling procedures for service men and their families. That is why I was pleased to hear the Minister acknowledge the need to provide good counselling and guidance to those suffering from alcohol and drug abuse. Many industries now have intelligent, sensible and compassionate alcohol abuse counselling services, and I welcome similar developments in the armed forces.

I also urge upon the Minister—he may argue that this is gratuitous advice—the need to prepare plans to deal with the distress which must be afflicting many service men now as a result of what may well appear to some of them to be a somewhat uncertain future. I have seen similar distress, leading in some cases to illness, among those facing redundancy and unemployment in industry. I saw

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

that particularly when a large shipyard in my constituency collapsed with the loss of more than 4,000 jobs. If regiments are disbanded, or if there is a pretty drastic reduction in certain sectors of the armed services, those who have to leave will require, among other things, intelligent and compassionate counselling. Much can be learned from the counselling services established in large-scale industry in the United Kingdom, where plants —perhaps coal mines, shipyards and other major employers of labour—have had to put people out of work. That is a very serious matter.

I must say a few words about the children of service men. Cases of physical and sexual abuse involving such children are fortunately very rare. But, even if there are only a couple of cases a year, the victims and their families have to be treated as carefully and as sensitively as possible.

The Minister may not recall this fact, but during the Report stage of the Armed Services Bill—I think it was in late 1985—I put down a number of amendments that sought to give added protection to children caught up in such distressing circumstances who lived abroad in married quarters where service men were stationed. I am pleased to tell the House that the Minister with responsibility for the Army at that time gave me an assurance—I was perfectly willing to accept it and I withdrew the amendments—that, on the basis of the concerns that I had expressed, a memorandum had been sent to the commanders of all bases overseas and in the United Kingdom outlining the need to give the best advice and counselling available to those involved; not merely to the children but to the alleged perpetrators and the children's mothers.

It is crucial that developments in child protection legislation in the United Kingdom are matched in armed services legislation. I shall certainly keep a watchful eye on that when we next debate an armed services Bill.

Mr. Brazier: It may be of assistance to the House for it to know that the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association, the services welfare organisation responsible for such work, and its professional staff pride themselves on the fact that they have pioneered some of the developments that are now also taking place in the wider community as a result of new legislation. It operates the type of fully-integrated set-up that we are now trying so hard to encourage in the wider community.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention because I failed to mention SSAFA.

Without wishing to indulge in anecdotal prattle, may I say that the first time that I came across SSAFA was as a young military policeman. I had to attend a fatal traffic accident, in which a Scottish soldier had died in Germany. The representatives of SSAFA were utterly marvellous in the way that they gave guidance and help to the young soldier's family, who lived in the married quarters in Munster, Westphalia. Therefore, I have some experience of SSAFA's work, albeit abysmally dated.

It is a long time since I was in the armed forces—too long, perhaps. Nevertheless, I believe that those are important considerations. A former Army Minister readily acknowledged the concerns that I expressed on that earlier occasion. If I am fortunate enough to be a member of the next Select Committee, I shall seek to cross-examine Ministry of Defence representatives on some of the topics that I have barely mentioned tonight.

11.30 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for his fond tribute to my friend and colleague, Sean Hughes.

If I ask that the order should not be considered until the Government are more candid about the case of Colin Wallace, it is because I believe that it involves basic issues of military discipline. It is less an issue of what happened to Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, the then Mr. Edward Short, and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) because, in general, politicians can look after themselves. The people who cannot look after themselves are those who are in the care of the state, as were those vulnerable boys at Kincora. It is a blemish of discipline that the Government have not been more forthcoming in giving a satisfactory explanation.

In case anyone supposes that just a very few of us are pursuing Colin Wallace's case obsessively, I may point out to the Minister that, together with the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), I was a speaker at the memorial meeting at the Guards and Cavalry club—not my usual habitat—for the late George Young, deputy head of MI6. On that occasion, and quite unprovoked by me—because I did not raise the subject—people expressed the view that it was important that the Colin Wallace case was straightened out. I will attempt to do so again tonight.

I refer to the Minister's letter to me of 20 June, in which he says:

"In your speech during the Army Debate on 5 June you asked a number of detailed questions relating broadly to matters which have been the subject of various allegations by Mr. Wallace. Several of your questions relating to Kincora concern matters outside the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and I will confine my comments on that subject to repeating that I am aware of no substantive evidence that Army personnel knew in the 1970s that homosexual abuse of boys was taking place at Kincora.

Turning to your questions about Clockwork Orange, as my Written Answer to Michael Marshall on 30 January explained, two documents have been found which contain brief references to 'Clockwork Orange': both are dated 1975."

Incidentally, I have informed the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall), who is Colin Wallace's Member of Parliament, of my intention to make this speech, and I believe that I have his approval. The Minister's letter continues:

"No record has been found of any draft document containing the material which Mr. Wallace has described as an early version of 'Clockwork Orange'. Nor has any material been found which would justify allegations that Crown servants commissioned or authorised Mr. Wallace to create or use material denigratory to MPs, or engaged in such activities themselves. No correspondence between Mr. Broderick and General Leng on that subject has been traced: you will be aware of General Leng's firm assurance to the Government that he recalls no project by the name of 'Clockwork Orange' and would never have authorised any attempt to smear MPs. You also questioned the Government's position and official statements on this and other matters (including the security exercise near Aldergrove airport) in the light of press suggestions that contrary information may be possessed by former Crown servants who served in Northern Ireland at the same time as Mr. Wallace. I am not prepared to treat uncorroborated reports as being of substantive value. The Government has repeatedly made plain that, if anyone has substantive evidence which corroborates Mr. Wallace's allegations concerning a campaign by Crown servants to

smear MPs or a cover-up of knowledge of homosexual abuse of boys at Kincora, they should give it to the Government or the Police. To date no one has come forward with such information. Finally, the handling within the Government service of papers relating to Mr. Wallace has been the subject of a very thorough inquiry by a senior civil servant. The results of that inquiry have been reported to Parliament. It has been acknowledged that there were some shortcomings in the way that papers were handled, but the substantive errors of fact which resulted have been corrected by statements subsequently made by Ministers. Any suggestion that officials or Ministers acted in bad faith is wholly unjustified."

I think it fair to put that letter from the Minister on the record.

Part of the reason why I raised the issue last week, and am doing so again tonight, is that I shall send the *Official Report* of these proceedings to the master of Magdalene as I have sent him previous reports—because David Calcutt should consider these matters as part of his inquiry. So the more formally they are put, the better.

On 3 July, Mr. Wallace, having studied the Minister's reply, wrote:

"Thank you very much for sending me a copy of"

the Minister's reply

"of 20 June regarding the questions which you raised during the Army debate. Quite frankly, I was furious when I read it. The letter is a disgraceful and deliberate attempt to evade every question you raised and it is clear from the wording of the reply that the Minister knew he was evading the issues. I don't know how you feel about it, but I think the Government should be told the reply is not acceptable and asked to deal with each one of the questions properly."

That is exactly how I feel.

"For example, on the Kincora issue",

the Minister

"claims that he is 'aware of no substantive evidence that Army personnel knew in the 1970s that homosexual abuse of boys was taking place at Kincora.'"

I have put this letter in the possession of the Ministry of Defence and it should have reached the Minister's office.

"As you know, there is ever growing evidence that what"

the Minister

"is saying is completely untrue, and that he knows that it is untrue. On 18 March this year, *The Correspondent* published a report which included the following comment from Mr. Hugh Mooney, Information Adviser to the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland from 1971-73:

Mr. Mooney also admitted that Mr. Wallace had told him about the sex scandal at Kincora boys home in Belfast—casting further doubt on Government claims that the security forces had no knowledge of the long-running rape and buggery of children in care'.

Similarly, in the transcript of the tape-recorded telephone conversations between General Leng and Barrie Penrose. General Leng confirms that he was 'aware of the homosexual insinuations' relating to Kincora and he also remembers saying 'this is a police matter, not ours.'"

On a point of journalistic principle, Mr. Penrose has given up his job with *The Sunday Times* on this very issue.

The letter goes on:

"Mike Taylor has also gone on record saying that he recalls seeing the Kincora file at Army Headquarters and, in particular, the two key documents which I had in my possession and which are referred to in Paul Foot's book, Who Framed Colin Wallace?

In addition, Peter Broderick has confirmed that he recalls seeing the memorandum which bears in his own handwriting the words 'Clerks IP' and which refers to William McGrath running a home for children on the Upper Newtownards Road. The document also gives the telephone number and full postal address of Kincora.

Lastly, there is the information provided by 'James', the Army Intelligence Officer who appeared in the BBC 'Public Eye' programme, and who has since confirmed to other journalists that, not only was he aware of the assaults that were taking place in Kincora, but also that his MI5 superior, Ian Cameron, stopped him from taking further action. Worse still, despite negotiations between the RUC and the MOD, MI5 refused to make Ian Cameron available for interview by the police and failed to answer their questions."

The letter goes on to say that the Minister's

"reply to you on this issue is, therefore, despicable. The rest of"

the Minister's

"letter is so outrageous that it is difficult to comment on it seriously. However, the following points need to be made:

1. The Minister again avoids facing up to the issues which you raised during the Army Debate by trotting out the Government's standard line of defence: 'The Government has repeatedly made it plain that, if anyone has substantive evidence which corroborates Mr. Wallace's allegations concerning a campaign by Crown servants to smear MPs or a cover-up of knowledge of homosexual abuse at Kincora, they should give it to the Government or the Police'. That is precisely what I did do in 1984 when I sent a complete dossier of information to the Prime Minister personally, but no action was taken on its contents. Similarly, you will recall that I recently sent to the Prime Minister a selection of documents bearing the handwriting of various Crown servants and containing information smearing political figures. Although the Government does not deny the authenticity of the documents, the Defence Secretary claims there is no evidence to suggest the material was intended for dissemination to anyone. How utterly absurd!"

I say to the Minister that I am not making a party issue of this. I was deeply shocked to see the imprimatur of the Army headquarters at Lisburn on an absolutely disgusting article in relation to the former Conservative Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup.

The letter continues:

"2. The Government has repeatedly assured the House that the 'fullest inquiries' have been carried out into my allegations. Despite that claim, the Government has refused to arrange for individuals such as Mike Taylor or Peter Broderick to be interviewed about the statements they have made to the press corroborating my allegations. The Goverment has a clear duty to carry our such enquiries and it is no use Ministers claiming that such witnesses should submit their own statements to the authorities. Such claims are totally dishonest, and Ministers know very well they are being dishonest when they refuse to face up to this issue."

Mr. Maginnis: I feel that I have a responsibility to intervene at this stage. No one can fail to admire the hon. Gentleman's tenacity in pursuing the Kincora case, which has disturbed every hon. Member. In so far as he pursues it within the scope of this debate, I hope that he will make it clear that he is not insinuating that the serving forces in Northern Ireland were involved in the Kincora scandal. If I may say so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one might assert that this is somewhat outside the scope of the debate and could reflect badly on our serving forces. No hon. Member would wish that to happen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have been following the debate carefully, and I understand that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is asserting that matters of discipline impinged on employees or people responsible to the Ministry of Defence. To that extent, the matter is relevant to the debate.

Mr. Dalyell: I should like to agree strongly with the first point made by my hon. Friend, if I may call him such. It is true that most of the Army were clean, and some of them are very shocked—including some of those whom I met tonight, who were senior officers in Northern Ireland in the 1970s—that this happened. It is no part of my case to denigrate the overwhelming majority of the British Army.

[Mr. Dalyell]

On the hon. Gentleman's second proposition, I was under the understanding that this is a debate on discipline and those who are answerable to the Ministry of Defence. I hope to heaven that certain sections of the security services in military intelligence are answerable to the Ministry of Defence. One of the worries is that discipline was not nearly tight enough.

Mr. Maginnis: That is the point.

Mr. Dalyell: That is very much the point. Indeed, it is the central point.

In all the argument between General Leng and Mr. Penrose, it is difficult to clarify matters. However, the central difficulty is that some of us think that military intelligence was not nearly as responsible to the Ministry of Defence as it jolly well should have been.

The letter continues:

"In paragraph 2 of his letter, Archie Hamilton claims General Leng has given the Government an assurance that he 'recalls no project by the name of "Clockwork Orange".' That is totally false. In interviews with the press, including the one with Barrie Penrose, the General confirmed that he did recall 'Clockwork Orange' but, quite rightly, says he did not know about its political content."

That is highly germane to the point on which my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) intervened.

The letter continues:

"4. Also, in paragraph 2 of his letter, the Minister says: 'No record has been found of any draft document containing the material which Mr. Wallace has described as an early version of "Clockwork Orange".' The Minister could clear up this issue very easily by asking Lt. Colonel Railton and Penny Sadler, the MI5 officer who typed the document, if they recall it. It is, of course, possible that no record of the document exists because all such records have been destroyed, but the Government could, without much effort, find out if it was produced at Army HQ in 1974 and typed by a member of MI5. That was, after all, what your questions in the Army Debate were designed to establish.

5. Finally, the last paragraph of Mr. Hamilton's letter does not explain how a number of senior MOD officers—General Garrett, General Rous, Mr. Whitehead etc—failed to draw Minister's attention to the fact that Government replies were, from their own personal knowledge of my case, inaccurate. Their failure to advise Ministers accordingly strikes at the very heart of the credibility of the 'senior civil servant's report' to Parliament."

That is the letter on 3 July.

On 8 July, Mr. Wallace wrote again. I have not yet given this letter to the Ministry of Defence. He says:

"Thank you very much for sending me the copy of Hansard containing your speech during the Northern Ireland (Direct Rule) Debate on 5 July. I think the speech was excellent and, supported by the one made by Ken Livingstone, it brought into focus the Government's failure to address the issues under discussion.

I apologise for returning yet again to the answers provided by Mr. Archie Hamilton"—

who is present tonight—

"but I think they are significant in that they demonstrate in the clearest way possible the fact that, contrary to Government assurances to Parliament, Ministers are not only failing to tell the truth about the overall affair but also are failing to make even the most rudimentary checks into my allegations. In your speech last week, you correctly highlighted the fact that some three weeks after my allegation concerning Mr. Whitehead's role in typing the Haughey document, it would appear that no one had bothered to check the allegation with him."

It is not so much that the Ministry of Defence is being lazy, but that it has been told to put the shutters down. That is not good enough for the House of Commons.

The letter continues:

"With your agreement, I would like to return to one specific matter which the Government could check out very easily if they are genuinely concerned about providing Parliament with accurate information on my case.

You will recall that in a letter dated 30 January this year, Archie Hamilton told Ken Livingstone:

'On 6 May 1988 you asked me about the involvement of Army Information Service Staff in the planting of hoax bombs and in the carriage of captured terrorist weapons or explosives. It is now apparant that you were referring to planned security exercises. Mr. Wallace has referred to Mr. CTT Whitehead'"—

who now, incidentally, is the press officer responsible for the prison service department, a highly sensitive department of the Home Office—

"'having taken part in a mock raid on Aldergrove Airport; I understand that he took part in a security exercise in November 1973.'"—

which my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) may recall.

"'Mr. Wallace has also suggested that fake CIA cards were carried; and I understand that such cards were carried on that occasion, for exercise purposes only. It is now unclear what was the full scope of the exercises, but they did include a test of vehicle check points en route to Aldergrove Airport. We have found no evidence that arms and ammunition captured from the IRA were carried. Nor have we found any evidence that any real explosives were planted.'

Comment: Why is it 'now unclear what was the full scope of the exercises'? The officer who planned the exercise was Major (now Major General) the Hon W E Rous. Why cannot the MOD ask the General to explain the details of the exercise?"

Mr. Wallace then states that he

"wrote to the Prime Minister on 6 February pointing out that Mr. Hamilton's reply was inaccurate and saying:

'Two of those who took part in the "raid", Mr. Michael Taylor, a former MOD official, and Miss Wendy Austin, a BBC journalist, have confirmed to Paul Foot and other reporters that captured IRA weapons, including rocket launchers, mortars, pistols and explosives were carried on that occasion. Moreover, as the MOD is well aware, we planted a bomb containing real explosive—but without a detonator—inside the headquarters of the UDR battalion guarding the airport and a "hoax" bomb on the Belfast/Ballymena railway line near Templepatrick. The latter device was blown up by an Army bomb disposal team'.On 16 February, the Prime Minister's Private Secretary,

Mr. Charles Powell, wrote saying:

'Statements made by Ministers to the House on these past events are naturally reliant on the material available in departmental records. Mr. Hamilton's letter of 30 January to Mr. Livingstone explained that the scope of the exercise at Aldergrove airport to which you refer is unclear at this distance in time: but that departmental records contain no evidence that captured weapons were carried nor that real explosives were planted.

It is not possible to offer comment on statements said to have been made to the media by Mr. Taylor or Miss Austin about the "mock" raid at Aldergrove airport, in the absence of direct knowledge of them. But if Mr. Taylor and Miss Austin have any information which they consider relevant they should pass it to the Ministry of Defence'."

I share Mr. Wallace's view when he comments:

"It is nonsense to say that 'statements made by Ministers on these past events are naturally reliant on the material available in departmental records.' As I have pointed out above and in earlier correspondence with Ministers, the MOD does not have to rely on departmental records alone, there are

a number of senior Defence staff who have personal and direct knowledge of the events in question and who could help Ministers with their enquiries, should they wish to do so"—or, more precisely, should Ministers wish them to do so.

Mr. Wallace again wrote to the Prime Minister on 21 February saying:

"'In your reply you attempted to avoid dealing with the fact that you had misled Parliament and claimed that you cannot take notice of comments made in the Press by my former superior officers and colleagues. Such a claim is totally disingenuous because you have repeatedly told the House that there have been "the most thorough investigations" into my allegations. If that is correct, why have those investigations failed to interview those who took part in the raid on Belfast airport'?"

That is a fair question. Time and again, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and I received answers from the Prime Minister and other Ministers referring to thorough investigations. That really is a load of codswallop.

Mr. Wallace's letter of 8 July continues:

"On 27 March, Ken Livingstone received the following Written Answer (Hansard Column 97):

'Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will direct his officials to interview Mr. Mike Taylor and Miss Wendy Austin about the full scope of their activities in Army Information Services in Northern Ireland in the 1970s'?"

According to Mr. Wallace's letter, the Minister replied,

"No. If Mr. Taylor or Miss Austin has information about activities in Northern Ireland which they feel to be of significance, they should submit it to the RUC or the Ministry of Defence."

In his letter of 20 June to me, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said:

"You also questioned the Government's position and official statements on this and other matters (including the security exercise at Aldergrove airport) in the light of press suggestions that contrary information may be possessed by former Crown Servants who served in Northern Ireland at the same time as Mr. Wallace. I am not prepared to treat uncorroborated reports as being of substantive value."

Mr. Wallace went on to state that the Minister's replies are, to say the least, a bit on the dishonest side and that there can be no excuse whatsoever for his failure to have the allegations relating to Aldergrove airport checked with those who took part in the raid, particularly when they occupy even more senior positions in the services. He went on to state:

"For example, when the Prime Minister and others were supplying the above replies to Parliament, Mr. Chris Whitehead was Chief Press Officer at the MOD—he is now head of PR for the Prison Service."

For a long time at any rate—I do not know whether the position has changed in the past week or two—Mr. Whitehead, according to the press, was not asked. They had not even bothered to ask people to whom it is very easy to put questions. I shall go on taking up the time of the House at awkward moments unless some effort is made on the part of the Ministry of Defence and the Northern Ireland Office to do something to answer questions that can very easily be answered.

Mr. Wallace's letter went on to state:

"During the raid, Mr. Whitehead carried a forged CIA identity card and a selection of weapons and explosives in his car. He was accompanied on that occasion by Miss Austin. I spoke to Miss Austin personally about two months ago and she recalls very clearly the details of that raid.

Similarly, the MOD could check with the Commanding Officer of the 9th Battalion, Ulster Defence Regiment, in whose HQ we planted a bomb, and some of whose members found several of the weapons we were carrying.

The officer who organised the exercise and who arranged for captured weapons and explosives to be supplied to my team was Major Willie Rous. When the above answers were being given to Parliament, he was Director of Army Public Relations at the MOD. He is now a Major General and Commandant of the Staff College, Camberley."

Presumably the Ministry of Defence knows how to get in touch with the commandant at Camberley.

Mr. Wallace said:

"In addition, the overall exercise was supervised by Major General Leng, Commander Land Forces, personally. He was present at the UDR headquarters when the bomb which we had planted was discovered.

The Aldergrove airport exercise may seem to be a trivial point in comparison with Kincora and 'Clockwork Orange', but I regard it as a yardstick of the Government's credibility on the overall issue. Bearing in mind Government assurances to parliament on 30 January and 1 February that they were anxious to correct all previous misleading statements, it would be helpful if, by obtaining further admissions on the above, we could demonstrate that inaccurate information is still being given to the House and that Ministers are failing to take the most elementary steps to ascertain the correct facts even when specific issues are brought to their attention and when key witnesses are still in Government employment."

Mr. Wallace concluded that he thought that the Minister

"should be pressed to explain the Government's excuse that they were only made aware that some of their previous answers about my case had been misleading, following the discovery of some papers last year. The inescapable fact remains that I submitted all the relevant facts to the Prime Minister personally in November 1984"—

I have seen the file, and it is thick and comprehensive—

"and, it would appear, that neither Major General Garrett, Brigadier Rous nor Mr. Whitehead told Ministers that the information they were giving to Parliament was inaccurate. Similarly, Mr. Hamilton should be asked to explain why the Government's 'thorough inquiries' did not include those officers or others such as Penny Sadler, Michael Taylor, Peter Broderick or 'James', the Intelligence Officer who investigated Kincora."

You and the House have been very patient with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The *Hansard* of this debate will go to the master of Magdalene, David Calcutt, who is undertaking an investigation. I hope that he will say that, in view of this and what happened last week, as a heavyweight lawyer and, in a sense, morally responsible to the legal profession in this matter, he will demand that his terms of reference be widened. Part of the reason for doing this is that I am a bit bothered that the terms of reference of the Calcutt inquiry in relation to Mr. Wallace are pretty narrow. They should be widened. Personally, I shall not complain too much if Mr. Calcutt does not produce the report oversoon. He has a mountain of work to do and a formidable task. He should apply himself to the wider aspects of this issue.

Finally—I make no apology to my colleagues—as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow said in another context, in dealing with young boys and military discipline, this is an issue that is above Heath or Wilson or anything of that kind. The fact is that, for a long period and in a sustained way, sections of the British state —paid for by the taxpayer—countenanced the systematic abuse of boys, entrusted into the guidance of our state, who were highly vulnerable.

This is a moral issue and an issue of discipline. It will not go away, and the sooner candid answers are given, the better for all of us.

12.6 am

Mr. Archie Hamilton: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply to the debate.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) referred to the leaflet that was issued in 1988 which

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

outlined the rights and responsibilities of service men. I can confirm that the leaflet has been updated and is issued to all new recruits. The hon. Gentleman suggested that the leaflet should be given to all service personnel, a point which was raised in the debate last year. The then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert), told the House that, if that were done, we would have to issue 300,000 copies. All service men are made aware of their rights and responsibilities in information that is already widely distributed. As my hon. Friend said, I suspect that the leaflet, which covers a number of subjects in general terms, would, like so much of our mail, end up in the wastepaper bin. Nevertheless, we are conscious of the need for members of the services to have proper advice on their rights——

Mr. Boyes: I am interested in the Minister's suggestion that 300,000 copies seems such a lot. Does he accept that, when compared with every household receiving a copy of a national health service leaflet, we are talking about issuing only a small number of publications?

Mr. Hamilton: It is conceivable that the NHS leaflet would tell people something that they did not know already. Other than new recruits, members of the armed forces know well their rights and responsibilities. I am talking about the updated version. I can make it available later to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the rate of premature voluntary retirement. The number of people who are leaving the services early is causing us some concern at the moment. Fortunately, recruitment is holding up extremely well and we have a record number of recruits. Nevertheless, the number of those leaving the services is running ahead of the record numbers that we are managing to recruit.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to "Options for Change". Clearly there is a degree of uncertainty—of which we are well aware—but much detailed work remains to be done. We then hope to be able to announce our intentions to the House. That will do something to help to solve the present problem of uncertainty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) referred to the present terrorist emergency and was concerned that our reserve forces are not able to carry out guard duties. He thought that some legislative change was necessary. That may be so. I should like to come back to him on that, having found out what the position is. A problem about reserve forces doing duties with firearms is that we must be confident that they are properly trained. We would not have the time to give them training on ranges to make us confident that they were competent in the use of firearms.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood also mentioned that we have no legislative powers to force merchant seamen or civilian aircrews of chartered aircraft to go to war. We had a healthy response when the Falklands conflict arose. Indeed, several merchant seamen volunteered to go to the Falklands region even though they were under no coercion to do so. Their pay was somewhat enhanced to reflect that. I shall write to my hon. Friend on whether we need powers to force merchant seamen to go to war.

Mr. Wilkinson: I appreciate that my hon. Friend has undertaken to write to me on both issues. May I add that as part of his review under "Options for Change" hypothetically it must be possible that Her Majesty's Government will consider chartering civil assets to fulfil roles both in shipping and air transport which were previously fulfilled by the military. If that is the case, there is, at least prima facie, a good argument for considering seriously legislative provision even if historic experience in the Falklands campaign was a happy one.

Mr. Hamilton: I take my hon. Friend's point. I am not certain that "Options for Change" will lead to us depending more on chartering, but clearly it is a possibility. As he knows, chartering would be a critical element of any reinforcement plans in the event of a major war in Europe. We constantly examine whether there are enough merchant ships to fulfil the required functions.

The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) raised the case of a UDR soldier who took a photo-montage and was imprisoned by a civilian court for a year. Subsequently he could not return to his regiment. The hon. Gentleman described that as double jeopardy. One must accept that if there are mitigating circumstances—the hon. Gentleman said that there were —one must expect a court to take them into account. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to question the finding of the court. It is not our job to take up the finding of a court. We must recognise the independence of the judiciary and respect the sentences that are passed.

Mr. Maginnis: The Minister will realise that the peculiar circumstances in Northern Ireland make it necessary at times for people to enter into plea-bargaining arrangements. Our security forces have a political responsibility on their shoulders. That may not be widely admitted, but we know that it is the case. The hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), who served as a Minister in Northern Ireland, nods in agreement. It is incumbent on soldiers to be political in their actions. The soldier in question was persuaded that it was circumspect to enter into a plea-bargaining arrangement, so there was no possibility of pleading mitigating circumstances. It is "Heads you lose, tails you do not win."

Mr. Hamilton: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, but I believe that he is trying to draw me even further on the findings of our court. As he knows, there is a rule in the UDR that when one is convicted by any civil court one must leave the regiment. It is not a question of the soldier being tried again under military discipline.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) referred to the enormous amount of paperwork involved in getting into the Home Service Force, and I shall consider that problem. My hon. Friend rightly mentioned the new management strategy and the necessity to achieve a balance between efficiency and paperwork. We are mindful of that and we must make certain that as much responsibility as possible is delegated to budget holders. The services are responding well to the challenge. It is necessary that they are given the freedom they need to exercise the discretion that should come with their new responsibilities. My hon. Friend also asked that the next armed forces Bill should take into account the changes in other legislation. It will do so, and it is important that it should.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) emphasised the need for adequate welfare and counselling services, upon which we concentrate. He also said that the services are facing an uncertain future. We recognise the need to end that uncertainty as soon as we can so that the services know the way ahead. It is rather alarmist, however, to talk about widespread redundancies. I do not think that that is the ball game, bearing in mind the large turnover and natural wastage of personnel in the services. The changes will be made between now and the end of the century and therefore there is plenty of time for those changes to be made without them resulting in redundancies.

The hon. Gentleman also made a good point when he said that we should not tolerate child abuse in the services, even if the incidence of it is small. I was grateful that my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury intervened to describe the role of SSAFA in dealing with that matter. I must come back to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow about what provision is currently made to deal with that problem as I am not totally certain about it.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was, as always, courteous enough to tell me in advance that he intended to air again his concerns about the case of Mr. Colin Wallace and Kincora. Despite your remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I admire his ingenuity in devising a basis upon which to introduce such matters into the debate. I cannot accept that the issues are directly relevant to the matters we are discussing. Many of the points raised were familiar ones that have been dealt with in the past. I shall, of course, look carefully at the record to see whether any new matters of significance were raised. If so, I shall certainly write to the hon. Gentleman about any that concern my Department. However, he is well aware that most matters concerning Kincora are properly the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

On the question of documentary material, Mr. Wallace has provided extracts from a number of documents—he says that he wrote some of that material. I know of no evidence that he was ever given official authority to produce any material that intentionally denigrated Members of Parliament. If Mr. Wallace has any solid evidence that Crown servants were authorised to prepare or use material——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 5th June, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

ANIMALS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Welfare of Livestock Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 21st June, be approved —*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

AGRICULTURE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock—Sheep, which was laid before this House on 21st June, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

CIVIL AVIATION

Motion made and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Air Navigation (Noise Certification) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 27th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That during the proceedings on the matter of Inward Investment to Wales, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for two hours at that sitting.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Water Quality (Norfolk)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

12.13 am

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): In this brief and late debate I wish to raise a number of issues related to declining water quality that concern my constituents and those who live in the county of Norfolk. There are two main water problems in the county: first, a water shortage caused by population growth and low rainfall, so that rivers and fens are drying out because of over-abstraction; secondly, pollution that affects drinking water, coastal bathing waters, marine life, rivers and inland bathing waters. I shall deal with the second issue.

Water pollution incidents in East Anglia caused by farms, sewage and industry have risen by 60 per cent. since 1980, but only 2 per cent. of offenders have been prosecuted. The bulk of the prosecutions were for farm pollution. The recent National Audit Office report showed that silage effluent and slurry are major pollutants of water supplies because of

"poor construction of silos and ineffective effluent management systems"

but found that

"farmers are reluctant to invest in systems without grant support."

East Anglia has high concentrations of nitrates because of the widespread use of fertilisers in farming. Even if no further fertilisers were used, nitrate levels would continue to rise because it takes up to 40 years for the chemical to seep through to the groundwater.

Five Norfolk boreholes, including Thorpe and Bowthorpe in the city of Norwich, were named by the European Commission in the indictment taking the British Government to court because they regularly exceeded the maximum recommendation of 50 mg per litre of water. Anglian Water has 25 derogations in force on nitrate and nitrite levels, but not for the Bowthorpe supply. Here lower levels are achieved by blending supplies from different sources but the environmental health department of Norwich city council is concerned about the effectiveness of blending.

The Government have responded to the concern about nitrates and last summer designated 12 nitrate-sensitive areas throughout the country where compensation will be paid to farmers who voluntarily reduce the amount of nitrates used on their crops. Amazingly, Norfolk, with the highest levels, is not one of them. At a further nine sites, three of which are in Norfolk, farmers will be encouraged, without compensation, to reduce the use of nitrates. Why are there no nitrate-sensitive area designations in Norfolk?

The Anglian Water region has by far the highest number of breaches of the maximum admissible concentration for combined pesticides. Water supplies in East Anglia are more contaminated by pesticides than those in any other part of the country. Anglian Water was the only company regularly found by the Department of the Environment to have concentrations above the EC limits of all seven pesticides tested for in its drinking water supplies. Mecoprop, atrazine, simazine, dimethoate and lindane were detected regularly at 20 out of 22 sites. Most of those are on the red list of inputs of dangerous substances to water. The 1987 report of the Select Committee on Agriculture, dealing with the effects of pesticides on human health, made 45 recommendations, including one—No. 25—on ground water.

It stated:

"If regions are found where serious contamination occurs, urgent action should be taken to moderate the use of offending pesticides."

What are the Government doing about that recommendation? Anglian Water is a major polluter. In 1986, 40 per cent. and in 1987 34 per cent. of Anglian Water treatment works tested breached their discharge contents—compared with an average of 23 per cent. and 21 per cent. in England and Wales. Anglian water is substantially the worst performing authority in this regard. In Norwich, much pollution is attributable to the decaying Victorian sewerage system. Storm drains carry raw sewage straight into the Wensum, putting the canoe training centre at Gibraltar gardens and swimming places at Bawburgh, Lyng, Earlham Park, Lakenham Cock, Hellesdon Meadow and many parts of the broads at risk. As no inland waters have been designated under the EC directive on the quality of bathing water, they are not sampled. Why are no inland waters designated when they are clearly used for bathing, as in this case?

Nearly five tonnes of mercury have been released into the Yare since 1976. About half of that is still in the river and the rest was swept out to sea. Mercury is not tested for in the coastal waters of Norfolk. No one realised that mercury was building up in the river bed until a local naturalist and diver carried out an examination and found the once thriving river severely affected.

Norwich city council environmental hazards committee recommended warning signs, but a letter from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to Norwich environmental health officer thought that would "cause public disquiet." The fact that there was already public disquiet led me to ask a parliamentary question in May 1989 about the mercury levels in the River Yare. I was told that the levels were all above the EC limit. The fish are still contaminated and no one has taken action to warn the public, especially fishermen, of the hazard. Do the Government still think that warning notices about this and other pollutants cause disquiet?

In 1985 a public inquiry into the building of the Costessey Pits storage scheme was told by Anglian Water that it was necessary because of the ground water contamination and the "present and potential hazards" of abstracting water from the Heigham plant. Heigham is regularly monitored by the National Rivers Authority which says that it is "improving slightly". Nevertheless, on several occasions it has breached the EC standard for pesticides in drinking water.

In 1987, the Thorpe borehole was found to be contaminated with industrial solvents, one of which is on the red list. Anglian Water investigated the contamination and Norwich city council requested a copy of the report, but after three years it has still not received a copy, and it remains concerned about the condition of the water.

The EC requires member countries to safeguard their water aquifer supplies because they are difficult and expensive to treat once they have become contaminated. The EC has issued in a draft directive standards that most British waste tips fail to meet. Anglian Water depends on ground water for 51 per cent. of its water supply. Using an unpublished Government survey, Friends of the Earth located two toxic waste tips at Harford Bridges and West

Beckham near Cromer which are classified by the Department of the Environment as "serious" risks to ground water and no fewer than 48 other Norfolk tip sites pose some risk to ground water.

There is also a large question mark hanging over the Attlebridge tip, in which 100 BSE-infected cattle carcases have been dumped, and that could lead to the leaching of infected matter into the River Wensum. The farmer living near the tip has been advised not to drink the water from his borehole as it contains ammonia and industrial solvents. The tip is less than the 1 km from the river that is advised in the directive and drinking water for most of Norwich is extracted from the River Wensum. Why do the Government not insist on the lining of tips as recommended by the directive?

Otters have disappeared from the rivers Waveney, Yare, Little Ouse, Bure, Wensum and Glaven in the past 20 years. The cause appears to be PCBs which leak from hydraulic pumps, common on fenland rivers. Should not these pumps be banned and replaced?

Last year blue-green algae was found at three Norfolk sites—at Filby broad, Barton broad and Blickling lake. This year it has already reappeared at Blickling lake as well as at Ranworth, Salhouse, South Walsham, Filby and Hoveton great broad. The Minister said in this House that there were no significant increases in nutrients last year and that it is not possible to prevent algae as they are a naturally occurring phenomenon. The broads authority disagrees and has sent evidence to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution arguing for further EC action on water quality and Government action on research and on consent levels for polluting discharges and grants to control agricultural pollution. Have the Government responded to this concern? Where is the Anglian task force report promised by the Minister for the early summer in an Adjournment debate on Rutland Water in April?

The news that the EC is taking action against the British Government because 140 beaches, including three in Norfolk at Sheringham, Cromer and Great Yarmouth, failed to meet EC standards came four days after the go-ahead for the long sea sewage outfall at West Runton. People are astonished and angered at the decision, particularly as the Secretary of State promised in March that the discharge by pipeline of raw sewage into the sea would be phased out as soon as possible. As the local paper put it:

"Anglian Water were tight-lipped in the wake of the announcement from Mr. Patten".

A similar scheme at Fleetwood in Lancashire was refused and yet, after tremendous public protest, including 9,000 letters, it has been decided that the West Runton outfall goes ahead.

It comes as no surprise to hear that so many beaches fail the EC directive. Those of us who have studied the bathing water survey have been struck by its cursory nature and answers to parliamentary questions have been less than satisfactory. The directive lays down mandatory limits for total and faecal coliforms tested at fortnightly intervals in the bathing season, and states that no salmonella or enteroviruses should be present. It also states that there should be no abnormal colour change, no visible film or foam and no odour, with further checks if it is thought that heavy metals, cyanides, nitrates and phosphates, pesticides or ammonia are in the water as well as floating waste. The directive expresses the hope that member states will endeavour to observe the guidelines. We do not. Of Norfolk's nine designated bathing beaches, only Mundesley meets the mandatory standards, and none meets the recommended guidelines. Wells, Mundesley and Great Yarmouth North were never tested for salmonella or enteroviruses. Heacham and Hunstanton were tested five times, but the other beaches only twice. Great Yarmouth pier and South beaches failed all tests except one.

The popular beaches at Caister, Hemsby, Corton and Pakefield, with their caravans, bungalows and holiday camps, are not designated and therefore not tested; yet Caister has a sewage outfall pipe. Why are bathers not informed of the health dangers of beaches so that they know which resorts to avoid? I have never received satisfactory answers to parliamentary questions that I have tabled asking whether Anglian Water has tested bathing water for the chemicals and heavy metals mentioned in the directive.

According to the 1988 Eastern Sea Fisheries district report, there is evidence of a

"major pollutant threat to the shellfish industry and also to the environmental wellbeing in this area. Despite such warnings being given and repeated . . . little has been done to improve sea water quality."

There are closure orders on mussel beds in the Wash, and all mussels from the Norfolk coast marketed in the United Kingdom are now subject to prior clearing.

Discharges of glycol by the offshore gas industry in the Bacton area are thought to be responsible for the deaths of sea birds. The RSPCA has found mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls and dioxins in the bodies of the many birds found on the Norfolk beaches. Those chemicals undermine their immune systems, and, in 1988, appeared to have allowed the bacterium paramyoxena to infect seals with the distemper virus that killed them in such large numbers off the north Norfolk coast.

Until we admit that the problems exist, we cannot implement solutions. The Government resist decisions made by the North sea conference, and contend that marine life is not affected by industrial waste and sewage sludge. They prefer to listen to the CBI, which has urged them not to agree to the phasing out of dumping of industrial waste because of the cost, and to Anglian Water, which contends that dumping is an economic and efficient way of dealing with sewage sludge.

While the Department of Health warns people not to eat shellfish, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food says that they are safe. While the Department of the Environment reassures us about drinking and bathing water, the European Commission takes the Government to court for failing to implement the directives.

In the run-up to privatisation, there was a complete clampdown on information. An Anglian Water scientist was prevented from presenting a paper on pollution data to a conference on agricultural pollution. For some months, both the Countryside Commission and I were even refused a list of the sites of special scientific interest in Anglian Water ownership; surely that was a modest enough request.

The pollution inspectorate is understaffed and under-resourced. The National Rivers Authority is responsible for monitoring water quality, but does not enforce that responsibility adequately. The shortage of environmental health officers and money impairs the ability of local authorities to fulfil their duties.

[Mr. John Garrett]

We need far more openness and public information on these matters. Data on pollution should be publicly available; warning notices should be put up. There should be a programme to eliminate the filth from our rivers and bathing waters. The quality of water is a matter of increasing public concern.

12.27 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) has made a wide-ranging speech. In the few minutes that remain, I shall try to summarise the action that we are taking in the affected areas.

I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the Government are committed to maintaining high standards of water quality, and to securing the necessary improvements where existing standards are below what we would wish. We now have in place the right regulatory system to achieve that. The separation of the regulator from the operator was a key feature of the privatisation of the former water authorities. We have established a National Rivers Authority, which is widely recognised as perhaps the strongest environmental protection agency in Europe. We have two other regulators, the Director General of Water Services and the drinking water inspectorate. That separation also means that the private sector water service companies are now in a position to raise the substantial capital sums necessary to improve drinking water quality and waste water treatment.

Some £14 billion is due to be spent by the water service companies during the next 10 years on drinking water. But I emphasise that already most supplies in the country, including Norfolk, regularly meet the stringent requirements of the EC drinking water directive, and our drinking water regulations which, in some respects, impose still tighter standards.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned nitrates. I can confirm that most drinking water supplies already meet the standards required, but the water industry is actively working to ensure that the remainder do so as quickly as possible, either through the blending of water supplies or through nitrate removal plants.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned nitrate sensitive areas and nitrate advisory areas, three of which are in Norfolk. They will help to give us and the National Rivers Authority the necessary experience in tackling nitrate concentrations in drinking water. All the areas were chosen, on the advice of the NRA, to provide a range of farming types and geology. Decisions on what sort of measures would be taken in each area were based on where results could best be obtained. This is the first scheme of its kind in the country and we shall be monitoring progress closely with the object of learning how best to tackle nitrate concentrations. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that Anglian Water has assured us that all supplies in Norfolk should comply with the EC nitrate standard by the end of 1994.

On pesticides, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the Government's medical advisers do not regard the trace amounts of pesticides that have been revealed by extensive monitoring as a danger to public health. The precautionary standards for pesticides in the EC directive are not based on toxicological data and we have formally requested a review of those standards. But it obviously still remains an aim to reduce such instances of pesticides in drinking water as far as practicable.

The water companies and the NRA carry out extensive monitoring. The NRA routinely monitors the concentration of dangerous substances in water courses and the water companies are responsible for monotoring the quality of the water that they supply in accordance with the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989.

Therefore, we are committed to ensuring that the standards are met wherever that is technically possible. Again, Anglian Water has submitted undertakings to the Secretary of State to comply with the pesticides standards throughout Norfolk by the end of 1995.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned waste disposal sites. The NRA is in close contact with the waste regulation authorities over those sites that are believed to present a risk of causing water pollution. The lining of existing landfill sites may not be possible, but the Environmental Protection Bill, currently before Parliament, sets higher standards and brings in a stricter licensing regime. It may well be that in those areas where the geology is not suitable the lining of new landfill sites will become far more common.

The hon. Gentleman rightly made considerable play in his speech about the need for public information. We remain committed to the principle of the widest possible public access to environmental information. Perhaps I can demonstrate that by reference to bathing waters—another of the issues that he mentioned. He complained that not enough beaches in East Anglia, and particularly in Norfolk, came up to EC standards for the quality of coastal waters.

Generally, British bathing waters are nowhere near as bad as some people would have it. We have identified 440 bathing waters under the EC directive, and three quarters of them now meet EC standards. I hope that local authorities will now act to bring those beaches up to the higher standards required for their designation as blue flag beaches. There are a number of such beaches on the East Anglian coast. Earlier this week I visited a beach at Lowestoft which comes up to EC standards for the quality of its bathing waters. Also I was glad to see that the local authority had provided public conveniences and information boards and had kept the beach free of litter.

As regards the voluntary provision of information to visitors, we encourage local authorities to provide information on public notice boards, and there is nothing to stop them doing so. The National Rivers Authority already makes that information and the raw testing data available on public registers and it is now up to interested voluntary bodies and local authorities to disseminate that information as widely as they wish.

The water industry throughout the country expects to spend some £3 billion on measures specifically designed to ensure that bathing waters meet the EC directive standards, and on implementing the recently announced policy that, in future, all significant discharges of sewage to coastal waters or to estuaries should first receive treatment.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned a number of specific bathing waters in the area. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to Yarmouth. Great Yarmouth south, Sheringham and Cromer are three bathing waters that fail

the test. All of them are now covered by improvement schemes. I agree with the hon. Gentleman—as I think we can all agree—that too many of our beaches fail the test.

In the past, Governments of all parties failed to give water treatment in coastal areas the attention and investment that it deserved. I assure the hon. Gentleman that that is no longer the case, and that we have an ambitious investment programme in train, which is to be carried out by water service companies. It is not always easy to put in place the complex engineering and technical plant, particularly as planning issues may arise.

Our programme should bring all our coastal waters up to EC standards well before the end of the decade. I do not believe that appearances before the European Court of Justice can accelerate that process.

The hon. Gentleman asked why inland bathing waters have not been designated for the purpose of the directive. The simple answer is that we are satisfied that no inland waters at present meet the criteria for identification, which involves much more than a simple test of whether people bathe there. Local environmental health officers may monitor water quality at such places and make the information publicly available, and the hon. Gentleman may encourage them to do so.

As to river quality in Norfolk, the rivers there are, in common with the rest of the country, of good or fair quality. Throughout the United Kingdom, 95 per cent. of rivers are of good or fair quality, which compares favourably with the situation in Europe, where we believe that only 75 per cent. of rivers are of comparable quality.

Privatisation of the water industry has enabled us to plan for further improvements. The water industry will be spending about £11 billion over the next 10 years on improving its sewage treatment works and the sewerage system generally. Anglian Water's investment programme will amount to some £1·5 billion during that period.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned high levels of metal contamination of the River Yare. In the early 1980s, elevated levels of mercury in that river were traced to a pharmaceutical works in Norwich, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that mercury is no longer being discharged by the company concerned, and concentrations in the river are regularly below the limit of detection. Concentrations in sediments have reduced dramatically—though, inevitably, sediments take longer to clear. Fish taken from the River Yare now meet the EC's requirements for mercury levels, and the results of the NRA's monitoring of water quality in the river are available for inspection on the public registers that the authority maintains. I must take issue with the hon. Gentleman if he is suggesting that there is any secrecy. Not only is monitoring undertaken but the results are available to the hon. Gentleman and to other members of the public.

I am not complacent about river quality in Norfolk or anywhere else. There remains much to be done, but we have in place a highly ambitious investment programme and the right administrative structure to ensure that it is successful. The new water service companies have access to the necessary capital required. We can look forward to a gradual but further improvement in water quality—not only for drinking but of waste water. That will lead in turn to cleaner beaches.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 13 July 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

9.34 am

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, to assure Her Majesty that this House profoundly shares the great joy of the nation on the occasion of the forthcoming ninetieth birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother is one of those precious people who were born in the reign of Queen Victoria and who are still enriching the life of our nation. In inviting this House to congratulate Her Majesty, we think also of all those who have attained so notable an age and have lived through so much history and have contributed to that history, but few can rival Her Majesty in the responsibilities that she has carried or in the services which she has rendered, or in the joy that she continues to bring.

Those born in 1900 suffered the agonies of the great war of 1914-18. She shares with others, then in their teens, the experience of losing close relatives. She herself nursed and administered to the wounded, seeing her Scottish home turned into an emergency hospital while she was a girl. These things helped to form that compassion which has been a mark of her service to the nation. No mere formality for her to be patron of the Red Cross, or to do all that she could for nurses in our hospitals.

In 1936 she was called to serve our people as the Queen of King George VI and in doing so became the first person of English and Scottish parentage to be the consort of our sovereign. Soon the nation found itself again in a great war which imposed exceptional burdens upon the King. These he faced with a strong sense of duty and determination. Throughout the war and the years of hardship immediately after he was sustained and encouraged by his Queen. Nothing endeared them more to their people than their decision to share the hazards faced by their subjects by remaining at the centre of the bomb-scarred capital during the blitz. The inspiration that she and the King provided during that struggle for freedom and democracy sealed for ever the place that she holds in our hearts.

Since the death of the King and since becoming Queen Mother she has not in any way diminished her service to public life. On the contrary, her circle of friendship is ever widening. She is an energetic traveller, especially to the countries of the Commonwealth, which is so important to her and whose people's affection for her matches our own.

The Queen Mother has delighted in being colonel-in-chief of historic regiments such as the Black Watch and the Queen's Own Hussars and in being the leader of the Women's Royal Naval Service.

All of us who were privileged to witness the birthday tribute to Her Majesty last month—a unique occasion saw the great depth of affection and loyalty that flowed out to her from people of all walks of life and from all parts of the country. Each, as they marched past in parade, showed in their faces their happiness at being able to pay tribute to the Queen who continues to give so much of her time and personal interest to the hundreds of organisations which serve the community and which form the strong threads in the tapestry of our national life. It was a joyous and fitting tribute to Her Majesty.

The warmth of her affection for the nation is mirrored in the affections of the nation for her. She has come to symbolise the continuity of the royal family across four generations. The Queen's realms and Commonwealth owe her a debt that can never be repaid. May we continue to be blessed with her gracious presence for many years to come.

9.39 am

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I have great pleasure in supporting the Prime Minister's motion that a message be sent from this House to congratulate Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother on her 90th birthday and to send her our warmest greetings.

This beloved and gracious lady has an incomparable place in the heart of the nation. Who else could have inspired a pre-birthday pageant which included an Aberdeen Angus bull, a selection of dachshunds and chickens, five mayors of the cinque ports, nine Old Contemptibles and 55 Fellows of the Royal Society? They represented but a small sample of the 300 civil and military organisations and activities supported and encouraged very actively by the Queen Mother in her long public life. It was the sort of spectacle that did her justice—a mixture of great fun, slightly unpredictable, entirely human and with the right shade of regality.

Today we can join with that celebration and send the gratitude of the House for a lifetime of truly meritorious service.

The Queen Mother's genius has been and is to fuse her love of family with her instinctive and strong sense of public duty and love of country. She has brought a spontaneity and energy to public life which has won her countless admirers all over the Commonwealth and all over the world. Her personal patriotism has always been distinctive and of the highest order, particularly, as the Prime Minister said, in war time when, with unrehearsed and heartfelt phrases, she identified herself completely with the people enduring the misery and the perils of the blitz. At that time and on so many other occasions, her courage and strength of character have been exemplary.

Following the death of her beloved husband with whom she shared so much, it would have been easy and understandable for the Queen Mother to have gone into retirement or semi-retirement. Instead she stayed to serve, and both our country and constitutional monarchy have benefited from that courageous decision.

The vivacity of the Queen Mother, her personal kindness, her formidable memory, her ability to make everyone feel special, her dignity and her intuition are not just charming qualities; they are the attributes of someone who has greatness. But despite that status, and despite the fact that she has attained great age and rightly commands great respect, she is the least stuffy and remote of great grandmothers. She is pre-eminently the Queen Mum, and

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

the affection which that unique title conveys is chief amongst all the feelings held about this remarkable woman. With that affection, we thank her today for all that she has done and all she continues to do. We bid her happy birthday, and we wish her many more hale and hearty years to come.

9.42 am

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I join the Leader of the Opposition in warmly endorsing the Prime Minister's proposal that a message be sent from the House to congratulate Her Majesty the Queen Mother on the occasion of her 90th birthday next month.

There has been a common thread running through our comments today. They have all expressed joy at the Queen Mother's impending birthday and thanks for the joy that she has brought us all over her long years of service to the nation. She is a truly remarkable person whose personal warmth, sharp wit and infectious gaiety have won her a special place in the hearts and minds of the British people.

The Prime Minister is right to remind us that, as consort of King George VI during the difficult years of the war, her loyalty, steadfastness and courage were indeed an inspiration to our nation. Throughout her life she has devoted herself to serving the public, bringing her unique brand of radiance and enthusiasm to every engagement, at home and abroad.

My colleagues and I would like to join the whole House in sending our warmest congratulations to her on her 90th birthday and wishing her continued health and happiness.

Mr. Speaker: The Father of the House.

9.44 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I am honoured to support the motion and to pay my tribute to a very great lady. As the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have said, the Queen Mother has long held a warm and special place in all our hearts.

The motion rightly refers to Her Majesty's lifetime of service to the nation, and of course to the Commonwealth, and to the universal affection in which she is held. It is not difficult to see why. When fate decreed unexpectedly in the 1930s that her beloved husband should become King, she filled her new role as Queen with a natural grace which must not only have been a great support to him but which endeared her to us all. The explanation of course is that Her Majesty has always liked people. She radiates a gentle friendliness and interest wherever she goes which puts everyone at ease. There is a certain magic in her ability to unite hearts and affection.

My generation in particular can never forget the war years when, with the King and the people, she shared the dangers of living in our blitzed capital city. It would have been understandable in those grim days, when we were threatened with invasion and later with mass destruction from the skies, if the royal family had moved to a place of comparative safety. There was never any question of that. We know from her Majesty's own words:

"The children will not leave without me. I will not leave without the King, and the King will never leave";

and so it was, and the nation has never forgotten.

So today the House and the whole nation salutes a great lady, and wishes her a very happy 90th birthday and years more of good health and happiness.

9.47 am

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I, too, support the Prime Minister's motion that a message of congratulation and good wishes should be sent to the Queen Mother on her 90th birthday. I do so on behalf of the Ulster Unionist party, and on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland where reside some of her most loyal admirers.

I am just a little too young to remember what happened during the war, but the service of the Queen Mother during that time has become a legend. During the past 20 tragic years we in Northern Ireland have seen it repeated in the Queen Mother's attention to that part of the United Kingdom. Her frequent visits to Northern Ireland have been an inspiration to the people living there, and the affection which each person there has for the Queen Mother is beyond my ability to describe.

I recall her last visit to my constituency and remember that gracious and regal lady stepping unaided from the helicopter on to the lawn and up on to the dais, again unaided, to speak to her loyal subjects. In endorsing what has been said by previous speakers, I emphasise that the people of Ulster love the Queen Mother and have a special affection for her.

9.50 am

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): On behalf of my constituents in Windsor and Maidenhead, I should like to add my congratulations to those of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who, in moving the motion so adequately and beautifully, expressed every facet of Her Majesty's life. The Queen Mother has many public duties. The parade showed the 300 institutions in which she has always shown an interest. Above all, the Queen Mother has always found time to take an interest in and look after all sections of our nation. She has a particular affection for Windsor. She moved there in August 1931 and since then she has shown an interest and particular affection, almost a family affection, for my constituents. Her Majesty has graced many events and we are proud to have her in our royal borough.

It is with great pleasure on behalf of my constituents that I endorse all that has been said by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and others in wishing Her Majesty good wishes on her 90th birthday and for the future.

9.52 am

Mr. Ian Stewart (Hertfordshire, North): I have the honour to represent north Hertfordshire, which includes the village of St. Paul's Walden, where the Queen Mother spent much of her early life and to which she has always remained attached. On behalf of my constituents, I express to her our affectionate thanks for all that she has done in the district—supporting so many causes, particularly St. Mary's church, Hitchin, and the successful appeal for the new theatre in the town that bears her name. I look forward to many such occasions in future when we shall see her again; and I wish her many happy returns for her sake, of course, and also for ours.

9.53 am

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Queen Mother is a Scot and proud of the fact, and we are proud that she has chosen to spend much of her leisure time in the north of Scotland, in my community, where she is a welcome visitor every year. She will come this year shortly after her strenuous birthday engagements, and we hope that she will find relaxation in our midst. She symbolises the unity of the nations of the United Kingdom and is someone we are proud to acknowledge as a friend in the community.

9.54 am

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I had not thought to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, but the Father of the House urged me to do so. For the past 12 years I have had the great privilege of welcoming Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother to Parliament's own church, St. Margaret's, when she attends an event that uniquely encapsulates her qualities. She comes every year to the dedication of the field of remembrance, which is a remarkable and moving occasion. She comes to commemorate those days when she lived through two world wars.

One of the most remarkable attributes of the Queen Mother is that she takes time. She always overruns the programme, speaks to everyone and makes them feel special, as has been said this morning. When she goes away she leaves a glow of remembrance and affection for her which will never be dimmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved, nemine contradicente,

That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty, to assure Her Majesty that this House profoundly shares the great joy of the nation on the occasion of the forthcoming ninetieth birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

Ordered,

That the said Address be presented to her Majesty by such Members of this House as are of Her Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council or of Her Majesty's Household. —*[The Prime Minister.]*

Resolved, nemine contradicente,

That a Message be sent to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, to offer to Her Majesty the heartfelt good wishes of the House upon the occasion of Her Majesty's forthcoming ninetieth birthday, praying that, in universal affection and gratitude for a lifetime of service to the nation and the Commonwealth, Her Majesty may long continue in health and happiness.—*[The Prime Minister.]*

Ordered,

That Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Neil Kinnock, Mr. Paddy Ashdown, Mr. James Molyneaux and Sir Bernard Braine do wait upon Her Majesty with the said Message.—*[The Prime Minister.]*

Policing in London

[Relevant document: 1989 Report of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner (Cm 1070)]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

9.55 am

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): The Metropolitan police are in many ways unique and have certainly some unique responsibilities, including responsibility for the security of this House, of other royal palaces in London and diplomatic premises. It is because they are unique that over the years Governments of all parties have taken the view that the Metropolitan police cannot be accountable to anyone but Parliament, and should be so answerable through a senior Cabinet Minister. The Labour party, without the burdens of office, now considers different arrangements are needed. Those would include involving local authorities in setting operational priorities and controlling the police.

Unfortunately, whilst most local authorities in London have an excellent record of working constructively with the police, it is not true of all of them. Until very recently five then Labour-led boroughs refused to co-operate with police consultative groups, and some still refuse to do so. Some refused to help neighbourhood watch initiatives; and some refused even to allow the police into schools. The situation seems now to be improving.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Which are the local authorities that do not allow police into schools?

Mr. Waddington: I was referring to the past, and I cannot give the authorities. If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that it is satisfactory to hand over the control of the police to local authorities that were recently refusing to have neighbourhood watch schemes and allow police into schools, that is a strange state of affairs.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): My right hon. and learned Friend is correct. The tragedy and wickedness of it is that the Inner London education authority upheld pressure from some left-wing teachers not to allow police into schools——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Where?

Mr. Greenway: In Hackney, for example, and Ealing. As I said in the House yesterday, when Labour controlled Ealing council Labour councillors did not attend the consultative police committee for the four years of their control. What is more, they had a staff of 10, headed by the deputy leader of another Labour council in London, who did nothing but disrupt the work of the police. What the Home Secretary says is correct.

Mr. Waddington: When I was last in the Home Office as Minister of State we had enormous trouble trying to get Labour local authorities throughout London to set up police consultative groups. Some of them flatly refused to do so. At present, Islington, Hackney, Haringey and Brent councils are still refusing to carry out their duties to set up consultative bodies.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The Home Secretary must know that the London borough of Islington has co-operated fully and participated in the

[Mr. Chris Smith]

police consultative group in Islington for the past three and a half to four years. I am a member of that group and attend its meetings, and the borough has always co-operated with it. The Home Secretary's information is wrong, and I hope that he will withdraw what he has said.

Mr. Waddington: I said a few moments ago that, until recently, five then Labour-led local authorities refused to co-operate with police consultative groups. Let me repeat what I was saying—

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I shall not give way because I must first deal with what I was saying before. I said that until recently five then Labour-led local authorities refused to co-operate with police consultative groups.

Mr. Chris Smith: Where?

Mr. Waddington: I shall give way in a minute. I can say precisely which those authorities were: Brent, Ealing, now happily free of Labour control, Hackney, Lambeth and —*[Interruption.]*—Islington.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Home Secretary get his facts straight and get another message from the Box while I am making this intervention. Will he apologise to the borough of Islington, which for a long time has mounted a most effective campaign against crime in the borough and has a police consultative group, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and I are both, as Members of Parliament, members? Will the Home Secretary withdraw the suggestion that the borough of Islington is not concerned about the safety of its citizens or the high rates of crime in it? It has made an enormous effort to solve such problems. Councillor Sawyer, the chair of the Association of London Authorities police committee, puts enormous effort into trying to improve, by democratic means, policing in London.

Mr. Waddington: If I am wrong, I unreservedly withdraw my remarks. I am just checking with my officials in the Box, and if the note that was passed to me was wrong, I withdraw the contents of it unreservedly. I was given to understand that the list was Brent, Ealing, Hackney, Lambeth and Islington. If the note was wrong about Islington, I unreservedly withdraw what I said. I notice that there has been no challenge on my statement that Brent, Ealing and Hackney flatly refused until recently to set up police consultative groups.

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, until this year, Lambeth council had refused to allow the Lambeth police consultative group to meet in the town hall? I am delighted to say that, this year, for the first time, it is prepared to make premises available.

Mr. Waddington: That is one improvement, but I have related a shocking history. If Opposition Members are correct, I apologise, but the fact that they were able to show that just one of the local authorities I mentioned had behaved correctly does not say much for Labour control of local authorities in London.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that one of the first consultative groups to be set up in this country was in Lambeth? It was set up with the full co-operation of the local authority, myself and John Tilley, who was also a Member of Parliament. We took the initiative to set up the group and, after the riots, worked closely with Lord Whitelaw to do exactly that. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should withdraw his remarks and confirm that there is adequate co-operation between Lambeth council and the police.

Mr. Waddington: I have a clear recollection of that matter. The Lambeth council would not set up a police consultative group in accordance with the guidelines that call for the involvement of local councillors, local Members of Parliament and local voluntary groups. As it refused to abide by those guidelines, it would not set up the group required of it—later required of it under legislation.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I came along this morning to hear from the Home Secretary about current policing and what is happening; I did not come along for a lecture about what happened in the past. Will the Home Secretary please tell us what is happening now and what will happen in the future?

Mr. Waddington: I shall certainly do so, but I was only pointing out that, first, I must justify the present system of accountability as I would be surprised if the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) did not mention the Labour proposal to do away with it. I think that it is correct that I should be responsible to the House for the activities of the Commissioner and the Metropolitan police. That is why I am here today. The present system is right, not least because of the attitude of Labour local authorities towards policing in London in the past. It would be odd to give power over the police to the very local authorities that have continuously attempted to undermine and obstruct them. History demands that we should therefore have no truck with proposals that would hand over control of the police in London to those local authorities.

The Labour party says, of course, that its proposals would improve accountability. All I can say is that I suspect that many chief constables are quite happy not to be under constant and thorough scrutiny by the National Audit Office and by the Public Accounts Committee as is the Metropolitan police. They are quite happy not to have their activities scrutinised on the Floor of the House following the presentation to the House of an annual report. The Metropolitan police are also in a real sense responsive to the people of London, their primary and most important customers.

In this debate and at regular meetings attended by myself and the Commissioner, right hon. and hon. Members and the local authorities associations have the opportunity to put their points of view and express their concerns and what they believe to be the concerns of London people. The elected representatives can make known their views and demand a response, and, perhaps even more importantly, the police at divisional level are closely in touch with the people whom they serve every day through the operation of police consultative groups, lay visitors schemes and more informal contacts. The police, therefore, learn of their concerns. I repeat that there is no

doubt about the accountability, no doubt about the responsibility and no doubt about the readiness to respond.

For all their uniqueness, the Metropolitan police face problems common to all police forces. They must be effective in preventing and combating crime: they must keep the peace; and they must try to reduce the fear of crime and support and care for the victims of crime. Like all other police forces throughout England and Wales, the Metropolitan police must deliver a quality service to the people they serve.

Work to prevent and combat crime is seen by most people as the core of police business; and there is no disguising that the criminal statistics recorded by the Comissioner in his annual report make sober reading. In 1989 there was a 5 per cent. increase in notifiable offences. Of particular concern is the increase in violent crime. However, violent crime remains a small proportion of all crime—7 per cent. in the metropolis and 6 per cent. in the country—and most violent crimes result in little or no injury to the victim. None the less, we and the police must engage in a thorough and continuing search to reduce violent crime so that all our citizens, especially those who, through age, sex, infirmity or the colour of their skin are special targets, can be protected from those who prey on them.

Over the years the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has said a number of things about the causes of crime. He has made a series of utterances that conflict with each other. In recent times he has attributed crime both to unemployment and to too many people getting too rich, too quick. Today we will probably hear that crimes occur because we have not joined the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Hattersley: I know that the Home Secretary likes to ponder on such profound matters. Why does he believe it is impossible for crime to increase among the poor because they are poor and among those who have been encouraged to get too rich, too quickly and too unscrupulously? Why cannot those two things happen together?

Mr. Waddington: I find it most extraordinary that in different debates the right hon. Gentleman comes up with different solutions. Perhaps he will study the matter a little more deeply and come up with his overall solution, which I am sure will suit us all. I am content with the notion that the explanation for crime has evaded people for years and years, and I imagine that it will continue to do so for many years to come.

In my experience, it is nonsense to say that unemployment is a cause of an increase in crime. We had far worse levels of unemployment between the wars but a lower incidence of crime. When I was called to the Bar in the early 1950s, the pundits were saying that the cause of the increase in crime was greater affluence rather than too much poverty. We shall await the right hon. Gentleman's next utterances, which I am sure will be quite as profound as the ones he has voiced so far.

The truth is that there is no single or simple explanation as to why some turn to crime and some do not. However, we do know that those minded to commit crime, those who have no inhibitions about stealing other people's money or property are always on the look-out for easy pickings. A quarter of all crimes are thefts from or of cars and we therefore need better car security. I have emphasised that in my discussions with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. However, people to not always lock their cars of secure their homes. A quarter of all car crime happens because people leave their car doors unlocked. A quarter of all burglaries are of premises that are unlocked and into which the burglar can walk without even needing to force entry.

Crime is not something with which the police can deal on their own. However the Commissioner's report bears witness to the constant and at times courageous struggle against crime waged by his force. While the war is still raging, the police have won some encouraging battles. Seven per cent. more crimes were cleared up in 1989 than in the year before. Muggings—street robbery and snatch theft—fell in the metropolis by 9 per cent. which is particularly encouraging in view of the public's great concern about this offence.

There is also great concern about the violence to which women are exposed, both inside and outside the home. The first step towards tackling this problem effectively is to encourage women who are victims of these crimes to report them immediately to the police. To this end, the police have concentrated on developing improved facilities for the reception and treatment of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. There are now eight fully operational rape victim examination suites in the Metropolitan police district. The domestic violence units which the Metropolitan police have pioneered over the past three years, of which there are now 35 in the Metropolitan police district, are widely recognised for the sympathetic and practical support that they offer to individuals who experience violence in the home. The Commissioner records in his annual report that 42 per cent. more incidents of domestic violence were reported in 1989 than in 1988. This is a terrible indication of what goes on behind closed doors and drawn curtains in London, but the fact that these incidents are being reported when they were not in the past is also a significant indicator of public confidence in the force's ability to respond effectively and positively to this problem.

The Metropolitan police have adopted a similar approach to the problem of racial attacks and harassment. The recent valuable report by the Select Committee on Home Affairs stressed the importance of well-publicised declarations by chief officers in encouraging further reporting of racial incidents. I greatly welcome, therefore, the Commissioner's repeated and public commitment to tackling this problem—backed up by a campaign to encourage the reporting of such incidents. It is not just a question of talk. The Metropolitan police have taken action. They are closely involved in a multi-agency project to combat attacks in Newham. They have increasingly deployed specialist racial incidents squads and mounted ad hoc targeted operations. There are now 15 racial incident panels in the Metropolitan police district. Again, the success of police activity and the encouragement that victims have received to report this crime have been in part the cause of the 22 per cent. increase in racial incidents in the statistics.

The police fight crime best when they are working together with the local community. Street crime in Brixton has declined dramatically in the past three years—with 1,200 fewer victims in 1989 than in 1986. This is a considerable achievement, which we can all warmly commend, and it is significant that the Brixton police operations, which have included enhancement of the

[Mr. Waddington]

robbery squad by a third, have had the full support of the Lambeth police-community consultative group and the Brixton divisional consultative team.

That partnership between the police and the public is at the heart of the Commissioner's crime strategy and is one that the Government wholeheartedly endorse. In that context, it was again encouraging to read in the Commissioner's report of the many new crime prevention initiatives that began last year. There were more than 10,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in operation in the Metropolitan police district by the end of last year, covering more than 1·3 million households. The involvement of businesses through the sponsorship of newsletters and the funding of videos and in other support services for watch schemes is especially important and encouraging. There is also a cabwatch scheme involving over 6,000 cabbies, and 64 pubwatch schemes. There are 34 adult crime prevention panels and six youth crime prevention panels in the Metropolitan police district. Clearly the message is getting through—crime is everyone's problem and it is up to all of us to help the police in every way we can to solve it.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the pubwatch schemes, which have been set up throughout the Metropolitan police area, are of special value? In the village of Harefield —which is a community in my constituency isolated from the rest of the area by about two and a half miles of metropolitan green belt—this scheme has proved to be exceptionally effective. It is especially suited to a small and isolated community. Can my right hon. and learned Friend say to what extent he hopes that the pubwatch schemes can be extended because they are of great value to the community, to the publicans who serve the community and to people who enjoy a peaceful drink in a pub?

Mr. Waddington: I am glad that my hon. Friend mentioned that matter because I did not want to give the impression that the pubwatch schemes are peculiar to the metropolitan area. They are springing up throughout the country and they are making a valuable contribution where they are already in existence.

It would not make sense to leave the issue of partnership between the police and the public without mentioning the Metropolitan police special constabulary. The contribution of the special constabulary is of enormous importance, not as a substitute for regular officers, but as a supplement to them. I am happy to pay tribute to their public-spirited service.

Crime statistics are regarded by many as the only measure of police effectiveness, but this is a simplistic view and fails to recognise the many important services, besides the prevention of crime and the apprehension of offenders, which the police undertake on our behalf.

The Metropolitan police was the first force in the country to provide assistance to the ambulance service when industrial action by ambulance crews put the public of London at risk by leaving a shortage of accident and emergency cover. The Metropolitan police devoted 650,000 man-hours to providing cover. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I are profoundly grateful for the dedicated response of police officers in helping to protect lives in this way.

The Commissioner's report also lists numerous examples where the police were called upon to help to preserve the difficult balance between the democratic rights of every citizen to demonstrate and march peacefully, and the right of others to go about their lawful business with the minimum of disruption. It is rarely appreciated that in a very real sense the police act as guarantors of the rights to demonstrate and march, working closely with organisers to ensure that major events pass peacefully and to the satisfaction of everyone. When matters get out of control, it is the police who are always in the front line. It is they who are assaulted, spat on, vilified—all for the terrible sin of protecting the public.

The scenes of violence and disorder that occurred in central London on 31 March, during and after the demonstration against the community charge, were an absolute disgrace. The police were subjected to sustained assault by a hard core of determined troublemakers. I am happy to pay tribute again to all the officers concerned for the courage they showed in the face of outrageous and barbaric behaviour.

I consider of particular importance the service that the Metropolitan police offer to the victims of crime. They have made considerable and welcome strides in this area since 1989, referring 108,000 victims to support schemes. One of the aims of a project implemented last year was to give priority in criminal investigation work to the victims' needs and to providing victims with a quality service, and I am pleased to see that one of the Commissioner's aims for 1990 is to keep the needs of victims at the forefront of the police response to crime.

The Metropolitan police, like all police forces, provide a multi-faceted service to the people of London, and it is up to them to find how to improve continually the quality of that service. There is, of course, much to support and commend in the work that the police already do. Day in, day out, the men and women of the Metropolitan police —civilians and police alike—work diligently and courageously for us to improve our quality of life. But although the polls show that a large majority of the populace are satisfied with the service that the police offer, worries are sometimes expressed about the lack of civility of a minority of police officers and some members of the public express concern about a tendency for the police to become remote and insular. I suppose that in a way it is not surprising that they should develop an insular approach. Too often the police are subject to undeserved and unfair criticism which must sometimes make them feel embattled and alone. We should not, however, disguise the fact that there are problems—with which, I am glad to say, the police service as a whole is beginning to grapple.

The year 1989 saw the launch both of the statement of common purpose and values and the Commissioner's PLUS programme. The Commissioner is deliberately opening up the Metropolitan police to legitimate criticism and to a searching examination of the service which they can offer and which is demanded of them. PLUS is nothing less than an attempt to change the whole culture of the Metropolitan police—to get the police to listen to the public, to understand what they want, and then to deliver a high-quality and steadily improving service. PLUS is a worthy and exciting initiative that demands the full support of the House.

PLUS carries with it some risks, however. Some think that improvements generated by it will come quickly and easily. But a programme of change on this scale will take

many years to complete. Of course, that is not to say that there will not be benefits along the way. I hope to see an increased emphasis on victims, a better response to the public's priorities, a new sense of corporacy within the Metropolitan police, better strategic planning and better value for money. Above all, I want to see improvements in basic standards of courtesy and service. The other risk is that, by accepting that change is necessary, we may damage the morale of those thousands of police and civilian staff in the Met who already deliver a high-quality service. But PLUS is in part about ensuring that everyone in the Met lives up to the standards of the vast majority —and the vast majority need not feel that they are unappreciated. We recognise that they shoulder considerable burdens. No one should forget for a moment the assaults that they endure: there were nearly 5,000 in the Met last year—an 18 per cent. increase on the year before. It is right that we should demand much from the police, but in doing so we should recognise what they have to put up with and be grateful for what they do for us.

A high-quality service is one that provides value for money, and we must continually look for value for money. In the current financial year the Metropolitan police will spend about £1·25 billion. The taxpayer and the charge payer have a legitimate interest in seeing that the money is used to best advantage. In the Met increasing efforts are being made to provide that value for money by civilianisation—189 posts were civilianised last year alone; through efficiency scrutinies, which have already saved more than £4 million a year; through the introduction of devolved budgeting, so that managers at local level can use their expertise to provide the best possible service; and by increasing the amount of time that officers spend on street duties, which is what the public undoubtedly want. As the measured work load of the Metropolitan police has increased by more than five per cent. in the past year, those are considerable achievements, but much remains to be done. The Commissioner estimated, for instance, that up to 1,500 further posts within the organisation could be civilianised. We will have to pursue that and other opportunities for value for money with increasing vigour.

The Metropolitan police must make full use of the human resources available to them on the labour market, and I am glad to say that they are one of the most advanced services in the country when it comes to providing equal opportunities in employment. But it is very important that the work force of the Met should become more representative of the people of London, now so diverse in race, and I know that the Commissioner is deeply committed to that aim. I was pleased to attend the launch in March this year of the Metropolitan police's report based on six years of collaboration with the Equal Opportunities Commission to promote equality of opportunity within the force. There is still much to do, but the Met is on the right road.

It is the job of Government to ensure that the metropolitan police have the resources that they need for the proper policing of the metropolis, and no one can seriously doubt that we have carried out properly our responsibility in that regard. Since 1979 expenditure on the Metropolitan police has gone up by 72 per cent. in real terms. There are 6,000 extra police officers, and many other officers have been freed from desk jobs to carry out the real tasks for which they have been trained as a result of the policy of civilianisation.

Until 1979, the Labour Government starved the police of resources, officers left the police in their thousands and morale plummeted. By May 1979, forces in England and Wales were 7,710 below establishment, and in the Met there was a 16 per cent. shortfall. Within a week of taking office, our Government implemented the Edmund-Davies pay award in full and we have honoured the Edmund-Davies formula ever since, so that police pay is now up 41 per cent. in real terms over its 1979 level. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Is that all?"] I think that 41 per cent. represents a very big improvement in police pay.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary has forgotten that he vetoed arbitration on the police rent and housing allowance. He has also forgotten that the chairman of the arbitration panel said that that was an integral part of Edmund-Davies. It is nonsense to say that he has honoured the Edmund-Davies settlement.

Mr. Waddington: The right hon. Gentleman had better read the Edmund-Davies report again. He is talking sheer nonsense. We have honoured the Edmund-Davies formula and the right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well from the debate that we had the other night that it would have been an irresponsible Government who did not do something about police rent allowances, not least because they rose by 57 per cent. in the Met last year. The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the more money is spent on rent allowances the less is available for other services. We could not have continued with the old arrangements, so a new formula had to be created. The right hon. Gentleman also knows of the protection given to all existing officers as a result of red circling.

The right hon. Gentleman has made some very strange statements recently about what might happen if the government of Britain fell into the hands of the Labour party. He does not like me quoting what he said at the Police Federation conference, but what he said in the House on 25 June is enough to frighten the living daylights out of the police:

> "'Of course, until the negotiations are completed, Edmund-Davies will be honoured.'"—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1990; Vol. 175, c. 117.]

If that does not mean that the right hon. Gentleman would try to negotiate his way out of Edmund-Davies, I am a Dutchman—and I am not a Dutchman.

Labour claims to support the police. However, that claim has no credibility when we consider what has happened in local authorities in London. We did not see much support from Labour for the police during the miners' strike. We saw no support for the police from Labour at Wapping when the police were protecting the rights of ordinary men and women to go to work and were attacked and reviled for doing so. I am sorry to have introduced a political note which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook does not like. However, I cannot see how I could have started this debate without referring to my responsibilities here and the folly of the Labour party's proposals to change the system of responsibility for the Met.

I remind the House that we are here today to debate specifically policing in London as a result of my duty to come to the House and report on the Commissioner's annual report. That report sets out a remarkable record of achievement in circumstances as difficult as those to be found in any large city in the world. The respect in which our police service is held world wide is demonstrated by

[Mr. Waddington]

the large number of officers sent from overseas to study and train here. I hope that the House will demonstrate today its full support for the police service in the work that it is doing for us.

10.31 am

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): In preparation for today's debate I read the *Hansard* reports of the debates on this subject that have taken place over the past 11 years under Whitelaw, Brittan and the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd). This is the first occasion in a decade when a Home Secretary thought it right to begin his account of the year's work of the police in London with the type of political knockabout that is more appropriate to young Conservative beetle drives, thus confirming again the growing opinion that the present incumbent is neither psychologically nor intellectually equipped for the office that he holds.

As the Home Secretary asked about control of the police in London—his words, not mine—and about responsibility and accountability, let me make several things absolutely clear. No serious person, and that includes the three predecessors of the present Home Secretary, could ever believe that the scrutiny that is possible for a Home Secretary extends as far as desirable in a democratic society. I do not know how much time the Home Secretary, with his many duties, actually spends in dealing with the London police in his capacity as the authority for the metropolis. I suspect that he spends very little time indeed. The idea that today's debate amounts to anything like proper scrutiny of the police in London is clearly nonsense.

I am not quite sure what the Home Secretary wants in that regard. At one point he said that many chief officers —I assume that he means chief officers outside London —would be pleased to avoid the scrutiny of the National Audit Office and of Parliament. He was implying that what happens in the provinces constitutes less control of the police than what happens in London. The Home Secretary then suggested that the elected police authorities, which are working so well outside London, would somehow be tyrannical for the capital. That is clearly nonsense and is not even a view that is held by progressive policemen.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is not it much more serious than that? Is not it clear that in his opening remarks the Home Secretary, knowingly or otherwise, implied that the Labour party's programme would introduce borough police control? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our proposal is to introduce to London what is, in effect, common now in Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool? If that is so, and my right hon. Friend can confirm it, should not we ask the Home Secretary to withdraw everything that he said about the future plans of the Labour party in London? Unless he does that, he can surely be accused of misrepresentation. Perhaps he has been ill informed. Should not we clear that up now? Otherwise the media will no doubt use what he said and be misinformed.

Mr. Hattersley: My hon. Friend is quite right to say that the idea of borough control is nonsense. As far as I am aware, that has not been advocated by anyone in any forum or in any political party. I am not sure whether the Home Secretary advocated it because during those passages he lost his place twice and became confused when the messages from the civil servants Box brought him false information, which he had to withdraw. I do not know what the Home Secretary said, but if he said that we proposed borough control he was talking absolute nonsense.

I want to pass on from the more silly side of the Home Secretary and deal with the real subject of debate—that is, policing in London during the year covered by the Commissioner's report. Last year at the opening of this annual debate, the then Home Secretary offered this judgment:

"Recorded crime figures do not tell the whole story, but they give an indication of what is happening."—[*Official Report*, 30 June 1989; Vol. 155, c. 1213.]

Today the Home Secretary rather downgraded the recorded crime figures as an indication of anything. No doubt he was influenced this year, as his predecessor was last year, by the trend in the figures. Last year the Home Secretary who upgraded the importance of the figures was speaking against a background of a reduction in recorded crime. This year, the indicator of what is happening shows a very different story and the Home Secretary has tried to downgrade it.

The Commissioner's annual report for 1989 revealed an annual increase in recorded crime of 5 per cent. The Home Office statistics for the first quarter of this year suggest that the increase in crime in London is accelerating at a frightening rate. According to the Home Office statistics, recorded crime in the Metropolitan police district increased between April 1989 and March 1990 by 7·6 per cent. Some 54,700 more crimes were recorded in the Metropolitan police area last year than in the year before. The total of notifiable recorded crimes has increased to 777,800—more than three quarters of a million. If the pattern of recent years is maintained, between 16 per cent. and 18 per cent. of those crimes will be cleared up. Of more than three quarters of a million crimes, only 120,000 will result in a prosecution and a conviction.

Mr. Shersby: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one interesting facet of the crime figures relates to sexual offences? In his report, the Commissioner makes the important point that although reported sexual offences rose by 23 per cent., that was due particularly to

"the increased numbers of victims having the confidence to report the offences."

Mr. Hattersley: I want to consider the individual categories of crime in a moment. However, I gladly concede, and by doing that compliment the Metropolitan police, that one of the reasons why crimes in that category show a higher number is because of the sensitive and progressive way in which the Metropolitan police now deal with them. There is therefore an increasing willingness on the part of the victims of those crimes to report what has happened.

However, I suspect that in other areas, in particular burglary, the tendency is increasingly not to report the crime. The assumption in some areas is that burglary is a common feature of life and that the burglar will not be caught. As I said, between only 16 per cent. and 18 per cent. of crimes are cleared up. Therefore, small burglaries are taken for granted.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): Burglary is one of

those crimes that will be reported whatever the percentage of clear-up, because insurance companies require the matter to be reported to the police in most cases before they will reimburse the householder.

Mr. Hattersley: I am delighted to have an opportunity to go into the serious technicalities of the matter. I discussed that point with the Metropolitan police when we considered "Crimewatch" and the vetting and screening systems to which I shall refer in a moment. My information is that burglaries are reported in a way that does not always enter the statistics. An insurance claim simply requires a claim number and that is provided if a phone call is made to the police station. However, that is very much a formal report. I remain suspicious that other cases are not taken to insurance companies anyway.

The Under-Secretary of State may be right that burglaries that are sufficiently large to justify an insurance claim go through the process of getting a report number, which insurance companies want. However, the hon. Gentleman must understand that, in many areas, there are constant burglaries, which are important and distressing to the individuals who have been affected, but they do not cover matters that the people affected regard as appropriate for insurance claims and therefore do not come under his rule.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is an important matter. The right hon. Gentleman was saying—I hope that I misunderstood him—that a formal report to the police of a burglary would not find its way into the formal statistics. If he is saying that, it is a matter of real concern, and I should be grateful if he cleared up that point. I should like to pursue it outside the House with the relevant police authorities.

Mr. Hattersley: I propose to deal with that subject when I refer to crime screening, when it would be sensibly and seriously considered.

The whole House will agree that the figures on clear-up rates and total reported crime make terrifying reading. Despite that, in a sense—perhaps in every sense—the Metropolitan police are to be congratulated on the year's record, for the increase in crime in London is less than the increase in crime throughout England and Wales. The latest statistics show a national increase of 10·5 per cent. —the biggest increase in history—up to the largest total level of recorded crime in history.

The national increase has occurred most dramatically among non-metropolitan forces—13·9 per cent. in Northumbria and 11·6 per cent. in west Yorkshire. In other cities, the increases have been much smaller—1·4 per cent. in Merseyside and 2·8 per cent. in the west midlands —in other cities, that is, except London. If we are to debate this subject seriously, one matter that we must examine is why, when other metropolitaan areas have seen small increases in their crime rate, crime has risen so much faster in London than in other cities. The answer is clear. Despite increases in establishment, police forces all over the country are much more overstretched than they have ever been before.

Increases in manpower have not matched increases in duties, and officers are deflected from their primary duties of prevention and detection by tasks that they should not necessarily perform. Although that is true of all police forces, it is particularly true in London, with the special duties exercised by the Metropolitan police, the special problems of policing the capital, and the additional burdens about which the Commissioner speaks in his annual report—additional burdens that overstretch the police in London more than the police are overstretched in the rest of the country.

The police will say, and no doubt have said to the Home Secretary, that, over the past 10 years, their additional duties have far overtaken increases in manpower. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 imposed additional obligations upon them. Many other items of legislation that have been passed by the House requiring extra police duties have stretched the force, but, in London, the overstretch is particularly acute, and that is why I believe that the crime rate in the capital has risen faster than in any other city. A passage in the Commissioner's report dealt with exactly that matter. Talking about special London demands and special demands on his force, he said:

> "These demands have included the requirement of Home Office prisoners to be held in police cells, the vetting of jurors and the continued development of London. In addition, this year my officers have also helped to police the Underground, assisted with maintaining order in Wandsworth Prison, and worked alongside the Army and voluntary services to maintain London's emergency ambulance cover."

Like the Home Secretary, I echo our gratitude to the police for all that they did in those particulars, but we cannot deny that, while doing that, they were unable to fulfil what many people would regard as their primary and most important duty: the prevention of crime and the apprehension of criminals when crime has been committed. Five thousand officers—400 to 700 a day—were employed in Wandsworth during the prison officers' dispute. No allowance was made for that in the total police establishment. They were officers who should have been deterring and detecting crime. No wonder crime increased by 7·6 per cent.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am following the right hon. Gentleman's arguments very carefully. Of course, they are complicated and important. However, does he agree that some organisations, such as the Prison Officers Association, have caused that additional duty to be imposed on the Metropolitan police? Should not the right hon. Gentleman condemn that irresponsible action by another service of the Crown, which required a more loyal service of the Crown to take its place? That might apply, of course, in other respects, such as the disorders in Trafalgar square. Of course, the right hon. Gentleman will not be unmindful of the policing of the Notting hill carnival. Over three days, no fewer than 5,000 police officers—almost the strength of the second largest police force in the country—are required to police one event.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman can allocate blame if he wishes. We are agreeing on the basic principle. We are subscribing to the view that was set out by the Commissioner, that the police in London face special problems because the capital's policing makes extra demands on their time and resources. On the prison dispute, the hon. Gentleman is quite wrong to heap the burden wholly on prison officers. I am not at all sure whether in many prisons, "fresh start" has worked in the way in which the Home Office promised. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman believes that the Government are right. In the hon. Gentleman's opinion, the Government are right in every particular. If the Home Secretary prophesied four years of flood and famine, the hon.

[Mr. Hattersley]

Gentleman would tell him that he was quite right to do so and would give his total support. I take a rather more objective view of such matters.

In some cases, the Government must take some responsibility—indeed, direct responsibility—for the overstretch that has occurred. For example, the London ambulance dispute caused the police in London perhaps the most seious problem of the year. In the Commissioner's words, 30,272 police man days "were worked . . . by officers who would otherwise have been available for normal police duty".
That was extraordinary.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, throughout the ambulance dispute, which was caused by Government obduracy anyway, there were numerous requests from the Police Federation that officers should not be involved in the dispute because they simply did not feel able or qualified to do the important and serious job of taking London's road casualties to hospital?

Mr. Hattersley: My hon. Friend is right in one particular, but I go further. The Police Federation formally doubted the officers' ability to perform the task properly. The Police Federation formally said that it was sympathetic with the ambulance workers, but it rightly accepted the burden of maintaining the emergency service, because that was its duty. Whether its judgment about the merits and virtues of the dispute was right or wrong, it is undeniable that, because that dispute was prolonged for such a period because of the extent of the dispute, 30,272 police man days were spent on a task that was not the officers' primary duty.

If the Government are not prepared to take action and understand the need to avoid situations in which police are diverted from their proper task and proper functions, they must take some responsibility for an increase in crime of 7·6 per cent. Clearly, diversions from proper duty had a substantial part to play in bringing about that increase.

Mr. Shersby: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, although the Police Federation expressed its concern about the strike and about the difficulties that were faced by the ambulance workers and the unions that represent them, the officers nevertheless carried out their duties loyally and with considerable distinction? Is he aware that, in Birmingham, which I visited during the strike, the police, together with the Army, actually succeeded in considerably cutting the call-out time for emergency cases? As a result, that technique will probably be of great benefit to ambulance workers in future.

Mr. Hattersley: I have twice congratulated the police on the way in which they performed their duties during that time. If the hon. Gentleman would like me to do it a third time, I shall do so gladly and willingly because those are the emotions that I felt before and still feel now.

Having discussed and described the problems facing the police because of the special problems, extra duties and the difficulties of overstretch, the Commissioner's report then refers to the difficulties of policing in a changing environment. He talks about——

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hattersley: Yes, but this is probably the last time.

Mr. Cohen: The policing of that dispute raises an important point. It cost millions of pounds, yet the Government have not put up a penny. The health authorities are having to foot the bill and to close hospitals and reduce their services as a result. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a scandal and that the Government should have put up the money?

Mr. Hattersley: Of course, I agree with my hon. Friend, but if I follow him down that route, it will divert us from the main task, which is to discuss policing. However, as my hon. Friend well knows, I agree that that is a strong point.

Although it is not a point of similar passion, my next point is a point of equal strength and, as I said, was made by the Commissioner when he discussed the problems of policing in the changing physical environment of London, with all its building sites and road developments. However, the Commissioner did not mention a second problem which I believe certainly exists and which is visible to anyone who travels around the capital. In my view, it is impossible to see the dilapidated housing estates, the decrepit Victorian housing and the derelict shops without believing them to be a breeding ground for crime, especially when they are located side by side with leisure facilities which, because of the squeeze on local authority budgets, are inadequate or run down. The reduction in council spending on repairs and renovations to old peoples' flats, on adequate road lighting and on the redevelopment of vacant land, must have had a substantial effect on the crime figures for London over the past year. Preventing local authorities from spending money on the things that prevent crime is a futile and foolish saving, especially if one then wonders why crime has occurred and spends even larger amounts detecting small proportions of it.

I describe all those difficulties in mitigation of the statistics and to allow me—I hope with justification—to offer congratulations to the Commissioner and the London police on the way in which they have faced up to their task in those uniquely difficult circumstances.

I very much support the themes of the Commissioner's strategy statement for 1990 and welcome the way in which the annual report demonstrates that many of those themes have been successfully carried out. The strategy statement stipulates three essential principles of policing policy—a close relationship between police and people, quality of service, and value for money. I hope to deal with each of those themes briefly, but first I want to suggest a fourth ingredient for successful policing—police morale. I say that because I am told from every side—I suspect that the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who speaks on these matters, will confirm it in a moment—that at no time in recent history has police morale, especially in London, been lower than it is today. That is partly because the police are overstretched and overworked. It is also partly because the police feel that extra burdens have been placed upon them without proper recognition of their difficulties. In addition, it is immediately because the Home Secretary has vetoed the arbitration award on their rent and housing allowance. By doing that, the Home Secretary has convinced many police officers that he will ride roughshod over their proper negotiating procedures and that he therefore has no respect for them or for the way in which they have worked over the past 10 years.

I noticed yesterday that the Minister of State, Home Office, the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten)—the Obadiah Slope of the Government—urged that when hon. Members meet policemen or women, they should treat them all with proper respect. I could not help wishing that the Government had sufficient respect for the policemen whom they meet to implement their latest award on rent and housing allowance. Talking about respect is not as important as doing the things that maintain and increase police morale. There is no doubt that police morale both in and outside London has deteriorated over the past year.

I refer now to the three aspects of policing that were specified by the Commissioner and shall deal first with the drive for an improved relationship between police and public. The Home Secretary was right to draw attention to the campaign that the Commissioner has launched to reduce and—I hope—to obliterate racial harassment in the capital. That has threee distinct beneficial results. First, it reduces harassment. The simple fact of its intention is obviously much to be desired. Secondly, it also increases the general opposition to racialism in all its forms by making the country aware of it. Thirdly—and not least important—it helps to convince the ethnic minorities of the capital that the police officers are their friends and that it is right for them to join the Metropolitan police and to expect a successful career in it. As the Home Secretary has said, it is essential that policemen and women from the minorities are recruited. I have no doubt that the racial harassment campaign, demonstrating that the police have formed good intentions in that particular, will encourage that process.

I also commend the progressive elements that are demonstrated in the report's comments about the incidence of domestic violence, in which there has been a depressing increase of 42 per cent. in the past year. However, sympathetic treatment is now to be increasingly provided by the police. That may have contributed to the statistical increase, but at any rate it will result in women being more willing to report such matters in the hope that those perpetrating the offences will be deterred and convicted. The report is most progressive and, therefore, much to be commended in its whole attitude towards attacks on women.

When considering the institutions of the police, it is important to realise that, in some ways, the police—more than politicans—have made progressive stands. When I read what the Commissioner said about the complaints machinery, and as I shared and endorsed his view that we must conclude investigations into complaints against policemen much more swiftly than at the moment, I could not help recalling that it is the deputy Commissioner, Mr. Dellow, in his capacity as chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland who now talks about a wholly independent police complaints procedure. That is a much more progressive idea about the matter than anything that has been accepted by the Government. I have no doubt that in many other ways also such progress can come from the police themselves, not least from the Metropolitan police.

The most direct and most visible form of co-operation between police and public is the neighbourhood watch scheme. When the Under-Secretary of State replies to the debate, I hope that he will tell us something about that. Like the Home Secretary, I very much commend and support the other watch schemes that have been established, but neighbourhood watch has come to be the litmus test—the visible example—of police and public working together. This year's Commissioner's report states that although the number of schemes in London increased during the year under review, it did not increase at anything like the speed by which it increased in the previous year. Can we be given any information on what has brought about the deceleration? Crime Concern, which I am always reminding the Home Secretary is not one of the revolutionary organisations about which he is so worried and which is chaired by his nominee—a Conservative Back Bencher—has said that the problem with neighbourhood watch is not lack of co-operation from authorities, but lack of funds from the Home Office. Can we be assured that the judgment made in general by neighbourhood watch about the deceleration in the progress of the schemes—it is not actually stagnation—is not, at least in London, because of the absence of finance? It would be a tragedy if those generally successful schemes were held back simply because the money is not available.

Another area in which the relationship between police and public has been under scrutiny and is much discussed is crime screening. Two years ago, the then Home Secretary told the House that crime screening meant that 80 per cent. of reported crimes were not investigated, and he defended that policy. Fortunately, he was wrong—not wrong to defend the policy, but wrong in his description of it. The real scheme, as amended and set out in November 1989, ensures that every reported crime is at least examined for investigation. Although it is not mentioned in the report, and the Home Secretary—the police authority for London, manifest and made flesh—did not think it worth reporting today, it is something that we should pause and consider for a moment or two. It should be welcomed for its ingenuity, its concentration of resources on the areas where they are most needed and the improved relationship that it provides between the police and the public.

I shall refer to two elements for special commendation from the seven or eight principles on which screening is now based. Crime investigation at local level should focus on the needs of the victim, and it is important to ensure whenever possible that a victim of a crime knows what action the police have taken, even when the police do not have enough evidence to proceed. Victims should know that the police have not simply let the case drop.

The final point in the seven-point plan is that there should be an increase in the numbers involved in the investigation of crimes. That is an essential element. It is not as important as the numbers available for the prevention of crime, because the public take the sensible view that it is better to prevent a crime than to detect the perpetrator of a crime once it has been committed. I strongly support the concept of screening as amended and announced. I hope that the Home Secretary will look at it carefully, and take a direct interest in it, and—if he is still in office this time next year—will think it right to say a word about what, after all, has been the major operational initiative of the Metropolitan police over the past year.

Perhaps the Home Secretary or the Under-Secretary will tell me if I am wrong—I should be delighted to be contradicted—but I believe that the obtaining of a number for insurance purposes is sometimes no more than a formality. The essential point relates to burglaries that are not regarded as appropriate for insurance.

[Mr. Hattersley]

My next point may be regarded by some hon. Members as trivial, but it is one of the matters on which the public and the police enter into trivial dispute, and that should be avoided. It concerns the free flow of traffic in London. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) will forgive me for trespassing on his property, but I believe that one of the things that prevent a proper relationship between police and public is the irritation caused to the public by traffic problems.

Let me give two examples. Those of us who live in and around Westminster know that the councils of our area are most assiduous in dealing with the parking of private cars in private areas. Those who are members of permanent residents' schemes have only to park on a meter for a few moments after 9.30 am to be clamped or fined. I do not object to that, but it does not move the traffic in London or avoid the irritation that does so much damage to police-community relations.

What causes constant problems and irritation is the sight of vehicles constantly parked in arterial roads in a way that prevents the free flow of traffic; vehicles parked on yellow grids at crossroads, preventing the free flow of traffic in the opposite direction when the lights change; and a policeman on the spot watching it all happen and taking no direct action. I give that example because I believe that we should do all that we can to avoid the small irritations between police and public.

Mr. Waddington: I ought not to take over the functions of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but it is part of his policy to ensure that in future the police will be able to concentrate on the job of enforcing the law in the circumstances to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. The local authorities alone will look after street parking when it is allowed, so that the police can concentrate on illegal—true—traffic offences.

Mr. Hattersley: How pleased I am to be educated in that way.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No; I should just like to finish this last sentence, as it sums up all that I have been trying to say.

I believe that the Metropolitan police are to be congratulated on what they have done in the past year. Progress depends on three things: provision of the right resources, the avoidance of diversion from their proper tasks to those of secondary importance and the growing co-operation between police and public. That, above all else, is what we should strive to achieve, and I hope that, after a bad start, the debate may contribute to that end.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act 1990
Licensing (Low Alcohol Drinks) Act 1990
Term and Quarter Days (Scotland) Act 1990
Access to Health Records Act 1990
Rights of Way Act 1990
Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Act 1990
Gaming (Amendment) Act 1990
Social Security Act 1990

Policing in London

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.5 am

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): As the House knows, I am parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales; I wish to declare that interest.

I am glad that we are talking today about the policing of London. It is right and proper that the House should have the opportunity to discuss the policing of the metropolis, especially in view of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's special position as the police authority. London Members are also in a special position, inasmuch as they have special opportunities to discuss with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the operational policing of the area for which he is responsible. In some respects, London Members have a special bird's-eye view of the way in which the police operate, which is not always shared by our colleagues in other parts of the country.

As the House knows, London is policed by the Metropolitan police force, which is by far the largest force in the country. It is comprised of officers of all ranks, whose courage, dedication and professionalism is directed towards serving the people who live in London. That is their job, and they do it with great distinction. As a result, in 1990 London is still one of the best policed cities in the world, and the London police officer is still regarded as a friend and protector by all decent law-abiding citizens.

My purpose in speaking is partly to underline the achievements of the Metropolitan police in protecting the public, and partly to alert the House of the continuing problems that they face in serving Londoners. First, there is the question of resources. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has told the House today that this year the resources at the disposal of the Metropolitan police amount to £1·25 billion; that is a substantial sum of money, which is provided by the taxpayers and community charge payers of this country and deployed by the Metropolitan police with great care to ensure that it is stretched in a way that enables them to carry out their important task.

I do not want to rehearse again the long discussion that we had some days ago about rent allowance and provided-accommodation allowance, but I am glad to hear my right hon. and learned Friend repeat his promise that the Government will adhere to the Edmund-Davies formula in respect of police pay. That is a key component of police remuneration and his promise will, I know, be important to police morale.

The Commissioner has reported to us in what I think has been one of the most interesting reports that we have examined in recent years. The report explains that police resources are being stretched to the limit, especially by the additional demands now being made on his force—for example the demand to house Home Office prisoners in police cells, jury vetting and the provision last year of 81 uniformed officers on a temporary basis for the British Transport police. This was done to achieve a high-profile uniformed presence on the underground and to supplement an existing anti-robbery campaign. There was great public concern about the ability of individuals to travel in safety on the underground and the provision of those 81 uniformed police officers went a long way to reassuring the public that the underground was safe.

As a result of that initiative, the Commissioner tells us that reported crime on the underground was reduced by 2·3 per cent. in 1989. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) will agree that this is one of the happier crime figures at which we are able to look. Robberies were reduced by 39 per cent. to 470 crimes—another police success story. Those 81 officers are no longer diverted from their normal duties because British Transport Police have been able to recruit additional constables to take their place. That was a commendable exercise to make the underground safer for everyone travelling on it.

The Government have provided substantial sums of money to the Metropolitan police. The House must be grateful for that, but must also realise that the provision of resources has to continue at a high level if the kind of policing that the public want is to be achieved. The crime figures for London show clearly that we need a first class, well trained, properly paid police force in London. The need for the police to continue tackling crime is evident from the figures that we are discussing. However, some elements of the crime figures are encouraging. For example, street robbery has fallen by 9 per cent., with an increase of 10 per cent. in the clear up rate. Street robbery causes great fear among the people who live in London, so it is good to know that the incidence of it has fallen and that the clear up rate has increased significantly.

As the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said, unhappily there has been an increase in some other criminal activities—for example, there was an increase in residential and non-residential burglary of 4 per cent. in each case. However, arrests for residential burglary increased by just over 2 per cent., although the number of offences cleared up fell marginally. The police are being more successful in arrests connected with burglaries and that, coupled with the sensible precautions being taken by a number of citizens to make it more difficult to get into their homes, is the best way to deal with this unhappy and difficult crime.

One of the factors in the Commissioner's report that I find encouraging is what he has to say about drug abuse, which is one of the most serious crimes with which the Metropolitan police have to deal. The Commissioner comments on the use of resources by the crack intelligence and co-ordinating group and the joint police/HM Customs task force. He rightly says:

"We cannot afford to make the same mistakes"

as in the United States, which did not act soon enough to deal with this problem. I am delighted that the Commissioner and his colleagues have taken this important initiative. When one thinks of the kind of problems faced by big cities in the United States where crack is prevalent, it is good to know that the Met is dealing with it through this initiative. I hope that they will be as successful in the year ahead as they were in the past year.

On the beat, the presence of courteous, firm and friendly police officers continues to give assurance to the public and is the strongest of all deterrents to crime. The Metropolitan police have given a swift response to calls for urgent assistance as a result of that policing on the beat. In his report, the Commissioner tells us that 2,700 emergency calls were received daily, many of which were crammed

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

into that busy Friday and Saturday night period. He also reminds us, rightly, that the people of London should understand that there are 8,600 miles of road in our capital city, with 2·6 million vehicles registered—300 for every mile. When the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook finds that one of the crossings is jammed, he will no doubt have that figure in mind.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary pointed out, perhaps one of the most important initiatives being taken by the Metropolitan police is the PLUS programme, which is coupled with the force's statement of common purpose and value. The Commissioner has made it clear to London Members of Parliament and others that the programme is about service with courtesy, firmness and fairness and about what the police and the public, working together, can achieve to enhance the quality of life. That is why the PLUS programme has the strong support of the Police Federation, the other police staff associations and the unions.

Essentially, it is a programme for change, and it is tackling issues that were identified in 1988 as impeding a consistently high level of service. It is also important that today the House should pay tribute to the many acts of bravery by individual officers who have had to face criminals with guns, knives and other weapons and who were involved in recovery and rescue operations such as the Marchioness disaster last August. It is interesting to note that in 1989 shots were fired by the police in only two instances—again demonstrating the great care that is taken before a firearm is discharged.

The bravery of officers is also illustrated by the number of assaults that they have had to endure. Some 774 police officers were injured as a result of being assaulted while on duty in the 12 month period ending December 1989, and were placed on the sick list. In addition, 4,181 officers were assaulted but continued on duty. That means that there were 4,955 assaults last year compared with 4,206 in 1988. That is a worrying increase and during the last year, for the period ended 30 June, the Metropolitan Police Federation alone submitted 498 claims to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and other claims were submitted directly to the board by individual officers.

This is a worrying trend, and the police need the reassurance of knowing that an assault on them will result in a custodial sentence and, where appropriate, compensation. I understand from discussions that I have had with some police officers that in 1988, an assault on one constable resulted in the imposition of a £50 fine and that in 1989, assaults on three constables resulted in a sentence of six months probation rather than a custodial sentence.

While I fully support my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals, contained in his recent White Paper, I believe that assaults on police officers which cause actual bodily harm should always result in custodial sentences. If they do not, how are police officers to do their duty if they feel that the deterrent for this type of assault is not effective? Surely they should be paid compensation. I say that because in 1989 there was a more than 15 per cent. increase in assaults on the police.

All hon. Members talk to the police officers who serve the Palace of Westminster—perhaps as we come into the Palace or leave, or we may chat to them as we wait for a taxi. If we ask them about the problems that they and their colleagues have to face, they will tell us that these days, on a Friday of Saturday night they face assault. Not so many years ago, people who had been drinking too much on a Friday or Saturday night might have got into a fracas with friends, or kicked in a window, but they would not have assaulted a Metropolitan police officer. We have to recognise and take account of the views of police officers and ensure that assaults on them are brought to an end. We can only do so if penalties are tough enough to make anyone who might assault a police officer think twice.

The police do not merely have to put up with assaults on Friday and Saturday night. I am not trying to make a political point, but the assaults that the Metropolitan police had to put up with at Wapping were on a terrifying scale: 162 officers were injured, and 39 needed hospital treatment. I quote that fact without wanting to get involved in discussions about what happened at Wapping. It demonstrates the sort of difficulties that the police have to put up with.

There has also been a demonstration about the community charge. Members on both sides of the House have expressed their concern about some of the strange groups of people who were involved, and whose activities resulted in assaults on the police. By 8 June more than 470 people had been arrested in connection withthose disturbances. That figure includes more than 50 people arrested as a result of what is known as "Operation Carnaby". The majority of those arrested are young men in their early 20s, who gave addresses in the London area, and claimed to be unemployed.

I congratulate the Metropolitan police on the way that they handled that difficult demonstration. When my hon. Friend replies to the debate, I would like to hear what further progress has been made in finding people suspected of assaulting police officers in that demonstration, and what contribution was made by the filming and videoing of the demonstration, and the identification of people who put steel posts through the windows of police cars, and took other aggressive action against people who were doing their duty and upholding the law.

The Government are anxious to achieve value for money—not always the happiest phrase to the ears of members of the Police Federation. However, having 774 police officers on the sick list as a result of assaults while on duty is a costly business. It is even more costly when we consider that more than 2,687 officers were on the sick list, following injury on duty.

The courts must be encouraged to impose deterrent penalties, if that high cost to the police and to the taxpayer is to be reduced.

Traffic has also been mentioned during the debate. The Metropolitan police are responsible for traffic control. I can give no better example of the type of problem faced in London than by citing my constituency and especially the borough of Hillingdon. There are more cars per family in that borough than in any other metropolitan area—up to four cars per family. Many of them are parked in the streets, or on the verges. The reasons are probably twofold: the local police tell me that many garages are not wide enough to take modern cars, especially if the houses were built before world war two; and garages are full of mowers, deep freezers and the other paraphernalia of modern life. My constituents want to know what relief is in sight.

The Secretary of State for transport has announced a plan whereby the control of parking places is to be the responsibility of the local authorities, which will deal with overstaying on meters and in parking bays. That has been foreshadowed by the city of Westminster's experimental scheme using its own parking attendants.

In his report, the Commissioner tells the House that such experimental schemes have been a success and are to be extended to all parking zones. While my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport may propose additional powers, I understand that they will need primary legislation, and will not therefore be available until the end of the next Session of Parliament. I understand that it is proposed that overstaying should be the responsibility of local authority, while illegal parking should continue to be dealt with by Metropolitan police traffic wardens and police officers.

The Commissioner points out in his report that the strength of the traffic warden service has declined from 1,444 in 1988 to 1,348 at the end of last year. As the Department of Transport's consultative document, "Traffic in London" has confirmed that wardens are to remain part of the Metropolitan police some of the uncertainty about the future has been removed. My constituents want to know what plans the Home Secretary has for recruiting more Metropolitan police traffic wardens, what additional resources are to be provided to pay for them, and when we shall have a regular force to deal with the problems of illegal parking.

I hope that the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport will be able to ensure swift passage of legislation so that outer London especially may be relieved of serious traffic problems.

I pay tribute to police and community consultative groups in London which do a very good job. There is one such group in Hillingdon, and I pay particular tribute to the late Mr. Harry Curtis, who was its chairman for the past few years, and who died recently. He made a distinguished contribution to the group's work. I also pay tribute to the victim support schemes, of which there are two in my constituency—in Uxbridge and West Drayton. They do a good job and I was glad to hear my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House that the Metropolitan police have referred 1,008 victims to such schemes in the past year. The schemes have the strong support of the Police Federation and of all those people who believe that victims must be cared for. Our thoughts should be concentrated on them as much as on the problem of dealing with the people who perpetrate crime.

The past year has been successful for the Metropolitan police, as it has achieved some significant and encouraging reductions in criminal activity. The morale of the force is good, despite the difficulties experienced in the past few weeks with problems such as the provision of accommodation allowance. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will continue to give them his strong support and to make the necessary resources available to them. I hope that he will remember the terrible assaults that police officers face in the metropolis and that he will do everything in his power to reduce the incidence of such assaults to the smallest possible figure.

11.29 am

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): These are not the happiest times in which to discuss policing in London, primarily because of the relentless increase in crime in London and throughout the country. We do not blame the police for that; it is not their responsibility. The Government ought to take responsibility for the increase in crime. They came to office on a law and order ticket. They suggested that the Labour party was soft on crime and that the Conservatives had the answer. Earlier today the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) was in the Chamber. I remember that she sought to draw attention to herself at the Tory party conference by holding up and brandishing a pair of handcuffs. We used to hear a lot about short, sharp shocks and stiffer penalties as the answer to crime. We do not hear very much about that now.

Since 1979, crimes have increased by over 50 per cent. pehaps that is due to the type of society in which we live. These are complex matters. This is the "me now" society. The Prime Minister says that there is no such thing as society—only individuals and families. People are encouraged to grab what they can for themselves. We see company directors allegedly receiving, even if they do not earn them, salaries of £500,000 or £1 million a year, while many others are left behind. A shut-out underclass is growing in the inner cities. That may be part of the explanation for the increase in crime.

The Home Secretary told us that since 1979 expenditure on the police had increased by 72 per cent. That is a substantial increase but it demonstrates that there is no correlation between expenditure on the police and the level of crime. We cannot say that if we spend more on the police there will be less crime, or, conversely, that if we spend less on the police there will be more crime.

In 1989, the clear-up rate of crimes in London was 17 per cent.—in other words, one in six. That is the same clear-up rate as in 1980. It has been static for a decade, although the number of crimes has increased during that period. The dispiriting truth, therefore, is that we are making no inroads into the crime wave. Very dispiriting also is the rise in racial offences. I know that the Metropolitan police take them seriously, but the police must give the impression that they are on the side of the ethnic minorities and that they are their friends. A great deal of work needs to be done in that area.

I am certain that the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) agrees that these are not the happiest days for the police. I see that he nods his head. The police need to gain the confidence and trust of the community. They can be successful only if they gain that confidence and trust. Public opinion polls show that an increasing number of members of the public no longer have complete trust in the police. I think that it amounts to about one third. Conversely, it could be said that two thirds do have trust in the police. However, the number of people who say that they no longer completely trust the police is growing. The reasons are complex. They may be due to recent events: the miscarriages of justice in the case of the Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven, the anxiety, to put it no higher, about the Birmingham Six, the disbandment of the serious crimes squad, of between 50 and 70 officers, in the midlands, the Taylor report on the Hillsborough disaster and the manipulation of crime statistics in Kent. Some of

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

those issues are getting into the public psyche. There are many other reasons, I am sure. It is an extremely complex matter.

Mr. Shersby: The hon. Gentleman should be very careful, as all of us should, about quoting public opinion polls. I saw a recent one in an extremely reputable magazine, which suggested that 81 per cent. of the people of London think that the police do a very good job. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that in the case of the Guildford Four no charges have been laid against police officers and that the matter is still under investigation.

Mr. Leighton: I am willing to accept what the hon. Gentleman says. There was never a golden age when everybody respected all policemen. However, from conversations that I have had with police officers, my impression is that they themselves believe that they no longer have the confidence of the public. Many of them have become very introspective; they question their role in our modern, complex society. They are going through what is almost an identity crisis. Many policemen feel beleaguered, unappreciated, misunderstood and a breed apart. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman agrees with me about that.

One of the important factors is responsibility. For example, the Government are very concerned about value for money for all public expenditure. If somebody wanted to ask whether we are getting value for money for the police, whom would he ask? How would any of my constituents who wanted to ask that question go about getting an answer? Responsibility is important. The Home Secretary referred to it in his speech. In 1964 one of his predecessors, Henry Brooke, introduced what became the Police Act. He agreed with the royal commission's view that chief constables were not adequately accountable when he said:

"One of the lessons of modern times is that a police system, instituted to defend freedom and maintain law and order, must itself be under effective control".—*[Official Report,* 26 November 1963; Vol. 685, c.83.]

I support the Labour party's view that there should be an elected police authority for London. That would be a big step forward and in the interests of the police. The Home Secretary is the police authority for London. I do not criticise him as an individual when I say that I regard it as totally unsatisfactory that one man, who is not even a Member of Parliament for a London constituency, should be the police authority for London. He has many other problems on his plate and many other responsibilities. It is not adequate to have one man as the police authority for London.

When we went to see Lord Whitelaw when he was Home Secretary, I asked for this debate and he agreed that we should hold a debate on the police once a year. It is the only vehicle for the Metropolitan police to be accountable to Parliament. It is the one organised opportunity that we have to raise police issues. That is not good enough. It could be argued that hon. Members can ask questions and go to see the Home Secretary. I do not, however, believe that any hon. Member believes in his heart of hearts that that is satisfactory.

All hon. Members try to have good relations with the police in their constituencies, and also with senior officers in the area. That works extremely well, but it is not sufficient. It is an ad hoc arrangement. All power in democratic society should be accountable. The only way in which we can achieve that is through an elected authority. That does not mean that there should be political interference; it would be complete nonsense to suggest that. Everyone appreciates and understands that the police must have operational independence, but there should be an authority to deal with general policing policy. The Home Secretary suggested that chief constables might feel intimidated or under pressure. Under such an arrangement, if a chief constable found himself in difficulty with such an authority, he would have the right of appeal to the Home Secretary, who would have powers to overrule that authority. We should know who is accountable for what, as that would be to the benefit, advantage and protection of the police.

I cannot let the debate continue without saying a word or two about Wapping, which was mentioned in passing by the hon. Member for Uxbridge. I have raised the subject at every meeting that I have had with the Home Secretary or the Commissioner. Some of my hon. Friends who are here today were at Wapping on 3 May 1986 and on 24 January 1987, although I understand that no Conservative Members were present. We were shocked and ashamed by what we saw, in particular by the behaviour of the riot squad. Officers dressed up in special gear, with NATO helmets, short shields and truncheons behaved indiscriminately and with quite sickening brutality. I have made three speeches in the House about what I saw at Wapping and I do not intend to repeat them, but there was unlawful violence. Truncheons were used not in self-defence but to batter, frighten and intimidate people. They were not used to the body or to the legs, but to the heads, and mounted police were used without warning. I saw people penned into Wellclose square; they were not allowed to disperse and they were repeatedly charged. Words fail me to describe my feelings at what I saw.

Fortunately, other people such as photographers, reporters such as Kate Adie, who was smashed in the face by a truncheon, and television crews were there. They brought the incident to the attention of the public, causing much disquiet. I took a deputation, which included a former Cabinet Minister who was a local Member of Parliament, to the Home Office and asked for a public inquiry.

Mr. Corbyn: I am sorry that I missed the earlier part of my hon. Friend's speech. I was also at Wapping on the dates that he mentioned and witnessed exactly what he saw. Indeed, I was with him for most of the evening. He is right to ask for the inquiry into the activities of the police riot squad that night to be continued. Does he agree that it is essential that there should be an inquiry into the command and management structure that operated throughout the night and the following morning, which then produced a barrage of media interpretation of what had happened? Many of the cases that could have been put to an impartial inquiry were undermined because the media had drawn their own conclusions as to who may or may not have caused the riots. Does my hon. Friend further agree that it is important that the police should have acted impartially after the event so that a proper inquiry could take place?

Mr. Leighton: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The object of the public inquiry was not to leave it to the headline writers of the tabloid newspapers to decide, but to examine all the facts and all the evidence from everyone concerned, including the police.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) may have been alluding to the attempted media manipulation in which one particular police officer whose name I am willing to give if I am asked, organised press conferences on a Sunday morning. I tabled parliamentary questions to ask where he was at 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock and 1 o'clock when the riots were taking place. He was in Leman Street police station. He had seen nothing. He briefed the press in a most misleading way. I can assume only that he did it honestly, but that he did not know what he was talking about because he was not there. That was not good enough.

I wanted a public inquiry, but instead an internal police inquiry was carried out by the Northamptonshire police and Chief Superintendent Wyrk. The Northamptonshire police spent two years scrutinising photographs and videotapes, taking thousands of statements and making thorough investigations. They produced a report, which was highly critical of the senior police officers in charge of that operation. They said that there was no proper control and that the police operation on those nights was entirely out of control. They made charges against a number of police officers. I emphasise that those charges and criticisms were brought by policemen. They included serious charges of assault, perjury and conspiracy.

What happened next? Absolutely nothing happened. No one has had to answer for what happened or to give an account of what happened on those nights. There has been no question of those highly paid senior police officers having to apologise for or explain what they were doing.

It appears that we have a force that is above the law. It can do what it likes without being accountable to anyone. Even when policemen investigate and accuse those people, it does not matter as there will be a cover-up and a whitewash. It is a disgraceful state of affairs. No respectable argument has been put forward to explain that cover-up or that whitewash. Excuses have been made. The Home Secretary is restraining the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department as he knows that there is no respectable explanation. It is outrageous and damaging to the police force.

I agree that the state should have in reserve an iron fist, which it can use in certain circumstances. However, it must be very careful about using such force against trade unionists who are decent, honest, British people who pay our wages and the wages of the police. It was totally inappropriate to use the riot squad against trade unionists who were sacked and who had a perfect right to demonstrate and to march expressing their grievances. People have that right here as well as in Poland.

I do not want to overstate my case, but I must make one more general point.

Mr. Waddington: I wonder whether this is the moment for me to intervene. If the hon. Gentleman leaves Wapping at this juncture, I am sure that he would like the whole story to be told. He must be aware that 24 officers were charged with criminal offences and were dealt with by the courts. The hon. Gentleman knows that what happened was as a result of delay due to legal advice tendered to the Police Complaints Authority and was no fault of the Metropolitan police. It is regrettable that the charges could not be properly tested in court, but it was no fault of the Metropolitan police and certainly not the Home Office. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would also like to tell the general public that, during all the trouble at Wapping, no fewer that 410 police officers were injured and during the demonstration on 24 January, so many missiles were thrown at the police that 3 tonnes of them were lying on the ground afterwards.

Mr. Leighton: I am not accusing the Metropolitan police of the delay of a couple of years. It has been alleged that, because of that delay and the fact that people's memories are so fallible, it would be impossible to achieve justice. We passed a Bill not long ago to prosecute people for war crimes that happened 50 years ago. I am not blaming the Metropolitan police, but the whole judicial system and everyone involved, for the fact that justice was not done.

The Home Secretary mentioned the number of police officers who were injured. A larger number of printing trade unionists were injured, and all that should have been brought out in a proper inquiry.

Mr. Corbyn: Part of the reason for the long delay before cases could be brought to court was the lack of co-operation, at many levels, of the Metropolitan police with the Northamptonshire police, who undertook proper inquiries into what happened on 24 January 1987. That itself should be a matter for inquiry.

Mr. Leighton: It is well known that the Metropolitan police are not always anxious to have their activities scrutinised quickly—we remember operation Countryman. But I am not criticising the Metropolitan police; I am merely saying that justice was not done and the truth was not brought out. I cannot let this debate pass without saying that what happened at Wapping was a scandal and an outrage.

I do not want to overstate my point, but I suggest that the police should be careful about their role in industrial disputes. Some people say that, at Wapping, the police were Murdoch's boot boys. It is bad if such a reputation grows up. The police should be careful not to be a tool of management; they should be neutral and be careful not to jeopardise that status.

The role of the police is to preserve the peace and uphold the law evenhandedly. Recently, there have been cases where the police appear to have been replacing workers in disputes and acting as substitute labour. In last year's ambulance dispute, the ambulance staff worked to rule, but were willing to answer 999 calls. However, they were sent home without pay and the police were substituted for them. That is worrying and has dangerous implications for the independent status of the police, who should never be seen as strike breakers. If police were ordered to act as blacklegs, I wonder what would happen if a police officer refused to do so because it could be objectionable on constitutional grounds. I understand—perhaps someone can correct me if I am wrong—that when troops are called in, a Minister must give his or her consent, but when the police are called in, that is not necessary.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The police are there to keep the public peace, and how they are deployed is a matter for the chief police officer, who uses his judgment and does not refer to a politician.

Mr. Leighton: I am grateful for that explanation because I do not think that everyone realised that. I am genuinely grateful for the confirmation that when troops are brought in, a Minister has to give consent, but when police are brought in, a Minister does not have to consent, and it is left to the discretion of a senior police officer. That has enormous implications. The police must be careful that they do not go beyond their legitimate function and are not seen, in any circumstances, as a strike-breaking force or as taking sides in industrial disputes. If they do, they could forfeit public confidence in their impartiality.

I have probably taken too much time—I wanted to say something about the recruitment of ethnic minorities and women, which seems to be getting worse, not better. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) will make the point about the recruitment of women effectively, but whether anyone will do so in relation to ethnic minorities I do not know—but it is extremely important.

I shall end on a non-controversial, consensus note and talk of the policeman whom we all like and of whom we want to see more—the policeman on foot, the beat bobby. I am not talking of the policeman who rushes round in a fast car with a wailing siren. Local people like policemen to whom they can talk and wih whom they can build up a relationship of mutual trust and respect, and exchange information. Whenever such policemen are mentioned, professional officers' eyes glaze over, but they are the sort of police of whom the public want to see more. I hope that we shall receive some Government response, and get more beat policemen on foot patrols.

11.56 am

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Out of courtesy to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), I shall follow two of the themes of his speech. First, he raised an issue that is always mentioned in such debates—the creation of a special police authority for London. That must be thought about carefully because of the nature of the policing structure in London. However, today's debate about police accountability is not about the Victorian concept of a police authority made up of elected local councillors and justices of the peace but, more significantly, about the modern police service and how it relates to the European Community services, which are nearly all national in structure. In the United Kingdom we need a police service that is funded by the Exchequer and ultimately accountable to the House of Commons, but which delivers its services at a local level and is accountable to the community on a sub-divisional or divisional basis.

The old war horse of a police authority for London should be taken to the knacker's yard and put down because it is irrelevant. When the House established the Metropolitan police in 1829, it deliberately chose as its police authority one of Her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State because it was asserted that it was necessary for hon. Members to have the degree of accountability that we enjoy today.

I shall take a second theme from the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East, the distinguished Chairman of the Select Committee responsible for considering employment issues. Ultimately, in this country, the police service is responsible for the preservation of life and the protection of public order. In that context, the hon. Gentleman should know that if another service of the state such as the prison service or the ambulance service fails to fulfil its obligations to the public, the police have to step in to preserve the life of our community. That principle must always be adhered to.

It is always a pleasure to take part in the annual debate on policing in London. Inevitably most of our discussion will concentrate on the Metropolitan police, but I remind the House that London enjoys the services of other police forces. When we contemplate the establishment of a police authority for London, would those other police forces be included? In my constituency I am glad to know of the excellent work done by the royal parks constabulary. That small police service performs an essential duty in parks such as Regents park, Kensington gardens, St. James's and the Royal Horseguards. The officers encounter residents of the community as well as a large number of visitors and they perform their services with courtesy and efficiency. I am always glad to review the progress of the constabulary's work when I receive its annual report from the Department of the Environment, which is its police authority.

The City of London is policed by the City of London police. We should not forget the special contribution that that force makes to the City, especially in its work concerning fraud. The City police is ably led by its Commissioner, Mr. Owen Kelly, whose leadership is highly regarded.

The House will be amused to be reminded of the other constabulary in police service in London—the Tower of London yeomen warders, who are constables under the authority of the Ministry of Defence.

The other important police force in London, which is especially topical, is the British Transport police. It has made an important contribution to the control of crime. It is also important to thank warmly the St. John ambulance service for its contribution in supporting the police in London. That service is taken for granted when it is on hand at the London marathon. It is also important to note that it is present at other major public order events such as the Notting Hill carnival. It also has a significant role in supporting the police in times of disorder, such as during the Trafalgar square riot. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise also has a significant role in the detection of drug trafficking and I commend that service.

The recent crime figures have again focused attention on the problem of crime control and the 15 per cent. increase in recorded crime in the first quarter of 1990 suggests that we are losing the fight against crime. Of course, that is not true. Anyone who has any serious understanding of the crime issue knows that most crime is opportunist. The fear of crime, which arises because of the way in which it is superficially discussed, is every bit as evil as crime itself.

It is worth remembering that the British Transport police is responsible for the effective policing of an underground system which serves 273 stations on a network of 254 route miles and carries 800 million passengers per year. It has an immense taks to perform. L division of British Transport police provides specialised support services for London Underground across a wide range of activities. Many of them are similar to those

carried out by other police forces, but they include the protection of London Underground staff and the investigation of railway accidents and station fires.

To meet the security needs of that vast enterprise, L division currently has an establishment of just over 400 police officers and it is continuing to recruit up to that strength. New York, which has a slightly larger subway system, is patrolled by about 4,000 police officers—but, of course, the quality of life and the nature of crime in New York is vastly different from that encountered in London. The British Transport police enjoys a good working relationship with the Metropolitan police and the City of London police. It liaises closely with them whenever a greater police presence is required, such as at major football matches and other such events.

While the national press often portrays the London Underground as a crime-riddled danger zone, that has never been the case. In 1989 only 12 per cent. of the 15,893 offences reported on the underground involved violence or the threat of violence. Just under half of crime on the underground in 1989 was theft from the person. Last year robberies on the network decreased by more than one third and assaults on passengers were down by nearly one fifth as compared with the previous year's figures. Women and elderly people tend to be afraid of travelling by tube in the evening, although most of them do not find the underground threatening during peak hours. Although fear of violence crime may deter women and elderly people from travelling on the underground, they greatly overestimate the risks of becoming victims of such crime. Crime statistics show that more than four fifths of robbery victims in 1989 were male, as were three quarters of the passengers who were violently assaulted. The perpetrators of such crime are also predominantly male.

Acting on the recommendations of the Department of Transport report and assisted by a £15 million cash injection from the Government, London Underground has set up pilot schemes to combat crime. The measures introduced on six Northern line stations have helped to reduce robberies from a total of 82 in 1986 to just eight last year. I am glad to note from the work of the British Transport police, in conjunction with London Underground, has resulted in a reduction of 39 per cent. in robberies and an 11 per cent. reduction in passenger assaults.

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend should also make it clear that L division of British Transport police was strengthened in 1989 by an addition of 50 officers to meet the concerns expressed by the public.

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend is right. I touched upon that when I said that British Transport police is supplemented by other officers when there are special reasons for so doing.

It is important that the people who live and work in London, as well as the millions of visitors to our city, should understand the truth about how safe our underground system is when compared with any other system in any other capital, and especially when compared with the subway system of the great city of New York.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the fear many women experience when travelling on the underground. In common with other hon. Members he will have received briefings from London Underground. During the litany of statistics that he gave I am surprised that he did not mention sexual offences, because, out of a total of 629 reported incidents, 298 were sexual assaults, which represents a 53 per cent. increase on the 1988 statistics. I accept that women need not be so frightened to travel on the tube during the day, but does he recall the recent distressing case when a woman was taken off a tube, taken to a park and raped? It is not that much safer to travel during the day.

Sir John Wheeler: The hon. Gentleman must know that I take a particular interest in these issues. I have made it my business to make a detailed visit to the underground stations in central London. After all, I have more underground stations in my constituency than any other hon. Member has. I am concerned that the public should feel safe when they use the streets underground.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is right. The number of sexual assault incidents has been recorded, but they are a minute proportion of incidents on the London underground. The good news is that when the facts are recorded, it is possible for the police, in consultation with the other authorities involved, to work out a strategy to deal with it. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree that we do no service to our constituents and to the wider public when we exacerbate the fear of crime by saying that there is a problem without also saying that there are genuine efforts by the police and others to resolve those fears so that people can travel with the confidence that, I believe, they are entitled to enjoy.

The Government's commitment to the police service is well known and, I contend, beyond dispute. However, it is worth reminding the House that the Government have stuck to the Edmund-Davies pay formula. Since May 1979, basic police pay has increased by more than 41 per cent. in real terms, which is a remarkable record. There are thousands more police officers than there were a few years ago. Since 1979, there has been an increase of almost 59 per cent. in police expenditure. The Metropolitan police now cost more than £1 billion a year and receive Home Office grant for 52 per cent. of the total net cost. An extra 1 per cent. is included to recognise the range of national and international services that the Met provides on behalf of the 43 police forces of England and Wales, if not all 52 police forces in the United Kingdom as a whole.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, it behoves me to raise some important questions of financial accountability, which we should examine when we have these debates. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister may be able to respond to these points later. How are cross-subsidies between London-related policing costs and national-related costs avoided in the Metropolitan police? How can other police authorities object to costs billed to them through the Metropolitan police for national services, such as the National Intelligence Bureau and the National Crime Bureau of Interpol, which are functions performed by the Met? How can the Metropolitan police recover the costs of an operation mounted outside their area? When, for example, explosive devices were discovered recently on the Pembrokeshire coast, who bore the cost of the work done? Was it the Dyfed-Powys police or the Metropolitan police? What happens if there is a disagreement about the apportionment of costs? If national services are removed from the calculations—the 1 per cent. to which I have referred—how does the Metropolitan police force value for money compare with that of other forces? Does it still

[Sir John Wheeler]

have more police officers per head of population than any other area, including other conurbations? These are important questions about accountability which I know that my hon. Friend will wish to consider.

The question has been raised about whether the police are effective in the control of crime. The media cry about the 15 per cent. increase in reported crime in the first quarter of 1990 is often accompanied by allegations that the police are not up to it. The enormous increase in the number of thefts of and from cars has contributed to the general increase and a slight lowering of the clear-up rate disguises the improved police productivity in the number of arrests and charges.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is it not true that many of the thefts from cars are carried out by young children in the 12 to 16 age group, and is that not one of the most worrying aspects of metropolitan crime that so many youngsters are involved?

Sir John Wheeler: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, as she so often is. It is perfectly true that most of this random, opportunist crime is committed by teenage males, for the teenage period is the peak age for offending. There are no national figures on which the assumption can properly be based, but one force that experienced a 34 per cent. increase in reported crime also logged a 21 per cent. increase in the productivity of its detectives. We are increasingly getting value for money from our police officers.

Crimes against property are 94 per cent. of all recorded crime. Car crime represents the biggest slice of property crimes at about 100,000. A quarter of those crimes occurred when drivers had not locked their car doors. The public's treatment of their possessions, and the design and building of cars by the manufacturers, and not the police, will decide the success or failure of the crime control strategies on auto crime. There is no way in which the random patrolling of uniformed police officers will make a hap'orth of difference to opportunist car crimes. Those who say, "We want more police officers on the beat", should recognise that they are talking about a public relations exercise rather than about the control or prevention of crime. The sooner that we discuss and recognise the truth of that, the more likely we are to make more effective use of police resources.

I want to tell the House about some of the success stories of the Metropolitan police. The police service in this country is the most expensive and the best paid in Europe. The Metropolitan police force is probably the most costly, in terms of numbers, of all the world's police forces. However, middle-ranking officers are increasingly exercising their talents to analyse the crime problems in their district and to put into operation effective solutions.

I want to give the House one example of how such an effective solution has been achieved. In 1 Area (North), which covers the northern part of the Metropolitan police area, the police and the public became concerned about the rising level of street robberies and about the effect that that was having on the quality of life of people living in the London boroughs of Enfield, Haringey and Islington. A strategy was devised that included intelligence gathering, targeting of known offenders, community and multi-agency initiatives and publicity. A team comprising 25 officers worked under the close supervision of a detective superintendent and concentrated on known suspects who were identified through intelligence gathering. since the beginning of this year, 313 people have been arrested for robbery, 32 for the second time. Of those, 206 were subsequently charged. The problem was analysed, shared and discussed with the community, and police action was taken effectively. I give that example as an illustration of the increasingly effective work of the Metropolitan police.

I welcome the intention of the Metropolitan police Commissioner not to seek an increase in the authorised establishment for the Metropolitan police this year. He is quite right not to do so. He is right to say that he has expensive, well-trained staff and that those resources should be better directed to the clearing up of serious crime, which is what the public want. Most of the 6 per cent. of serious crime to which I referred is resolved by intelligent police action rather than by an increase in the number of uniformed police officers strolling the streets of our capital city.

That is a welcome development in the work of the police service. I commend it and I look forward to seeing the results of the commissioner's strategy when we come to review his annual report this time next year.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Unless speeches are very much briefer than they have been so far, I am afraid that a number of hon. Members will be disappointed.

12.20 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I do not wholly agree with the remarks of the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler). He said not only that there is incontrovertible and welcome evidence that we are getting increased value for money from the police but that the public perception of the role of the police, which would require them to engage primarily in foot patrolling, is misconceived. It is an extremely controversial proposition that the public are entirely wrong in perceiving that the need for foot patrolling police is not diminished. I regret that the hon. Gentleman has thrown his weight behind the arguments against the widespread public belief in the desirability of retaining traditional policing.

I throw my weight behind the opposing argument, in part because I believe that the fear of crime in our society is at least as important as crime itself. There is often a considerable gap between public perception and reality. Some examples of that were brought out well be the Commissioner in his annual report—notably the anxiety of elderly women, who fear that they may be subject to attack or harassment. The Commissioner makes it plain that women over the age of 50 are proportionately the least likely people in our community to be subject to attack. The Chairman of the Select Committee should recognise that that anxiety about the possibility of attack can be minimised only if traditional policing is sustained. The visible presence of policemen in the community is a necessary method of diminishing that anxiety, which inevitably erodes much-needed confidence in the police.

The debate takes place against the sombre background of growing anxiety about policing matters, not only in the metropolis but throughout the country. That anxiety has been expressed in quite dramatic terms in some notable

national organs of opinion. Perhaps such language has been justified by this year's events, which have certainly been dramatic. The revelations of miscarriages of justice involving really disturbing police activity is not something that the public will pass over without concern.

The Home Secretary rightly lingered on the appalling events in Trafalgar Square on 31 March, which are further evidence of lawlessness in our society. At the time, all of us expressed our strong support for the police and our concern about the extent to which they had suffered assaults in those outrages, but those events nevertheless raise questions which must now be considered—and which are, indeed, being considered—about the operational methods that were employed, the appropriateness of the levels of force that were used and so on. The evidence of the growth in crime in the capital city and the disturbing increase in crime related to drug abuse are bound to raise questions about the adequacy of our policing and the methods by which the police are responding to the constant and changing demands.

I regret that our debate started with a disquisition from the Home Secretary which did not address these matters at all but instead involved a rather partisan attack on certain Labour local authorities. Perhaps some of it was justified—certainly I was critical at the time of some of the matters that the Home Secretary mentioned—but it seemed a little out of date. It was all the more odd that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should choose to mount that attack in the context of a disquisition on the suitability of the Home Secretary as the police authority for London. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman can sustain his charge only on the basis of information that is plainly out of date—notably the information about Islington—it does not suggest that the present arrangements for police accountability are without blemish or that they could not be improved upon.

Having said that, I think that changes are being made in the whole process of holding the police in the metropolis to account and some of them are being brought about as a result of the intervention of the House. Not only do we have this important annual debate. We have the continuing work of the Select Committee on Home Affairs and of the Public Accounts Committee of which I have the honour to be a member and which recently produced an important report touching on the expenditure—or rather the lack of expenditure—on the building fabric of police headquarters in London. The report made substantial criticisms that will need to be answered.

I am not entirely sure that the debate has reflected the great internal discussions that have been taking place witin the police—not only in London—about whether the police are performing the role that society expects them to perform. It is widely recognised that resources have been made available in ever greater amounts but that those resources have largely been absorbed by the additional demands that have been placed on the police.

The police have been responding to the pressures, referred to by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), for greater accountability and greater value for money through the operation of increasingly sophisticated internal control mechanisms and much money has been devoted to the analysis of police procedures and the like. I am concerned about accountability, and I am not unsympathetic to the businesslike approach of the police. However, as the Home Secretary's predecessor said in last year's debate, the police are not business men. They must be businesslike, but they are not running a business. This morning the Home Secretary rather surprisingly described the public as customers of the police. We would do well to remember that the police provide a service, and the Commissioner emphasised that strongly in his report, especially in his most notable innovations in the statement of common purpose and values and in the PLUS programme. There is a "de-emphasis" on the role of the police as a force and a welcome emphasis on them as a service.

The provision of that service is not easy to reconcile with the accounting standards and value for money considerations which are difficult to quantify for traditional policing procedures. It is difficult to quantify the value for money provided by those traditional procedures. None the less, those procedures are justified.

The police are conscious that in large areas for which they have hitherto held responsibility their role is being eroded—for example, by the operation of private security firms in public order areas. The police are less in evidence at football matches and major public events where security forces are now being employed. Similarly, the police presence at magistrates courts is being withdrawn in many cases. Large shopping precincts are also being patrolled by private security companies. There is some doubt about the impact of all that on the public perception of the police.

I have not been able to find much evidence to show whether the additional resources which the Government have made available have secured increases in traditional policing areas. I believe that those resources have been used to cope with additional demands, many of which are necessary and important. The Commissioner points out in his report that some of those demands are exceedingly unwelcome, although necessary, for example, in supplementing the provision of ambulance and fire brigade services during the industrial disputes earlier this year. Such demands considerably distort the role of the police, and they draw resources in London away from the traditional policing functions which the police would wish to perform.

Further duties have been imposed on the police in response to important public perceptions of need, for example, in respect of pornography and child sexual abuse. Separate special units have had to be set up to cope specifically with those newly perceived threats to society. Those demands have withdrawn policemen from traditional policing. Although I recognise the need for those things and have strongly urged that those priorities should be acknowledged by the police and have supported them when they have taken such action, I believe that traditional policing is vital to maintain public confidence and a freedom from fear in society which is a major part of the role of the police.

Questions were raised earlier about whether there has been a serious decline in police morale. Such a claim would be an exaggeration. The police have been adversely hit by the Secretary of State's recent decision about housing allowances. However, we have debated that subject and I do not want to dwell on it.

More serious than the natural fluctuations in morale which the police may suffer, like the rest of us, because they are affected by fluctuations in their economic fortunes is the underlying uncertainty about whether their role is perceived to be one that is being discharged to the satisfaction of society.

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

That has been fuelled by suggestions that the Government may be contemplating the introduction of an officer class in the police. Some Government supporters have advocated that suggestion on the ground that it might introduce into the ranks people of management ability whom they believe would not be likely to be thrown out by the existing structure of the police. I wholly reject such a concept. It would have a deeply damaging effect upon the police force. Of course there is a case for the introduction of individuals from outside the service from time to time—for example, late recruits with other experience—but it would be quite wrong to create an officer class as such.

At the operational level, in the past year the police have faced extraordinary difficulties. The fight against drugs and drugs dealers has not let up. There is considerable difficulty in coping with the enormous quantities of drugs that have been flowing into the country from a number of sources. To raise such an issue is to emphasise differences in the policing of London compared with other areas, because much of the drug traffic operates through the metropolis.

Riots in prisons were front-page news for some time and placed enormous and unacceptable pressures on the police and caused the periodic use of police cells for prisoners—an intolerable situation.

Traffic problems in London have caused increasing public concern. Although I welcome the decision that local authorities shall be primarily responsible for infractions of parking regulations, I agree with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that there is a need for more interventionist policing when vehicles obstruct the free flow of traffic. The number of cars in London is absolutely astounding. According to the Commissioner's annual report, there is one car per 17ft of road. That causes immense problems for the police. Clearly, such problems cannot be wholly solved by them. None the less, the public looks for greater assistance in helping to remove the frustrations of living in this too-crowded city.

The debate is valuable. It is important to continue the practice of holding such a debate. However, I have my doubts about whether this periodic and necessary scrutiny of police activity—a bird's eye view—can be comprehensive. Notwithstanding the difficulties of the special role of the police in the metropolis, we must address new forms of police accountability which go beyond the historical role of the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary takes that role seriously. His presence throughout the debate compares extremely favourably with the behaviour of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, who, having made his speech, disappeared from the Chamber. I cannot believe that the right hon. Gentleman is a busier man than the Home Secretary. The way in which the Home Secretary has responded to interventions, listened to the debate and reacted to the report is commendable. That is why many of us welcome the opportunity which this important debate provides.

12.39 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I am glad that in his comprehensive speech the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to London's traffic problems. In last year's debate I drew attention to the proposal for a red route scheme to improve the flow of traffic along London's main streets and roads. It would have involved greater parking restrictions and the much stricter enforcement of those parking restrictions.

Since that debate, I have some good news and some bad news for the House about the red route proposal. The good news is that the Government appear to have adopted the policy and pilot schemes will soon be in place. The bad news is that there does not appear to be any plan to recruit the extra traffic wardens who will be needed to make the concept work. At the end of 1989, the Metropolitan police traffic warden service had 1,348 wardens. That was a decline of nearly 100 on the number of wardens employed at the end of 1988. The Metropolitan police themselves estimate that, to make the red route scheme work, they will need double the number of traffic wardens that they have at the moment. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State told the House whether there are any plans for recruiting the extra traffic wardens who are necessary.

Help may be at hand, however. Some of my hon. Friends may have discovered—to their personal cost—that Westminster city council is introducing a new parking system with higher meter charges and a hard-working, locally employed enforcement squad. I must admit that I was doubtful about the idea of the London boroughs sharing the parking control problem with the Metropolitan police. However, the Westminster experiment has converted me because there are lots of wardens; the scheme seems to be cost-effective and parking places are better used. I also perceive a slight improvement in the flow of traffic. There is, however, one important snag. The council-employed wardens cannot put tickets on vehicles that are parked on single or double yellow lines. I believe that the council wardens should be given that power——

Mrs. Gorman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, but I think that he is wrong on that point. I have been given a ticket for parking on yellow lines by the new wardens.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I am sad that my hon. Friend has been ticketed but I am sure that she must have deserved it. I think that she will find that she was ticketed by Metropolitan police wardens, not by Westminster city council wardens. I have checked this point with those who are responsible for the scheme.

Mr. Hattersley: I intervene partly to clear up that confusion, but also to ensure that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) no longer finds me invisible. He assures me that he will apologise if he gets the opportunity. I believe that the position is clear. The extra wardens, to which the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) has referred, are entitled to warn of prosecutions that take the offender to court; they are not entitled to ticket vehicles in the more cost-effective and quicker way that is available to a Metropolitan police warden.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I agree that wardens' powers should be extended to allow them to give tickets, and I am delighted that I have the right hon. Gentleman's support.

Not only do we need more traffic wardens; we need more police officers in the Serious Fraud Office. In 1989,

the number of cases under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office was 806, and the sum involved at least £3,500 million. The Commissioner reports that the number of officers employed in the Serious Fraud Office remained at about 30 in 1989.

The problem of fraud is likely to increase rather than decrease. Company law is becoming more complex; the removal of restrictions on the flow of capital means that fraud is becoming more internationalised, and there is a growing problem with the laundering of money acquired by drug barons. Meanwhile, the spread of instant international communication, with computers, faxes and satellite links, makes the detection of international fraud ever more difficult. I am glad that the Commissioner reports that the development of combined investigative teams of police, lawyers and accountants is progressing well, but clearly we have a long way to go.

There is some talk of setting up a national detective force. May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary whether there are any plans to establish a national fraud squad? I believe that there should be. I note that the Select Committee on Home Affairs, under the able leadership of my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), is to undertake a review of the policing of football grounds. That is an admirable idea.

Mr. Waddington: Before my hon. Friend leaves the question that he was addressing to me about a national fraud squad, I can tell him that I hope for the swift establishment of a national criminal intelligence unit. The debate has been about whether that unit should have an operational arm. The matter was discussed recently by the Association of Chief Police Officers, which concluded that the best approach would be to provide more effective investigation and enforcement through a reduction in the number of regional crime squads from nine to five. It takes the view that, if that were done, it would not be necessary to create a new organisation, with all the problems of accountability and the need for primary legislation that that would involve. I tend to agree.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that important intervention, but I still believe that there is a powerful case for a national fraud squad. I hope that, when the Home Affairs Select Committee has completed its investigation into the policing of football grounds, it may turn its efforts towards an investigation of the whole question of the policing, detection and elimination of fraud in this country.

I have recommended the employment of more traffic wardens, and also suggested that we need a larger Serious Fraud Office. Perhaps I should touch on an area in which the Metropolitan police can get rid of, or at least share, some of their responsibilities. At present, the protection of embassies and palaces—including the Palace of Westminster—involves a large number of men and women. There is bound to be a reduction in the size of the British Army of the Rhine before long, and some units will look for other roles if they are not to be disbanded. I should like to see discussions between the Commissioner and the general officer commanding London district about whether some of the units that now provide ceremonial guards in London and Windsor could provide some actual guards. Some diplomatic and royal residences are guarded by specially trained police marksmen. Those duties could be carried out equally well by specially trained Army marksmen.

I am happy to say that the Commissioner's report lists an astonishingly wide number of schemes for interesting and involving young people in the work of the police. It also records the immense success of neighbourhood watch schemes, which have grown to more than 10,000 and the development of such schemes into other sectors such as pub watch, school watch and hospital watch. I note, sadly, that the oldest community involvement scheme of them all—the special constabulary—is still languishing. There is talk in the report of borough recruiting campaigns and press advertising of schemes, but the strength of the special constabulary still slowly shrinks. At 1,362, it is clear that it is substantially smaller than required. I am sure that the police need an adequate reserve force, and I note that there are 8,000 Army volunteer reservists serving in Greater London. There should be a similar number in the special constabulary, and yet another urgent review is needed into whether the special constabulary has the correct role and structure.

One paragraph of the report draws attention to the risks that the Metropolitan police undertake while protecting us. It says:

"Injuries to police officers on duty increased sharply in 1989 to 13,348 (11,889 in 1988); a rise of just over 12%. The number of assaults on police officers also showed a marked rise on previous years and totalled 4,955 (4,206 in 1988). Once again, arresting officers have borne the brunt of these assaults with 4,340 incidents (almost 21% more than in 1988)".

Those figures underline the debt that we owe to them all.

12.53 pm

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am pleased to be taking part in my first debate on the police. I had not realised the significance of the debate. If this is the accountability of the Metropolitan police, with the Home Secretary here to show that accountability, it shows how necessary it is that the Metropolitan police should have the same system of accountability as forces in the rest of the country.

The statement of common purposes and values is supported by all hon. Members who wish to see its aims achieved. Some of the contents of the report are more progressive and more positive than many of the words spoken in the debate. The way the Home Secretary dealt with the issue in his introduction was particularly disappointing.

To realise a statement of common purpose and common values, two things are crucial—the morale of the police, and public confidence in the police. Those two factors are interrelated and are extremely important.

What is the role of the police today and what is their identity? Are the Government asking too much of the police? Is the real danger the fact that the Metropolitan police are being asked to do things that we have not given them the resources to do? Certainly, the police are being left to pick up the pieces of the effects of Government policy, especially in the inner cities.

I will give examples of what is happening in Lambeth to show how the police are being caught in the middle and forced to undertake duties which many of them did not join the police force—or rather, the police service, as we should refer to it—to carry out.

West Lambeth health authority is grossly underfunded and is having to make some £8 million cuts in its budget. The result of one of the immediate cuts is that the health

[Miss Kate Hoey]

authority now refuses to admit people to hospital under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 between 8 pm and 8 am, and

"Priority care has broken down in West Lambeth health authority."

Those are not my words, but the words of an officer of West Lambeth health authority. As a result, the police are having to stand in. After 8 at night many of these vulnerable people have to be incarcerated in totally inadequate facilities in our police stations. Police officers did not join the police service to do that.

Another example is the problem of homelessness. In Lambeth the police are being pushed into a situation where they are under pressure from the Government, and from some members of the public, to move the homeless on.

When the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) called for the homeless to be swept off the streets of London, I asked where he suggested that they be swept to. Now we know where, as it was recently announced that they are to be put in church halls and makeshift buildings. Who will be asked to do the sweeping up? Who will enforce the things that the Government are trying to do? The police will have to do the sweeping up, and it is interesting to note that the use of the Vagrancy Act 1824 is increasing. In my constituency, the Kennington police officers who cover the bull ring are well aware of the intolerable position in which they are placed. They face pressure from some members of the public, who are unhappy because a small number of homeless people are perhaps being intimidating, but the police are also aware that the vast majority of homeless people are facing a terrible crisis in their lives.

The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis recognises that homelessness has many social causes and implications. He also recognises the demands being made of the police. I hope that the Home Secretary shares his concern.

Mr. Waddington: I must pick the hon. Lady up on one small point. She said that the use of the Vagrancy Act was increasing. There are many misconceptions about that. The Vagrancy Act creates a whole series of offences. Is she aware that in 1988 there were only 12 prosecutions for sleeping rough?

Miss Hoey: That is one good reason why the Vagrancy Act should be swept off the statute book.

Let us consider two other areas for which the police are being asked to take responsibility. I shall not go into them in detail because other hon. Members have already mentioned them. The first was the prison officers' dispute, when between 400 and 500 officers had to work in Wandsworth prison every day. If police officers are working there, they cannot be where they ought to be. Most young policemen and policewomen did not join the police to do the work of prison officers. If they had wanted to be prison officers, they would have joined the prison service. A similar case can be made in relation to the ambulance dispute.

There has been a large increase in domestic violence and in the number of children who have to be protected. Police resources have to be devoted to those issues. The extra burdens placed upon them call for additional resources, but the resources have not been provided.

The Home Secretary referred disparagingly to Lambeth, but he was corrected. It is important to note that the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis says in his report that in Lambeth relations between the police and the local authority are increasingly good. We welcome that, and I hope that the Home Secretary will do his bit to ensure that those better relations are cemented.

I hope, too, that the London borough of Lambeth's application to be part of the safer cities programme will be successful and that it will be allowed to play its part in the safer cities initiative. A multi-disciplinary agency brings together the community, the police and the local authority. I hope that the Home Secretary recognises the need for more resources to be devoted to that important step forward by the local authority, if it is to play its part in the safer cities programme.

Another important step in Lambeth is the summer project, which is also mentioned in the commissioner's report. This arose very much out of people wanting to do things instead of just talking about the community and the police working together. The Lambeth summer project has been a notable success. That has been said not just by the police and the people of Lambeth. It is also referred to in an interesting booklet by Robert Chesshyre, published by the Police Foundation. The booklet deals in depth with the positive things that have come out of the Lambeth summer project, which has brought together all the agencies in the local authority area. I hope that it will continue to be supported.

I have spoken to the Lambeth police about another matter which is causing concern to many hon. Members with London constituencies. There is a feeling among the black community in my area that the police are using their powers to stop and search black people to find out whether they are breaking the immigration rules. It is imperative that no black person walking around my borough should be picked on by the police simply because he is black, and that such tactics are not used to try to find illegal immigrants. The police have said in public that they recognise that there has been bad policing in the Lambeth area. I hope that we shall be able to influence their actions. The police should not have to act as an immigration service.

Positive initiatives have been launched in Lambeth. The borough recognises that if facilities are to be improved in the area, more resources will be needed. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis also recognises that the needs of inner city areas such as Lambeth are so great that policing cannot be divorced from all the other things happening in the borough. I hope that some of the issues raised in the debate will lead to Government recognition of the fact that we cannot allow the police to be used as a kind of mopping-up operation when things go wrong in the borough. Some of the problems can be solved only by more resources being devoted to boroughs such as Lambeth to improve facilities and housing for the people who live there.

1.4 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I am contributing to today's debate partly because I have been a Londoner all my life, although I now have a nice house in my constituency of Billericay. I have also served on the Westminster city council police liaison group. Therefore, I have some insight into the situation in London.

We talk as though things are going from bad to worse, but I recall from my history books that crime in London was much worse at the turn of the century. In some parts of the east end of London where three policemen used to patrol together, a young policewoman can now walk alone, so I am not sure that things are getting worse. Although people's expectations have increased, and that is perfectly right and acceptable, the general level of policing in London is probably better. As the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said, that does not affect the public perception that things are getting worse.

As a woman who has to walk around London late at night—we often leave this place at some ridiculous hour such as 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock in the morning—if someone comes up behind me, I am more nervous and frightened than I was when I was a young girl living in Putney, a more suburban part of London. The other evening as I walked home, a jogger came up behind me. I could hear him padding along and I yelled. I felt a real idiot, but I was frightened at the thought of someone coming up behind me. Women should not have to be afraid in our cities.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) said, it may well be that the number of elderly women who are battered is smaller than people think, but that does not help any elderly woman who wakes up at night to see a monster with a balaclava hod over his head and a knife in his hand. Although the number of such crimes is decreasing, there is no reason why we should be complacent or suggest that the detection rate does not need improving.

Three interesting aspects of policing in London have not yet been mentioned. The increasing use of private security agencies takes work off the police. The number of bank robberies in London has reduced remarkably in the past 10 years because more banks are using private security firms to police the banks and to carry the money. That is a sensible idea. Contracting out traffic wardens has also been mentioned. I am not sure that I entirely disapprove of the vigilantes who travel on the underground, but I am all in favour of that American idea if it improves people's feeling of safety on the underground.

The participation of citizens in policing their communities is no bad thing. One version is neighbourhood watch. In my constituency there has been an interesting development. A young women who is not a police officer monitors with a computer the movements of all the constables and patrol cars within a large part of my constituency. She is extremely efficient; she knows just where everyone is and can direct officers to crimes. She is not a police officer.

Our highly trained and well-paid police should be used at the sharp end of crime detection. We should have more of them on the streets so that people feel their presence. That contributes to people's sense of security and is a more productive and sensible use of police time. I hope that the Metropolitan police will continue looking for ways of taking the paperwork and bureaucracy away from police officers so that they can go out and do the job for which they have been trained.

Another aspect of police work in the metropolitan area relates to street demonstrations. When I was a Westminster city councillor, the aftermaths of violent street demonstrations cost the ratepayers in the metropolis a lot of money. They were often staged by people from other parts of the country. The police grant the permits for such demonstrations. We on Westminster council tried, at various times, to prevail on the Metropolitan police to redirect the demos to parks, city outskirts or public commons such as Wandsworth common and Hampstead heath, where those involved could conduct a perfectly good demonstration with much less disruption for people who live in the capital.

When I stay in London at the weekends I often go shopping and cannot get back as the traffic has been diverted because of demonstrations. People might not think it matters that I cannot get back from Marks and Spencer on a Saturday afternoon, but it matters to me. I have to go to the other side of the river and walk miles and miles with two heavy shopping bags to get back to my London address. Such problems would be eased if the Metropolitan police could be urged to consider more carefully whether they should grant permits for demonstrations.

I was raised in Putney, and every Saturday during the football season my brothers and dad would go to Fulham football ground to watch the match. Nobody ever worried about whether they would be in a riot or a punch-up on their way to or from the match—the issue never arose. Now parents worry about their kids going to football matches in case they get involved.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary should have a word with the Secretary of State for the Environment, because if the planning laws were relaxed, many football grounds could be situated outside cities, where, at present, planning consent is not given. My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) is involved with Luton football club, which wants to re-site its ground outside Luton centre but cannot obtain planning consent. I know that that issue is not directly related to the responsibilities of the Metropolitan police, but it affects the overtime work that they have to do on Saturday afternoons. Week after week, large numbers of them are diverted to policing demonstrations and football matches when, I am sure, they would prefer to be at home with their families watching a football match or tennis on television.

I have referred to the increasing involvement of children in street crime and crime involving cars in the metropolitan area. I am sure that the Metropolitan police would be happy if they could pin more of those crimes on children. Time and again they told us that children who were taken to court, got off scot free. I am happy that the Government are considering involving parents more when such crimes come to court. The effect of such a shock on both parents and young children could well stop the rot setting in. Children would not become used to getting away with crime, and would be less likely to become seriously involved in it. The increase in crime in central London is due largely to schoolchildren whose parents, more than the police, should be responsible for them.

Whether or not the number of violent crimes against women in the community and cities is rising, women's perception of such crimes is heightened. Ever since I can remember, travelling in crowded tubes has sometimes been an excuse for a monster, a dirty old man, to press up against me and squeeze bits of my anatomy with which he has no business to be in contact. It is horrible. Often in the past women would not report such occurrences because of a feeling of shame, as if they had been involved. Recently, a judge said to a women in a rape case that, although she

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said no she may have meant yes. Such an attitude, which exists in police forces as well as among the judiciary, does not help women to feel secure in our communities.

I should like the Metropolitan police to pay more attention to instructing young girls on how to deal with such assaults. A girl's response is often one of fear and inaction. Girls almost freeze rather than sock the man in the chops or, better still, kneeing him in the groin. We grown-ups know that that is one good way of putting a man out of action long enough to run a short distance down the road and get away. I do not subscribe to the idea that women should not fight back.

The Metropolitan police should formulate ideas on teaching young girls and women how to cope when attacked, whether in their own homes, on the street, the cinema, on tube stations or on trains. Such education could be given on television, and women's confidence to go out at night would thus be restored. We should not feel that we must take a taxi from A to B every time we want to go outside our front door. The Metropolitan police should use some imagination to do something to improve a woman's sense of security when outside at night.

From time to time we have read in the newspapers of horrific violence against young children. In recent years in the London area Jasmine Beckford, Kimberley Carlile and Sukina Hammond were murdered in the most terrible circumstances in their homes. Appalling violence was meted out to them. Often violence is perpetrated not by the parent, but by a surrogate parent, for example, the live-in boyfriend.

When we were considering the Cleveland case, it was interesting to note the role of the police as opposed to that of the social services. I know that the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) feels extremely strongly about this and she has some excellent background material on the way in which children in care are often abused by the very people who should be looking after them.

I was pleased when, recently, the Metropolitan police and others introduced specialist rape squads so that the victims could receive sympathetic treatment. We need such a service for children who are endangered. Often we hear that risk to a child has been reported to social services, which are subsequently involved with the family, yet nothing is done to rescue the child, often because children are regarded as the property of their parents rather than individuals in their own right. Children do not get enough protection from the police. The Metropolitan police and other forces should be involved at a much earlier stage in such cases and should take control of them. When a child is at risk, the pressure of the police would be salutary. These matters should not be left to social services, as they have been in the past.

The Metropolitan police should spend less time on ancillary jobs which could be efficiently sub-contracted out to the private sector. The police should grant fewer permits for demonstrations in the centre of the city. Demonstrations should be confined to outer-London areas where they could be policed more securely. If that happened, much less disruption would be caused to those who live in the metropolitan area, who cannot go about their business at the weekends.

The police should provide more protection for children at risk and should not leave it to the social services. The Metropolitan police should also prosecute more children who commit crime as that would mean that their parents would be made to feel responsible. Much more attention must be paid to women's belief that the police cannot protect them as well as they used to. That undoubtedly means a far greater presence of police on the streets, where I think that most of them should be.

Here in the centre of London we do not have a balanced view of these matters. There are more police to the square inch in London than there are hon. Members on the Benches in the House today. We are over-provided. Not surprisingly, the crime rate in the Canon row catchment area around here is the lowest in London. We perhaps get a false impression in this place because everywhere we turn there is a policeman. In other areas, such as Brixton, Lambeth, Southwark, Peckham, the east end and north London, the position is different. We want more policemen to be doing the job for which the public think they are paying—working as bobbies on the beat.

1.20 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Last month's release of the latest crime statistics gave little cause for comfort as a background to today's debate. Notifiable offences were 15 per cent. higher than in the equivalent quarter of 1989. Violence to the person was up by 4 per cent. One small ray of light in an otherwise dismal picture was that sexual offences were down by 5 per cent.

I reiterate the remarks that have been made in response to a comment and a series of statistics from the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), who was trying to be reassuring. Crime to women—especially crime on the transport network—is not only growing quite dramatically in reality, but is causing many women to be prisoners in their own homes, especially in the evening. There is evidence that sexual crimes against women have increased by 54 per cent., and to be glib about that is a big mistake.

In London, notifiable offences have risen by more than 7 per cent. on an annual basis. Offences against the person rose from 4 per cent. of notifiable offences in 1979 to 7 per cent. in 1989. While offences involving death or serious injury have declined by 3 per cent. since 1988, they are 16 per cent. higher than they were a decade ago. That represents a changing pattern in criminal behaviour and naturally causes great anxiety to those who feel that they are most vulnerable.

I have discussed the statistics relating to my area with the local chief superintendents. They can, of course, reassure me that a woman in her 70s, out at 2 am, statistically would be at virtually no risk because none of them is out at that time. The chief superintendents have told me, quite convincingly, that the most vulnerable person out in the evening is a teenage male. By and large, teenage males are also responsible for dishing out this treatment, although quite innocent teenage boys coming home from a club or a pub do get set on. They are a vulnerable group.

We are responding, in part, to media reaction. The brutal rape of a 70-year-old or the brutal mugging of an elderly lady will receive more media attention than will yet another youth being beaten up on the street in the evening.

We must not underestimate the fear of crime. It has a foundation and it causes people to live their lives in an unacceptable way. We must continue to address that problem.

We must also take seriously violence in the home. Violence, injury and murder at the hands of relatives or others well known to the victim are becoming an increasing problem. There is a constant debate about whether the increase is to be accounted for by the fact that the victims of child abuse are coming forward more frequently than in the past or by the fact that women who have been sexually abused or raped by a relative are now prepared to say so whereas they were not in the past. We shall never know the truth, no one will ever be able to find equivalent statistics for past decades and centuries. There may be an element of truth in the assertion, but even so it does not detract from the seriousness of the problem of violence in the home.

Nearly half the women who are murdered are killed by their husband or lover and we cannot ignore that fact. In the past, such crimes were called crimes of passion, and the police kept well clear of the increasing number of violent incidents leading up to such murders. That pattern is now beginning to change. We do not expect our children and womenfolk to endure such treatment. The natural consequence of that is that we expect our police officers to intervene and take preventive measures. It has not always been the tradition for police to become involved in such activities. It used to be notoriously difficult to get the police to intervene because in many cases someone who makes a complaint in the heat of the moment will then decide to back off and not to proceed with the case. We must reflect and encourage the changing values in society. Women should not feel ashamed or feel that the violence against them is their fault. They should feel entitled to, and should properly expect, the protection of the police force.

I propose to deal in detail with some of the ways in which the police deal with serious violent crime, often resulting in death. A study of the families of murder victims published earlier this year has proved to be extremely useful in highlighting some of the shortcomings in the police's handling of relatives following a bereavement. The loss of a relative is always tragic but a violent and unexpected death-murder, manslaughter or accidental death—is far more difficult to come to terms with. The report showed an open-mindedness and sensitivity on the part of the police, and a readiness to become involved in understanding how to deal with the relatives. That is not their first line of work but it is extremely important.

I have received several representations from the relatives of victims of road accidents who have been unable to find out what happened after the inquest on their loved ones. Sometimes the person responsible is charged with nothing more serious than a motoring offence. The relatives of the bereaved person often find it very difficult to find out what happens when the person who has been charged goes to court—to find out what the sentence—if any—was and what is being done to prevent an irresponsible person going out on a joy ride and inadvertently killing someone else.

My work as an hon. Member has involved dealing with a number of relatives following bereavements—not only in cases relating to police work. Because of the way in which the circumstances of the death were handled, those relatives have been unable to accept the tragic loss of their loved one and the circumstances surrounding it. The police are rightly prepared to accept further help and to become more sensitive in dealing with such matters. Some of the work can be handed over to civilians, who may be able to engage in bereavement counselling and help the police in their job. I have written to the Home Secretary about a sad case in my constituency involving the death of a young man in a lift accident. There is some debate between his father and the police concerning the nature of the accident. I am about to write to the Home Secretary again because I have made further inquiries and I think that in this instance, the police, in an attempt to spare the father of the child the full details of how the death came about, have brought repercussions on themselves. Those matters must be dealt with sensitively, not least because the work load that follows an unhappy bereaved person may be enormous and may last for years.

I want to draw attention to some of the grey areas in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour and who takes responsibility for that, particularly in inner-city areas. That is a great problem in Greenwich, as I am sure it must be elsewhere. It involves disputes between neighbours; severe vandalism to the extent of lighting fires in the basement of tower blocks; harassment and objects being pushed through letter boxes and children knocking on doors and running away, not just once, but repeatedly. The responsibility for such behaviour is a murky area. Does it lie in the way in which the council estate is run—if it happens on a council estate? Does the responsibility lie with the local authority housing department? Or does the responsibility lie with the police? Because of the greyness of that area and the difficulty in finding someone to take responsibility for it, very often untold misery is caused to those who are on the receiving end.

Bored children and bored teenagers—irrespective of those who have a tendency to criminal behaviour—cause great misery on some of our estates and the result of their behaviour overlaps on to police responsibility. As a society we must take the responsibility for our young people more seriously. We must provide more constructive things for them to do to stop them from turning to crime from sheer boredom.

I want to refer to homeless people, to which the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) referred. Earlier this week I had to contact my local police about a lady who had appeared on the streets in my constituency in an area that is not unfamiliar with dossers, tramps and people with nowhere to live. An establishment called Carrington house, which takes people in at night, is in the area. I had received innumerable telephone calls about a lady who had appeared quite well dressed and seemed to have money. She had settled down on a street corner and had proceeded to live there for the next five weeks. People were becoming very disturbed and anxious about her. I contacted the social services to see what could be done and I also contacted the police. A week later nothing had been done so I rang the chief superintendent and said, "Unless you do something quickly, I'm going to ring 'Thames News' about this lady." It was not really his responsibility. The women had committed no crime and I understand that she had been offered shelter, but had refused it. However, she appeared to be just sitting on the street corner dying.

One of the problems with homelessness is that among the homeless there are clearly many mentally ill people. We are forcing our police to take responsibility for those people as there is no other route available. I understand

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that the woman to whom I have referred cannot be taken into compulsory care for her own well-being because she is not a danger to other people. Although she is not looking after herself, she is no real danger to herself and has lived that way for some time. Such social problems are reflecting heavily on the police burden.

The reputation of the police has perhaps been tarnished as a result of their response to what, in their book, might be more moderate crimes. People accept that if there is a serious rape or a murder the police come round in full force and there is a proper investigation. It is rather like the health service—if we suffer a road accident or a serious illness, the health service leaps into action. The equivalent of the varicose vein syndrome in the health service is the routine robbery. Such robberies are routine for the police, but they are not for the people who are on the receiving end. I have discussed the matter with my local police force. The police must sharpen up their performance in that respect to regain some of their lost esteem. I have found my local police co-operative and wishing to address issues seriously in what has been a difficult time for them.

Without taking up too much time, I shall relate one brief anecdote of how the police are sometimes misjudged. I spent a night working with the police, in the early days of my time as a Member of Parliament, to see exactly what they did. During the early hours of the morning, I was taken by a police officer to a site on which travellers were about to be evicted. When we got there, I discovered that the police officer was well known by the travellers. They came out willingly to speak to him, and they were interested to know what he had come to tell them. It was a cold winter's night, and the police officer was busy telling them to take the young children back indoors. He said that their eviction notice was issued for the following morning and not the following Monday, as he had previously advised them.

He asked the travellers to make sure that they had given their children their breakfast and had warmly dressed them when they were evicted at the crack of dawn. The local press had been speculating that local travellers who were about to be moved on had got the nod from a misguided social worker and moved a few hundred yards down the road so that the order did not apply to them. I was quite amused to find that a kindly policeman of the old school was concerned that the children had their breakfast before they were moved. Such policemen are still in our midst. I could relate anecdotes to demonstrate the other point of view, but I shal not detain the House further.

Policing in London is a difficult task. Problems in society are making an already difficult job much more difficult.

1.36 pm

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): I wish to raise two constituency issues—one good and one bad. The good one received a warm welcome from the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey). I refer to the Lambeth summer project, which is absolutely first-class. If such projects are not being run elsewhere in the country, they should be.

The project is open to every youngster aged between 10 and 17. The purpose is to show that the police are human and helpful, and to give youngsters some fun, experience and activities during their summer holiday. I may be wrong, but I believe that it is the brainchild of Streatham chief superintendent Roger Street. Certainly, he was one of the instigators. The person organising the project so extremely well is the community liaison officer, Chris Taylor, who is based at Cavendish road, which is also in my constituency. The project has been operating for some years and has grown in strength each year. What is involved? The police initiate the formation of a committee of themselves and local businessmen for the purpose of raising money. This year, they have raised £36,000—part of which, I agree, has come from the city action team. There has been much additional help. For instance, Leyland-DAF has lent seven mini-buses for a month to cart the youngsters from place to place. The project runs from 30 July to 24 August and every youngster between the ages of 10 and 17 is welcome.

All sorts of activities will be involved—for instance, recreational activities, arts and crafts, motor maintenance, weight lifting and a drama workshop. The Army is providing activities on certain days to show that, among other things, there is a jolly good career in the Army for the youngsters, if they wish to pursue one when they grow up. I understand that the Navy is providing six days of water sports activities at the East India dock and the Welsh Harp in north London, with which I am not familiar, is also involved.

Last year, 414 boys and 264 girls enrolled in the project. These youngsters mainly came from the inner-city council estates in Lambeth. As hon. Members will know, part of Brixton is in my constituency and it is also very much involved. The average daily attendance was more than 200, adding up to 3,000 child days.

I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Vauxhall present as I am elaborating on the points that she made about the Lambeth summer project. It is first class.

There are five centres in Lambeth—two in Streatham, two in Kennington, and one in Clapham. The Streatham *Guardian* has given free space. It has not yet been published, but it will be very helpful.

In previous years, Lambeth council refused to co-operate with the project in any way and would not have anything to do with it. That was the missing link in the plan. I am delighted to report, however, that I understand that the council is to be much more positive and helpful this year and may well be involved in the planning stage.

It is difficult to know whether the day-time crime figures have dropped, for example, on the council estates, but the project is being carefully monitored and we should know in a year or two. Nevertheless, the fear felt by many elderly people when they see a lot of youngsters gathered around a lamp post or outside a coffee bar is reduced because the youngsters are not around—they are enjoying themselves on the summer project. That is another way in which the project has helped. In addition, parents—and especially single-parent families—have been delighted to have youngsters taken off their hands during the summer.

I have gone into the project in some detail because, as I have said, it is not just jolly good for Lambeth—it is the kind of thing that will be good everywhere. Since I became member of Parliament for Clapham 20 years ago, I have seen an extraordinary change in the relationship between the police and the community. Things blew up horribly in the Brixton riots, but since then enormous strides have been made by community policing—or whatever one cares

to call it—of which the summer project is an excellent example. I am sure that the barriers of mistrust are being broken down in my constituency. That is the good news.

The bad news about my constituency is that my own private Member's Bill, the Sexual Offences Bill, has not gone through the House. Although it had an unopposed Second Reading and was unamended in Committee, it was talked out on Third Reading on 11 May by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). He was in the Chamber earlier and I am sorry that he is not here now. My Bill was objected to five times and talked out on 6 July —again, by the hon. Member for Brent, East. I entirely accept that the hon. Gentleman has the right to use the procedures of the House in that way. My argument is with his judgment, not with his use of the procedures. I accept his right to do what he did, but I remind the House that my Bill had all-party support. It had the support of both Front Benches and also the support of hon. Members in other parties. Indeed, it had well-nigh universal support. If it did not have 100 per cent. support in the House, it certainly had about 99·5 per cent.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House, made an interesting interjection when the Bill was talked out the other day. In essence, he said, "This cannot be the right way for things to happen. Perhaps the procedures for private Member's Bills could be reconsidered." I very much hope that that might be done.

I shall not rehearse my arguments because they have already been gone into. However, the situation in my constituency is worse today than three months ago. Previously, the police could arrest a kerb crawler who drove around an area several times and solicited just once. It amazed me that they got prosecutions, but they did. However, one of the people who was prosecuted and convicted then appealed and won his case. That does not surprise me because it was not persistent soliciting. So the police are back to square one.

There is a strong feeling in the constituency about the lack of police presence. We have a vice squad of five whereas Wandsworth has a vice squad of 10, yet we have far more kerb crawlers than Wandsworth. I have talked to the deputy assistant commissioner and my chief superintendent, who takes the view that it is not a matter of a shortgage of police officers—they arrest prostitutes two or three times a week, but they always come back. I believe that it is a problem of kerb crawlers. I am therefore delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is present on the Treasury Bench to hear this because if amendments are tabled to any appropriate Home Office business with any semblance to my Bill, I hope that he will smile and not frown on them.

1.44 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I have attended every one of these debates since I became a Member of Parliament seven years ago, and in every one I have made exactly the same point that I am going to make now. It is a travesty of democracy that £1·3 billion of public expenditure—a £250,000 rise on the figures for 1988-89 —should be debated on a motion to adjourn the House, with no opportunities for detailed discussion or questioning, and that the police force should not be accountable to the people of London other than through the Home Secretary—who, once again, does not represent a London constituency. That is nonsense. It is time that there was a real understanding of the need to bring democracy into the running of the police force in the capital city. I entirely endorse the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley): the Labour party is committed to introducing democratic accountability—in a general sense—in the police force throughout London.

It is also time that the Home Secretary reprogrammed his word processor. I believe that in his private office there is a word processor programme entitled "Policing of London, annual debate—Home Secretary's speech". He makes the same old attacks on Labour authorities, whether or not they are still Labour authorities and whether or not the attacks are justified. It is the same old drudgery.

Let me draw the Home Secretary's attention to a serious error that he made this morning. Islington borough council not only has a police community consultative group—of which my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and I are both members—but it has spent a great deal of time and effort producing crime surveys. It has been working with Middlesex polytechnic to produce the second Islington crime survey, of crimes on council estates. It has current projects concerning the crimes on the Mayville estate and in the Highbury area, as well as one carried out on Hilldrop estate some time ago.

The council takes crime very serioulsy, because, by and large, it is the poorest people living on the council estates who suffer the most. Women are attacked on the street who should be able to walk around the streets freely at night, but suffer from sexual and violent abuse. The black community suffers from racial harassment. The council is attempting to encourage the police to operate in a way that is responsive to the needs of the people of our borough. I wish that the Home Secretary would give some credit where it is due, and congratulate the borough council on responding to the wishes of the people of our borough by trying to encourage the police to act. I am not saying that agreement is always reached with the police—by no means —but a real effort is made by the elected local authority to ensure the safety of the people who live in our borough. I wish that some recognition would be given to that.

The enforcement of traffic restrictions by the London police is highly selective. They did not want many bus lanes, and it took an awful lot of prodding to make them enforce traffic regulations relating to such lanes. Even now, bus lanes are too often blocked—delaying hundreds who are stuck in buses—by one or two selfish people parking their no doubt tax-free BMWs while popping in to buy a copy of *The Times* or the *Financial Times* on their way into the City.

There is another example of class bias policing. Stretched limousines are parked all along Charing Cross road every night outside clubs, such as the Sportsman club at the bottom of Tottenham Court road. They are parked on double yellow lines for the entire evening, with a chauffeur sitting inside. The police walk up and down protecting those limousines while the traffic builds up all down Tottenham Court road and Charing Cross road, and people such as myself, returning from the House on the 29 bus, are delayed. I have raised questions about this matter, and now that the Home Secretary is here I hope that he will take it up with the Commissioner of Police of the

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Metropolis immediately to ensure that stretched limos will no longer deny the people of London free movement on the streets of their capital city.

I support the enforcement of parking controls whenever necessary, but I sometimes have half an inkling that wheel clamping is done where the contractor can most easily put the clamps on, rather than where the traffic offences are most serious. I wish some examination would be made, because I notice from the accounts that there is a considerable income to the Metropolitan police from wheel-clamping contracts. There should be some examination of that relationship.

Page 73 of the report shows that there has been a serious increase in the number of road accidents to cyclists, and in the number of accidents involving overweight or overloaded heavy goods vehicles. I hope that the Home Secretary will look into that. I must move on because my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is giving me a nudge. He is our Whip for London and the agency Whip for today.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend wasted 15 seconds on that.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you.

The graph on page 48 of the police report shows an almost static clear-up rate, at 150,000 crimes, despite the fact that the number of crimes has increased to 800,000. The clear-up rate as a percentage is not high and has hardly risen in the past three years. Violent crime is up from 719,000 to 756,000, and firearms crimes are up from 514 to 531. That is not a high figure but it is serious for all that. In London, there are now 8,877 firearms licences as opposed to 8,650 last year. The Home Affairs Select Committee report entitled "Racial Attacks and Harassment" said:

> "We therefore recommend that the Home Office emphasise to Chief Constables the importance of the Committee's recommendation of 1986 that all police forces covering areas with appreciable ethnic minorities make clear that tackling racial incidents is regarded as one of their priority tasks, and advise Chief Constables in such forces to take appropriate action."

I hope that the Metropolitan police will take that on board. The rate of racial crimes in London is unacceptable and there is inadequate reporting of racial attacks. Too many police think that if a young black man is driving an expensive car he should be stopped and questioned, although the same is not true of a young white man. Nigel Benn, Garth Crooks and others have all been stopped in such circumstances.

Far too many women feel unable to go to the police to report sexual attacks, of whatever kind. That is serious because women must have confidence in the police. In the past few years 20 gay men have been murdered in London. There has been a great increase in the number of cases of men accused of buggery. This is part of an attack on the gay and lesbian community in London. I hope that the Home Secretary will make it clear to the police that the murder of gay people and the lack of co-operation between the police and gay community organisations is to be deplored. I recommend that he examines the good working relationship that has been developed between police and organisations representing gay and lesbian people in Hampstead. In comparison with other parts of London, this area has a good record.

This is an inadequate way to debate the Metropolitan police. I hope that one day soon we shall have a properly accountable democratic police force in London so that serious matters of crime and public safety can be addressed by elected representatives of the people of London who can have control over the policing of their city.

1.53 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I apologise to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary because, in the time allowed to us tail-end-Charlies, I shall not be able to make many positive comments about the excellent work of the police and the progress that they have made in recent years. Therefore, if my speech is somewhat unbalanced, it is merely because I have to make excerpts from it to bring to his attention matters of concern to the people of Richmond upon Thames borough, and, in particular, my constituency.

In reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Corbyn) I can say that in the past few months I have had letters from women who believe that the treatment that they have been accorded following their reporting of rape and other sexual attacks is far more sensitive then it was in past years. I know that the hon. Gentleman agrees with that. I was merely supporting what he said. I also agree with him about the needless harassment of many young black people, when we should be congratulating them on their achievements. Perhaps as achievement is measured by the acquisition of certain assets, such as motor cars, they should not be made to feel that buying a car with the fruits of their labours means that they will be stopped by the police as an object of possible curiosity.

I condone the strategy statement issued by Sir Peter Imbert earlier this year—the "Strategy Statement 1990"—and in particular the passage which states that he wishes

> "To establish a climate both internally and externally which attracts and retains greater numbers from ethnic minority groups at all levels of the Metropolitan police."

It is vital that we have more role models for communities to adopt.

My local community, the Richmond upon Thames division, in common with the rest of the country, has experienced a significant rise in recorded crime during the first five months of this year compared with the corresponding period in 1989. While the national picture shows an approximate rise of 15 per cent., the borough of Richmond upon Thames has seen a 35 per cent. increase, and 73 per cent. of that is attributable to rises in three types of crime: burglaries, both residential and commercial; criminal damage offences; and motor vehicle crimes.

I shall quote some figures that I received recently from Richmond upon Thames division which show that the increase in burglaries for the first five months this year compared to the last is 34·5 per cent., in motor vehicle crime it is 54 per cent., and for criminal damage it is up by 35 per cent. When taken together with other crimes, that gives a 35 per cent. increase in the crime profile.

Those figures are particularly sad because I do not know of any borough in London where co-operation between local people and the police is greater or more welcome. The police-community group is well supported by the police, by lay people and by the council. Although wider issues are involved in the rise in crime, the

Metropolitan police have undertaken a number of initiatives specifically in Richmond which are worth mentioning.

First, in liaison with the police and community consultative committee, the Metropolitan police have taken the problem of residential burglaries as one of their primary objectives this year. Twelve officers are attached to a small squad to try to deal with that, and to give it a greater profile.

Secondly, in March a team of 10 officers was formed to address the problem of motor vehicle crime, which has increased by more than 50 per cent. in the past five months. In June, the local force commenced an operation which involved the local and area headquarters-based officers and various other authorities, to try to reassure local residents and to increase the arrest rate of offenders.

Thirdly, the local community in Richmond is very much a part of Metropolitan police strategy achieved through neighbourhood watch schemes and the local media.

I commend the local Metropolitan police for their support of the victim support scheme. Nowadays it is often thanks to the Metropolitan police that victim support schemes get off the ground. The force has been extremely generous with money and support and continuing co-operation. The victim is so often forgotten, but thanks to Home Office funding victim support schemes are now on a more secure footing.

What are the reasons for the increase in crime? Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that proper research is undertaken to find out the reasons for increases, especially in the leafier pastures of the suburbs, such as Richmond? Richmond is perceived to be an area of plenty. Perhaps that is why so many crimes are committed by people who travel to Richmond on what might be called a "take it awayday" ticket. Perhaps we should consider some of the other reasons. It may seem trite to say that warmer winters have an effect on crime, but there is no respite for domestic or street crime when there is such climactic change. That needs to be investigated. Perhaps we can discover whether there are seasonal differences in crime.

Another factor is the "poll tax attitude"—the mentality that certain laws are optional and that one can protest and refuse to pay, depending upon one's views, and that is encouraged, or not encouraged, by outside groups. The "Can't pay, won't pay" mentality leads to "Want now, won't wait" mentality. In an age in which people own more property and assets, some people feel that they do not want to pay for things because interest rates are high. Research ought to be carried out into whether the acquisition of property is accompanied by an increase in crime. There is little that the Metropolitan police can do about it. It is up to the owner of property to protect it by making it difficult for people to steal it.

We must also investigate the impact of alcohol on the young. They go to pubs far more than they used to do. Many pubs now issue a voluntary identity card. I believe that as soon as possible there ought to be a nationally readable, voluntarily carried identity card for everyone in the United Kingdom.

2 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I know that there is none so selfish as a Member of Parliament on a Friday, particularly those who make speeches for 15 or 20 minutes, leaving the fag-end-Charlies to divide the remaining time between them. I shall therefore try to make a few points in about five minutes.

I echo what has been said. We are grateful to the Home Secretary for agreeing to meet the London group of Labour Members of Parliament, which I chair. We had a useful exchange. However, even that, combined with police debates, is an inadequate mechanism for holding the Metropolitan police, through the House, to account. I look forward to the day when my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is Home Secretary and he introduces a Bill to set up a new London council as set out in "London Pride", a document published by the Labour party. The Bill would establish an elected police authority for London. The City of London has had one for many years. I see no reason why that principle should not be extended to the metropolis as a whole.

London faces many policing problems. I refer in particular to the incidence of racial attacks in the London borough of Newham, the east end and Tower Hamlets. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred to the attacks on lesbians and gay men. There is something almost perverted in the policy of entrapment adopted by the Metropolitan police and other police forces. The number of prosecutions of gay men and the number of murders of gay men, through "queer bashing", has increased. When violent crimes are being committed throughout London, it is peculiar that the police should devote so large a part of their resources to the entrapment of gay men in public places. The perception is that London wants—and needs—effective policing.

That brings me to the perennial demand for more police officers on the streets where they can be seen and contacted when most needed instead of speeding by in panda cars. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) referred to the fact that it creates a sense of security. It does. Nowhere is that sense of security more needed than on public transport. The British Transport police establishment has been increased to about 400, but that is not good enough. The statistics that have been rained upon us today show that there has been a 53 per cent. increase over the 1988-89 figures in the number of sexual offences directed against women on public transport. We should all be ashamed.

In particular, more security is needed on the underground. I know that it is not a Home Office responsibility, but something ought to be said to the Department of Transport about the increasing move towards one-person-operated trains and buses. It is ludicrous that women are now being advised to go to the end of the train that is nearest the driver; but he still does know what is going on in the carriage behind him. We want guards on public transport and police travelling the public transport system to give women greater security.

London has unique policing requirements which place a greater financial burden on the residents of London, and that is grossly unfair. London has more police officers per head of population, but the clear-up rate of the Metropolitan police is lower than average. If we are talking about value for money, Londoners have the right to point the finger and ask whether they are getting true value for money from the police on the streets and the public transport system of the capital city for which they pay so much. I hope that when the Home Secretary

[Mr. Tony Banks]

examines police resources for London he will recognise the uniqueness of the capital city, that more demands are made on the police in London and that greater costs have to be borne by Londoners. We need greater accountability by the police to those Londoners. We are not trying to determine day-to-day policing operations, but we want some democratic say in the way in which police priorities are determined.

Those are reasonable demands from a Labour party that is very reasonable these days, and I hope that the Home Secretary will consider them.

2.5 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I offer only a truncated version of my usually brilliant speech. I apologise to the House for that, but I shall give the flavour of what I wanted to say when I arrived here at 9.35 this morning.

First, I must put on record my warmest possible tribute to Sir Peter Imbert and all his officers in the Metropolitan police, particularly Chief Superintendent Peter Lockley and all the officers in the Epsom and Sutton division, which includes my constituency. The police have an important and difficult range of tasks to perform, and on the whole they carry them out with exemplary courtesy and efficiency.

One local aspect of policing that is a great cause of concern to my constituents is vandalism and criminal damage to property. It may not be the most serious form of crime, but I assure the House that it is a great worry to many people, particularly the elderly. It is disturbing that this category of crime increased last year by 5 per cent. over the previous year and that the clear-up rate is still only 12 per cent.

As the House knows, those problems are often caused by gangs of youths congregating threateningly in residential areas and egging each other on to various forms of anti-social behaviour. The police and the entire law-abiding community need to do more collectively to deal with the causes of that behaviour. Parents should be encouraged or required to take more responsibility legally for their children. Teachers should do still more to limit and reduce the levels of truancy from schools as many such offences are committed when the children should be at school. Publicans and owners of off-licences should be more rigorous in their efforts to detect and prevent under-age drinking. Some of the suggestions made by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) were absolutely right. Only a co-operative effort will begin to control and reduce such anti-social behaviour, which is so disturbing, particularly to elderly people.

In general, the problems of law and order in the metropolis have to be tackled by a multi-pronged approach. First, we need to encourage and assist the general public to pay still more attention to crime prevention. I commend the Home Office on its initiatives over the years, but even more could be done, especially by motorists, householders and insurance companies with the benefit of sophisticated modern technology. Action should be taken by teachers to limit truancy, by parents in fulfilment of their family responsibilities, and by magistrates and others to deal more firmly with the problems caused by under-age drinking. Above all, I would mention the continuing importance of more police officers on the beat as the best way of reassuring the public. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) pointed out that it was only a matter of reassurance. Yet in this role, where we seek co-operation between the public and the police, and the police can be only a thin blue line, it is vitally important that the psychological dimension is taken into account.

In the years to come we shall need to secure even more police in line with the increase in crime that we must expect, if we are to maintain public order in our capital city. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and the Government who, since 1979, have made possible an increase of more than 6,000 officers in the metropolitan area. They did so largely by securing a 72 per cent. increase in real terms in public expenditure on the Metropolitan police, which is admirable. That is progress in the right direction and it is gratifying that the force strength of the Metropolitan police is now only 148 officers short of establishment levels. However, I would still argue that the time has come to consider a further increase in the police establishment, coupled with continuing efforts to staunch the wastage which occurs every year and which, in 1989, was only 200 or so fewer than the number recruited that year.

In view of the prospective decline in the number of 16 to 19-year-olds entering the labour market during the next few years, the balance between recruitment and wastage will have to be kept under careful review, not least because during the past year there was a 7 per cent. increase in medical retirements—no doubt because of the pressures of being a police officer in the metropolitan area—and a striking 33 per cent. increase in transfers to other forces. That is why we are losing so many of our valuable and qualified police officers.

The Commissioner and his senior colleagues must turn their attention to keeping the well-trained, well-qualified and expensive officers that we now have in the metropolitan district. The clinching argument for doing so is that the surest deterrent to crime is the likelihood of being caught for an offence and that can be achieved only with more police officers appropriately deployed. I commend my right hon. and learned Friend and other Home Office Ministers for the leadership that they have given and pay tribute to the Metropolitan police.

2.12 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): A few months ago I copped a look—excuse the pun—at my local police station. The police were making improved efforts and morale was quite high by comparison with national trends, but there were some serious defects about which I have written to the Home Secretary. The working conditions were appalling, particularly the inadequate accommodation.

Leyton police station was built for 70 officers but now houses more than 200 and can only be described as sub-standard. Access for the public is not good and access for the disabled is impossible. It has poor office accommodation, poor interrogation facilities and inadequate parking outside. One of the most serious problems involves the cells, which are inhuman. I warn the Home Secretary, because I have his interests at heart, that a serious injury or even a death could easily occur in those cells, and the Home Secretary or the Commissioner could

be prosecuted if it was thought that the inadequacy of the cells was to blame. Action should be taken to improve the cells, as well as the accommodation generally. The Government's priorities on the building programme are wrong. All the new police stations are being built in the leafy glades, where they are not needed so much. The Home Secretary should reprioritise the Government's building programme.

Women's fear of crime and the number of assaults on women has been mentioned. The police have made some progress towards preventing domestic violence. I appeal to the Home Secretary to take on board my proposed Rape in Marriage (Offence) Bill. I hope that it will become law because it will strengthen the hand of the police in tackling domestic violence. I agree with the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) that police should be more active in giving advice to women about their own self-defence and personal safety. The Home Secretary must work with the local authorities instead of against them, so that street lighting can be improved as well as other safety requirements in public places and on public transport. That would do much to make women feel more secure.

Racial harassment is still a problem. I sought to introduce a Bill to make such harassment a specific criminal offences so that the perpetrator would risk eviction from his home, instead of the victim having to leave his. It would have imposed a legal duty on the police to investigate all such cases. I believe that there remains a strong case for that Bill to be enacted. The police should have a duty to protect the victim—it should be their first duty—but too often they still regard the victim as a nuisance. It is wrong that the pilot projects that the police launched in London to tackle racial harassment have virtually lapsed. I hope that the Home Secretary will consider that matter.

The lack of black and Asian police officers in the Metroplitan police is a serious problem which must be addressed. I know that the Metropolitan police are shortly to hold a conference in Bristol on this but they should also consider the routine policing of black people, which is part of the problem leading to the poor recruitment and retention of the ethnic minorities in the police force.

I have also been asked to express the concerns of GLARE—Greater London Action for Race Equality—about the rising tide of attacks on the Jewish community throughout Europe. It does not want that to happen in London. They recommend that the police should record the ethnic origins of the victims of racial harassment, including a separate category for Jewish victims. I hope that that will be considered.

My hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) spoke about the problems faced by gay men and women. The entrapment in 1989 which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West condemned cost about £10 million. We must question whether that was a worthwhile use of resources, especially when assaults on gay men and women have increased and a number of gay murders remain unresolved. The police should monitor such anti-gay assaults and homophobic remarks and behaviour by police officers should be made a disciplinary offence. The police should introduce lesbian and gay awareness teaching in police training and appoint homosexuals as community liaison officers. That would show that the police take the matter seriously.

The Prime Minister was elected on a pledge to ensure:

"Law and order as a fact and as a concept"

Yet recorded crime has gone up by more than 30 per cent. since 1979 despite the fact that there are now 7 per cent. fewer youths—the category generally held to be responsible for committing much of the recorded crime. There has been a great increase in violent crime against the person, sexual offences, criminal damage, theft and burglary. The annual cost of that crime is astronomical —about £3,500 million to the police, £700 million for running our prisons, £1,000 million for private security and the £1,000 million that local authorities have to spend on crime-related matters.

The Government have not properly addressed the causes of crime. Deprivation, in its widest sense, is one such cause and it affects youngsters and the affluent alike whose lifestyles are narrow and deprived. Unfortunately many of the Government's measures have made that deprivation worse.

Those other prime cause of crime is the bad example set by the Government and the rich in our society. The Rover sweeteners—I must not call it fraud—are another example of high finance City fraudsters getting away with millions without being brought to book. It seems that that is okay so long as one can get away with it. Unfortunately, that attitude has seeped down and has led to an increase in the use of force. Some people believe that the use of force is legitimate—if they can get away with it. The Government have set a bad example, although not deliberately.

We need more community policing, and a balance between the use of high technology and of man and woman power. The details of all murders in London should be computerised. I hope that the Home Secretary will consider that point and my point about balance.

A swifter police response to serious crime is needed, as is accountability. I support the case put so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) about accountability, which exists in the rest of the country. Why does it not exist in London? We need an elected, Londonwide police authority responsible for overall policy—not operational aspects. To guarantee the security of the chief police officer, he would have the right of appeal to the Home Secretary, who could overrule the police authority. If such action was taken, instead of suffering from the crime wave that we see now we could wave goodbye to a lot of crime.

2.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): This has been a full and varied debate. Hon. Members of all parties have made interesting points and many were extremely important. As is in the nature of things, some points were made more than once—indeed, some need to be repeated. That is why I shall begin my remarks by recapitulating two figures given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary in his opening speech.

Since 1979, expenditure on the Metropolitan police has increased by 72 per cent. in real terms and there are 6,000 extra police. In addition, the police specific grant is 52 per cent. of expenditure compared with 51 per cent. in the rest of the country. That is a huge increase in resources and answers the call of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) for adequate

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

resources. I suspect that the right hon. Gentleman could not match that record if he were ever Home Secretary in a Labour Cabinet.

During the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend, there was an exchange about the consultative groups. I want to put the matter back into accurate perspective. On page 2 of his annual report, the Commissioner refers to the "Police/Public" partnership and speaks of his pleasure, which my right hon. and learned Friend shares, that

"there has been some improvement in relations wih the majority political parties in the London Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hackney, Haringey and Lambeth, although they still show reluctance to participate formally in consultative groups."

I am glad to say that, following the recent local elections, Ealing council is now Conservative controlled and is sending representatives, as is Haringey. Following the loss of control by Labour, Brent shows signs of following suit. That still leaves Hackney and Lambeth not co-operating. My right hon. and learned Friend also suggested that Islington was not co-operating. I understand that it did not co-operate until 1988 but, I am glad to say, it is co-operating now.

Traditionally, there were problems in Hackney, in Islington and in Lambeth—and I emphasise the word "were"—where the councils supported the stance of local schools in refusing access to police officers. There is no explicit policy now by any council to refuse access, although I understand from the Metropolitan police that there are still problems in Hackney and in Tower Hamlets. The Metropolitan police do not attribute those problems to the councils concerned, but to the East London Teachers Association. Most schools in London now have such liaison with the police, although some still do not. If any Opposition Member wants to intervene to tell me that every school now co-operates, I shall gladly give way.

Mr. Leighton: The Minister has corrected what the Home Secretary said at the beginning of his speech. As the Home Secretary is the police authority for London, why did not he know what the situation was? Why was he so badly informed?

Mr. Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend inadvertently cited Islington but on the other points he was not incorrect. As I said, I am merely putting the matter in its proper perspective. I have withdrawn the remark about Islington on my right hon. and learned Friend's behalf —as he did himself in an intervention. What my right hon. and learned Friend said about Islington is incorrect now but it was very much correct until recently. The hon. Gentleman should understand that. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) may laugh. As he said, there has been a change of heart, perhaps as a result of electoral pressure on Labour-controlled authorities in London.

Mr. Tony Banks *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Lloyd: I leave the hon. Gentleman's remarks to be read in *Hansard.*

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook sought my response on a number of matters, one of which was neighbourhood watch. The number of schemes is still increasing, although probably not as much as in the past. That is not surprising because those areas that particularly wanted or needed schemes have already established them. The right hon. Gentleman asked about finance. The Metropolitan police do not provide money for watch schemes but they devote considerable resources to assisting the schemes by providing manpower, publicity and signs and other material. As the right hon. Gentleman probably knows, Anglia Windows is now sponsoring newsletters, which are useful in helping groups to keep in touch. I understand that, as a result of that sponsorship, more money is available than in the past. There is otherwise no difference in the money available.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook mentioned police complaints procedures. He wanted them to be more independent and to exclude the police altogether. The Police Complaints Authority is very independent in its operation. It uses police officers in its investigations, and it is difficult to envisage where the skill, knowledge and ability to investigate complaints thoroughly would come from if the police resources were not used under the supervision of the authority.

The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned crime screening. All crimes are examined, as he rightly said. I take his point that police officers ought to tell victims what has happened in their case. That is what they are supposed to do, although I imagine that that may have been overlooked in some cases. I shall draw the matter to the Commissioner's attention although there is perhaps no need to do so as I am sure that he takes a clear view on it and in any case he will be reading the debate.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: No, I shall not give way as I have only a few minutes to comment on a large number of speeches. If I have a moment or two at the end of my speech, I shall gladly give way to the hon. Gentleman.

As one might have expected, my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) made a well-informed and constructive speech. He paid a justified tribute to the bravery of the police. I have noted carefully what my hon. Friend said about assaults on police officers. The figure of 4,955 is disturbingly high. My hon. Friend also mentioned penalties, which are a matter for the courts and not for me or for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. I am glad that my hon. Friend noted the seriousness with which the Commissioner regards the drug threat—particularly the threat of crack.

I noted what my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge said about traffic wardens, parking and police powers—subjects that were also touched upon by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), whose remarks I shall certainly draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. We have authorised and provided money for 300 more wardens this year but there are recruitment and retention difficulties. That is why we have given an increase of 9·4 per cent. in salaries and why we are considering regrading.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) referred to racial attacks, and I share his view of those: they are obnoxious and reprehensible and they should be dealt with as severely as any other type of assault. That is why the Commissioner emphasised in his report that the police were campaigning to ensure that such attacks were reported and that they would follow them up. I am glad to say that after a substantial rise in the

figures reported, no doubt as a result of that campaign, the figures for the first quarter of this year are no higher than they were last year. The met is also involved in the Newham multi-agency project to combat racial attacks and the hon. Gentleman will know about that.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East also referred to Wapping and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State intervened on that point. Twenty-four officers were subsequently charged with criminal offences. As a result of legal advice tendered by the police, I am sorry that the charges could not be properly tested in court. That is regrettable. However, I emphasise that the major regret is that so many police officers, doing their job responsibly, carefully, sensitively and with restraint were injured in a series of demonstrations and attacks that should not have happened.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This debate has been rather shorter than usual because of the delayed start. I do not blame the Minister for not replying to everything that I and other hon. Members raised. However, may I ask him through you to be good enough to ensure that he replies in writing to the many points that were raised in the debate to which he did not have time to reply?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I am sure that that has been noted, but it is hardly a point of order for the Chair.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (FINANCE BILL)

Ordered,

That , notwithstanding the practice of the House as to the intervals between stages of Bills brought in upon Ways and Means Resolutions, more than one stage of the Finance Bill may be taken at any sitting of the House.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 19th July,—

(1) in relation to the proceedings on the Motion in the name of Sir Geoffrey Howe relating to the First Report from the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House, Mr. Speaker shall, unless they have been previously disposed of, at Ten o'clock or three hours after they have been entered upon, whichever is the later, put the Question already proposed from the Chair and any other Question necessary to dispose of those proceedings; and

(2) the said proceedings may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Society of Voluntary Associates

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

2.30 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am grateful for the opportunity in this short debate to draw the attention of the House to the valuable work performed by the Society of Voluntary Associates. I propose, first, to describe the work done by the society, and then to draw a number of lessons of wider application for the way in which we deal with offenders and young people at risk of offending.

The Society of Voluntary Associates—or SOVA—is a national charity which recruits and trains volunteers from local communities to work with offenders, their families and young people in trouble. SOVA's president is Baroness Seear and its vice president is Lord Hunt—who was recently honoured by the Sovereign as a knight of the Garter. These are two admirable members of another place whose tireless work in this field over many years has been admired by so many of us. The volunteers who are recruited and trained by SOVA work alongside the main agencies serving the criminal justice system, including the probation service, social services departments and the national voluntary agencies which work to resettle offenders.

SOVA's volunteers are deployed in a wide variety of ways. For example, they visit people in prison, befriend and support them on release, work with offenders on probation, befriend the partners and families of people in prison, help to find work or accommodation for ex-offenders, teach them literacy or numeracy skills, support offenders with alcohol dependency problems and work in day centres, hostels and drug rehabilitation units. The society is currently working with seven probation areas—Berkshire, north-east London, south-east London, West Sussex, Kent, Cleveland and Humberside—and is running befrienders schemes in five London boroughs. It also has a variety of specialist schemes of other kinds.

The best way to illustrate the work of the society is to describe some of the projects in which it is involved. An example well known to Mr. Speaker is the Croydon befrienders scheme, now in its sixth year of operation, which receives financial support from Croydon council. The scheme recruits volunteers to work with young offenders and with other young people who are deemed to be at risk of offending. Each year the scheme provides trained volunteers to befriend more than 50 young people in the Croydon area, and Mr. Speaker himself takes a particular interest in SOVA's work in the Croydon area.

Most of the volunteers are young adults between the ages of 18 and 24, while most of the youngsters are in the 13 to 14-year age range, with a substantial number of 15 and 16-year-olds. Some have already come to police notice as a result of offending, while others are considered by social workers to be at risk of offending due to their home circumstances. In the first five years of the scheme's operation, 89 per cent. of the young people befriended through the scheme were successfully kept out of court. SOVA's most recent annual report observed:

> "Whilst we are very pleased with this success rate, it must be remembered that this is only one form of evaluation, and many benefits are derived by the youngsters from their relationship with their befrienders, which cannot be measured by statistics".

As a result of the success of the Croydon befrienders scheme, in the past year SOVA has been invited to set up a further four such schemes—in Wandsworth, Lambeth, my own area of the City of Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham—a clear and encouraging sign that the value of this approach is evident to local councils of widely differing political persuasions.

A number of important lessons can be learnt from the work of SOVA. The first is the vital contribution to the resettlement of offenders and the prevention of crime that can be made by ordinary members of the community of both sexes and all ages, drawn from all walks of life, giving their services freely. We must make sure that we fully use

[Sir John Wheeler]

the potential for voluntary involvement of that kind if we are to reduce levels of crime in our society. That includes ensuring that voluntary organisations receive adequate levels of funding. Amounts of grant aid, which are tiny in relation to expenditure on the criminal justice system, can produce astounding value in the amount of effective, high-quality work which results.

Secondly, SOVA's approach highlights the fact that the voluntary approach is not the same as an amateurish approach. On the contrary, a concern about quality runs through the organisation from top to bottom, and with it goes a real sense of professionalism. Recognising that voluntary work with offenders is highly skilled, SOVA provides specialist, highly developed training for its volunteers, as well as training probation officers and social workers in the use and management of volunteers.

Thirdly, SOVA's work underlines the fact that many offenders are also victims—victims of their own circumstances of disadvantage and inadequacy. If they are to lead law-abiding lives, they often have to overcome problems of illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and drug or alcohol addiction. It is there that the help and support of individual volunteers—helping them find their way through the social security and housing benefit systems, encouraging and motivating them to sustain their fight against addiction—is of the greatest value. SOVA's literacy scheme, which recruits and trains volunteer tutors for offenders referred by probation officers and prison education officers, is just one example of the society's work in helping offenders to overcome their personal disadvantages.

Fourthly, much of SOVA's work demonstrates the importance of keeping offenders—especially young offenders—out of penal establishments wherever possible and dealing with them in the community. That is true, for example, of the work of SOVA volunteers in intermediate treatment centres. The centres involve juvenile offenders in programmes of supervised activities which are having considerably greater success than custody in diverting young people from reoffending.

Fifthly, SOVA's work illustrates the value of partnership in combating crime—partnership between statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, the private sector and the community. An excellent example of this partnership is the HOPE project in Hartlepool, which was set up jointly last year by SOVA, Cleveland probation service and the inner city task force. The project aims to integrate offenders, with the support of volunteers, into local facilities for training, education, community care and leisure activities.

The project's management committee is a model of partnership, involving representatives of the probation service, the police, the task force, the educational sector, industry and commerce. During the first year of its operation, the project recruited 35 volunteers to work with up to 70 offenders. Each offender is assessed and then linked with community resources, such as employment training, education, community care and leisure activities. The volunteer is responsible for making the link between the offender and the community resources and then providing continuing support.

Another impressive example of partnership is the Berkshire PACT project, financed by the Home Office, in which SOVA volunteers are working with young adult offenders on release from custody. The project is a partnership between SOVA, the Apex trust and the Berkshire probation service. Its work with young offenders is based on individual "contracts"—PACT stands for positive action contract—which gives the offender significant, focused time with a volunteer and attends to his or her employment, training, leisure and social needs. The Apex trust has provided an employment consultant for the project and is developing links with the local business community. The Berkshire probation service identifies offenders on its caseload who could benefit from the project, accredits and supervises the volunteers and provides premises for the project.

In these and many other ways, the work of the Society of Voluntary Associates—and of the many other voluntary organisations working with offenders—points the way to better ways of dealing with crime and achieving a safer and more decent society.

2.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on securing this debate. I am pleased that he has devoted it to such an inspirational subject, and I am glad to have the opportunity to reply to some of the points that he has made. My hon. Friend is well known for his wise, imaginative and long-standing interest in matters relating to penal policy, and it is therefore no surprise that he should want to emphasise the varied and essential roles that voluntary organisations such as SOVA already play in the criminal justice system and what they might do if the opportunities were opened up further.

SOVA is very highly regarded, and is well established with the Home Office as a national voluntary organisation which, as my hon. Friend has said, aims to promote community involvement in the resettlement of offenders and young people at risk. It does so partly by recruiting and training volunteers to work alongside the probation and social services, and also by providing consultancy and training to other agencies in the criminal justice field. SOVA also generates community involvement through its use of volunteers across the range of work with offenders and ex-offenders, which my hon. Friend has described so well. I commend those volunteers, who are not paid and who, as my hon. Friend has said, wish to contribute in that important but time-consuming way. We owe them a great deal.

SOVA receives core funding from the Home Office as a contribution towards its central administrative costs to enable it to carry out its resettlement work. The organisation makes a charge for the services that it provides to probation and social services.

I endorse my hon. Friend's remarks about the contribution to SOVA of Baroness Seear and Lord Hunt.

My hon. Friend has ably described SOVA's work. I should like to underline the examples that he has given. For instance, the Home Office very much appreciates the innovative work that SOVA is doing—with the aid of Home Office funding and in partnership with the Apex trust and Berkshire probation service—with young adult offenders. This is a novel project recruiting, as it does, volunteers to work with young adult offenders in character building, vocational skills, social skills, community skills

and with individual problems, such as addictions, and providing the opportunity for skills training, pre-employment training and leisure training.

I agree that a commendable example of SOVA's ability to achieve a partnership in combating crime and the fear of crime is the establishment of the HOPE project in Hartlepool, in partnership with the Cleveland probation service, the inner-city task force and leading members of the local community. I am glad that the Home Office has been able to make some funding available through its safer cities grant scheme to assist with that work.

My hon. Friend is right to point to the valuable work that SOVA is doing through its befrienders scheme in Croydon with young people at risk of offending. My hon. Friend mentioned the work in Croydon particularly, and I know that Mr. Speaker takes a special interest in it. The use of young volunteers to work with the youngsters, a number of whom are in care—increasingly, following a caution—is an imaginative approach to the aim of diverting them from the court process. The success rate is encouraging, and I am pleased to learn of the prospects for expansion of the scheme.

No less praise worthy is SOVA's literacy scheme—which my hon. Friend also mentioned—with its aim of giving offenders referred by probation officers and prison education officers the confidence to undertake proper adult literacy training.

It is not least because of the proven track record of innovation, flexibility and professionalism of voluntary organisations such as SOVA in their work with offenders that the Government have published the discussion paper, "Partnership in Dealing with Offenders in the Community". As my hon. Friend knows, the paper explores future roles for the independent sector—that is, voluntary organisations, volunteers and profit-making bodies—in the criminal justice system, so that the probation service can concentrate on areas requiring its specialist skills.

In recent years, there has been a blossoming of community involvement in the tackling of crime, with the neighbourhood watch scheme, for instance, now being very much a part of everyday life. It is essential, therefore, that the community should also be involved in the treatment of offenders. As SOVA has emphatically shown, and as my hon. Friend has sagely commented, "voluntary" does not mean amateur. Many voluntary organisations already work in the criminal justice system, and there is room for an even greater involvement of the voluntary sector in cautioning and charging policies; bail arrangements; programmes of supervision and work with prisoners before and after release, especially on welfare matters; social crime prevention, particularly youth provision; and help with victims of crime.

We are seeking to encourage greater voluntary sector involvement through a programme of grants for organisations working with young adult offenders, as £7·3 million is available over four years. Last year we made grants to 11 organisations, the PACT project in Berkshire being one recipient. This year we have received over 100 applications for funding. We cannot, alas, meet them all, but it is heartening that so many voluntay organisations are interested in the work.

The discussion paper encourages the development of partnership between the independent sector and the statutory agencies to do the work that I have mentioned. SOVA has shown how that can be done. Three options for funding voluntary and private sector organisations are rehearsed in the discussion document: locally organised provision, centrally organised provision and a mixture of the two.

Under locally organised provision, the probation service would provide or buy in all core statutory services. All funds would be channelled through the probation service, and only pilot or evaluation exercises might be centrally funded. With a centrally organised arrangement, local probation services would provide only statutory services; the remainder would be put out to tender. If there were a more structured mix of central and local provision, local initiatives might be funded locally, but nationally significant projects might be centrally funded.

We have invited views on that, as on the other issues covered in the discussion paper. Indeed, the Home Office has said that it is willing to sponsor a series of conferences to stimulate discussion of the issues, and is inviting proposals from interested organisations to arrange such events. I know that SOVA is currently discussing with officials in my Department running one in the autumn. The Government want a debate, and want to take an active part in it.

I recognise that a crucial factor in securing the wider involvement of the voluntary sector in the criminal justice system will be the Government's ability to provide an appropriate level of funding. We shall have to look at that once we have considered the various views and completed the round of discussions with interested bodies. The discussion paper rightly stresses the importance of monitoring and evaluation to secure value for money and that will underpin our ability to argue for the right level of resources.

The recommendations of the "Scrutiny of Government Funding of the Voluntary Sector", if accepted by the Government, will be important too in clarifying the relationship of Government Departments with the voluntary organisations that they fund in that there will be agreement about the objectives to be achieved. When he announced publication of the scrutiny, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary outlined a number of principles that will condition Government funding for voluntary bodies. Those principles included the extent to which voluntary bodies use or encourage volunteers. That underlines one of the important points that my hon. Friend made in opening the debate.

I hope that we shall be able to bring about more involvement by the independent sector in criminal justice. As SOVA has shown, this is undoubtedly the way to providing a different, additional and innovative perspective on problems and increasing the range of alternatives for dealing with them.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend both for what he said about SOVA—it is valuable and heartening to know and have it on record—and for giving me this opportunity to reply to the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 16 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Menopausal Facilities

1. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what menopausal facilities, other than clinics, are available for women in Wales in national health service hospitals.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): Clinics in a range of medical specialties are the main form of provision, but detail on the services provided for menopausal women, either in clinics or otherwise, is not available centrally.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. I am sure that he will be pleased to learn that East Glamorgan hospital, in co-operation with the Amarant trust, of which I have the honour to be chairman, is about to open the first dedicated menopause clinic in Wales. It will be entirely free for the women in that area. The funds to pay the salaries of the doctor and nurse at that clinic have been raised entirely from the private sector, while the health service is providing the space and back-up facilities. Because of the great demand for the service by women in Wales, will my hon. Friend consider sponsoring training fellowships, so that the well-known Welsh gynaecologist, Dr. Peter Bowen-Simpkins, can undertake the training of more doctors who would like these facilities to be available?

Mr. Grist: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her announcement and thank her for the interest that she has been able to arouse in the subject and for her chairmanship of the trust. Training goes a little wider than the matters on which I can comment, but obviously we would consider any proposal such as that suggested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Roy Hughes: The plea by the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) for better menopausal facilities in Wales may be laudable, but does the Minister agree that our health authorities are faced with a funding crisis and that there is pressure on them to close wards and whole hospitals? That has caused great anxiety in our local communities. Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that we are still waiting for an up-to-date list of hospital closures to be placed in the Library?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that health authorities in Wales are receiving record funding. They have never received so much, nor have they ever been able to treat so many patients. As the hon. Gentleman knows, if his health authority has any proposals on closures, it must present them in the ordinary way when they will be a matter of public record.

Salmonella

2. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish his Department's report on the salmonella outbreak in Flint; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Department's report will be published as soon as possible.

Mr. Raffan: Is my hon. Friend aware of the widespread concern over the delay in the publication of the report, which the Welsh Office originally promised would be in April? Will my hon. Friend be more specific about the publishing date? Will he scotch rumours that the report does not face up to the central issue of the outbreak—the need for one person to be put in overall charge, preferably the medically qualified director of public health medicine?

Mr. Grist: We shall have to wait for the report's final version before answering the latter part of my hon. Friend's question. The time taken to publish the report was caused largely by the fact that we had to send it in draft form to Delyn borough council and Clwyd health authority, and the borough council in particular replied at considerable length. In addition, we sent out an associated draft guidance circular on public food poisoning, and we are trying to sort out the responses to it. We shall have to wait until we have managed to do those things before publication can take place. I promise my hon. Friend that we shall do it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Rhodri Morgan. The question relates to Flint.

Mr. Morgan: It is about salmonella.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member had better read the question.

Mr. Morgan: I am asking a question about the importance of discovering the causes and effects of salmonella. As a further sign of how important it is, I should like to point out that an outbreak at Ely hospital, a large hospital in my constituency, has resulted in 62 cases of salmonella or suspected salmonella poisoning. I press the Minister on the urgent need for him to find out the exact causes and effects of salmonella. In the meantime, may I say to him how strongly——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have let the hon. Gentleman get away with that, but the question was about a report on the salmonella outbreak in Flint.

Mr. Grist: I have already asked for a report on that matter. I gather that 40 patients are affected, although the hon. Gentleman mentioned 60, but obviously that can be sorted out. It is a matter for South Glamorgan health authority, but clearly it is of public interest, and I shall find out precisely what has happened.

Water Quality

3. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of Welsh Water plc to discuss water quality.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I met Mr. John Elfed Jones, in his capacity as chairman of the Welsh Language Board on 9 July. I look forward to meeting him and his colleagues in Welsh Water plc on 6 September.

Mr. Michael: When that meeting takes place, will the Secretary of State take the opportunity to discuss his welcome and long-overdue assurance that we shall have statutory water quality objectives for all rivers and estuaries in Wales? Will he go further and discuss with the chairman of Welsh Water how that will be paid for? Will he give an assurance that the contribution invested by the Government will continue at the same level as in the period just before privatisation?

Secondly, will the right hon. Gentleman encourage the chairman of Welsh Water and the company to give up the idea of a flat-rate charge, or water poll tax as it is known, and to retain the present system at least until after the next general election, when the long-term future of the water industry will be determined?

Mr. Hunt: I understand that Welsh Water made clear exactly what its preferred method of charging was early in 1989. It was clearly laid down then and was set out in the prospectus. The hon. Member will know that Dwr Cymru has laid down an investment programme of £1·75 billion over the next 10 years. That is a record level of investment, and it will be maintained. The hon. Gentleman should remember that the last time his party was in office there was a 50 per cent. cut in investment.

Mr. Livsey: When the right hon. Gentleman next meets the chairman of Welsh Water plc, will he point out that the company is perhaps even more leaky than the Cabinet discussing German matters? One third of the water supply goes down the drain which is a cause of concern for water quality, and which badly affects Welsh Water's profits. Will he ensure that consumers will not have to pay for essential repairs but that money will come from the company's profits?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman raises an important subject which I know exercises the mind of the chairman of Dwr Cymru and his colleagues. The amount of leakage is serious and too high. I know that it will be one of the subjects that I shall discuss with Welsh Water when I meet the chairman on 6 September. It is certainly a problem which needs to be solved.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best guarantees of improvement in water quality are the National Rivers Authority and increased investment, neither of which would have taken place without the privatisation of the industry?

Mr. Hunt: I am glad that my hon. Friend mentioned that. I wish sometimes that we could have a more even-handed approach from the Opposition, and that they would pay tribute to the important reforms that we have introduced.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: When will all untreated sewage be prohibited from entering Welsh coastal bathing waters?

Mr. Hunt: As soon as possible, all significant discharges of sewage to coastal and estuarial waters will be treated.

Mr. Wigley: Is not the Secretary of State aware of the tremendous variations in the quality of drinking water in Wales? In such circumstances, it is ridiculous for a uniform charge to be made on the pretext of the same price for the same service, when it is clearly not the same service. There will be a massive revolt against even pricing. Is not it time to nip this in the bud and stop it growing into an enormous problem?

Mr. Hunt: Welsh Water made clear its preference early in 1989. We are talking about a range of services to be supplied and the method of charging. The hon. Gentleman has overexaggerated the problems that it will cause because many people in Wales had been expecting such an announcement. It is for the director general, Mr. Byatt, to consider charging from the point of view of the consumer.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on levels of unemployment in Clwyd and north Wales generally.

Mr. David Hunt: Unemployment in both Clwyd and north Wales has fallen substantially. In May 1990 the unemployment rate in north Wales stood at 5·7 per cent., whereas four years ago it was 15·2 per cent. The rate in Clwyd is 4·9 per cent. whereas it was 14·7 per cent. four years ago.

Mr. Jones: I thank the Secretary of State for those figures. Leaving aside the fact that they have been fiddled something like 29 times since 1981—each time downwards, apart from once—does the Secretary of State acknowledge that if 1,200 jobs are lost at Brymbo, they will increase the figure for male unemployment by 17 per cent. in Clwyd alone? If the right hon. Gentleman is to have any credibility as Secretary of State for Wales, he must do something about Brymbo, and do it soon.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman knows about the range of activities in relation to Brymbo. The Welsh Development Agency is, with my full support, exploring a number of options to secure the future of that important community. I wish that the Opposition would start to pay tribute to the achievements of the people of Wales in having created a success story which has meant such dramatic falls in unemployment.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Does my right hon. Friend share my astonishment that the Labour party should choose to raise that issue at this juncture? Is not it a fact that employment in Clwyd is one of the Government's most glittering success stories, and is not that due to the policies that have been pursued by three successive Secretaries of State for Wales in making the maximum use of the instruments available to them? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is an achievement of which we should all be proud?

Mr. Hunt: I quite agree. Lord Crickhowell and my immediate predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), laid a tremendous foundation

for the future prosperity of Wales. I sometimes wish that Opposition Members would join their colleagues in local government——

Dr. Thomas: Not all of us.

Mr. Hunt: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. I sometimes wish that Labour Members would join their many colleagues in local government in working in a positive partnership—as some do—to secure the future of the people of Wales and to improve their conditions even further.

Mr. Barry Jones: With the long recess imminent, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether he believes that the excellent Brymbo work force has a steelmaking future? They have fought so spiritedly and so hard for more than two months and need a word of encouragement about steelmaking from the right hon. Gentleman. We do not want him to be impotent in this instance. The right hon. Gentleman's former colleague in Cabinet, the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, did Wales a disservice in his infamous interview with *The Spectator*. The right hon. Gentleman may know that there are 43 West German companies in Wales and 900 in Britain, and that one sixth of West Germany's manufacturing companies here are located in Wales. Was not the right hon. Gentleman glad to see his former Cabinet colleague go, having done such damage to Britain's interest?

Mr. Hunt: To answer the only question that falls within the limits of the tabled question, I advise the hon. Gentleman that I have had the opportunity of meeting representatives of the work force at Brymbo and have been able to assure them that I am aware of the tremendous progress that they have made, individually and collectively, in terms not only of the quality of their work, but of productivity. However, it is right not to raise hopes to a false expectation. Suffice it to say that every possible effort is being made to find a solution that secures the future of that community.

Earnings

6. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average pay in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The average gross weekly pay of full-time employees on adult rates in Wales in April 1989, which is the latest date for which figures are available, was £215·90 compared with £87·20 in April 1979.

Mr. Flynn: Although we are happy to pay generous tributes to local authorities, the Welsh Office and everyone else who has encouraged the good news on employment in Wales in the past few years, we must not be blinded by the glitter referred to by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). Is the Secretary of State aware that what has really happened and what masks the reality is that a plague of unemployment has spread over Wales during the past decade? We have slipped to the disgraceful position in the new earnings survey to which the Secretary of State referred of having the lowest average pay of any region in Britain. Will the Secretary of State acknowledge, as his predecessor did not, that low pay does great damage? To be paid a low wage is an insult. It is demeaning and it produces a demoralised work force. When will the Secretary of State return us to the level in Wales of a decade ago? The poverty of unemployment has been replaced by the poverty of those in low-paid jobs.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman did not listen to my reply. The figures that I gave show a 17·6 per cent. real-terms increase in rates of pay since 1979. I recognise that we have problems in Wales, caused by low pay in certain instances and by a low gross domestic product per head, and that we have pockets of poverty. My predecessors and I set a target of raising the quality of life throughout Wales and of spreading prosperity. That is a commitment to which I am securely wedded.

Welsh Language

7. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received about Welsh language teaching.

12. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received concerning the use of the Welsh language in primary schools in Dyfed.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): We have received 27 representations about the use of the Welsh language in primary schools in Dyfed since June 1989.

Mr. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to encourage Welsh language and culture is through a sensible, balanced and moderate policy which does not involve compelling parents to accept it? Does he also agree that the best way of ensuring freedom of choice for my constituents would be to allow generous exemptions from compulsory Welsh in secondary schools and to look again at the categorisation policy in some primary schools in Dyfed which means that some children are immersed in Welsh at the age of five without the opportunity of learning their mother tongue of English?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The word "compulsion" is anathema to me, as it is to my hon. Friend. He must recognise that in schooling there is an element of compulsion to learn school subjects. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has consulted on exemptions from Welsh in the national curriculum. He is considering the results of that consultation and we shall make an announcement in due course. Categorisation of schools in Dyfed is primarily a matter for the local education authority.

Mr. Williams: Does the Minister agree that every child has a right to an education in its mother tongue as far as reasonably possible? Does he realise that in Dyfed since last September, when, without consulting parents, the local authority made all schools in rural areas Welsh speaking, thousands of English-speaking infants have been deprived of the right to an education in their mother tongue?

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is important to understand what happened in Dyfed. Under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 —not the Education Reform Act 1988—the local education authority is required to state its policy on secular education. I understand that consultations have been held with the governors of about 333 primary schools

and that only two changes were proposed. There will be consultation with parents during the summer and in the early autumn.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the row in Dyfed has more to do with county policy than with the Education (No. 2) Act or the national curriculum?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Yes, it is precisely as my hon. Friend says. The dispute arises from the county's policy, which is geared to the 1986 Act. It is an independent authority, but I understand that 27 of its members belong to the party of the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams).

Mr. Geraint Howells: Does the Minister agree that it was a great shame that the hon. Members. for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) interfered with the teaching of Welsh in one of my schools in north Pembrokeshire? The parents of 50 out of 56 children at that school are in favour of the present policy. Will the Minister advise those two hon. Gentlemen to behave themselves and to act like statesmen?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I understand that the parents concerned in one school are the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). Surely the House is not averse to right hon. and hon. Members stating their views or those of their constituents. We are here to try to resolve any difficulties that may arise.

Mr. Budgen: Is my hon. Friend aware that his answers about the Welsh language will cause dismay and confusion in Wolverhampton? A separate language is a clear sign of distinct racial characteristics, and my hon. Friend's answers, allied with the revelation that members of the Cabinet have been considering the distinct racial characteristics of the German race, flies in the face of all that the people of Wolverhampton have been taught for 25 years by successive Governments and by the race relations industry—that there are no such things as racial characteristics.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), I wished that his predecessor as Member of Parliament for that constituency were here, because he was a distinguished Welsh scholar. I cannot agree with my hon. Friend that linguistic differences are the same as racial differences. After all, I can proudly boast that I speak Welsh and German, and I have a smattering of English.

Family Practitioner Services

8. **Mr. Coleman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he has made to finance the family practitioner services budgets in Wales.

Mr. Grist: More than 90 per cent. of the provision for family practitioner services is not subject to cash limiting. Cash limits for family practitioner committee administration budgets have already been issued and provisional allocations have been made in respect of a proportion of GP practice staff costs and cost-rent schemes. I hope to finalise allocations in the next few weeks, after information received from family practitioner committees has been evaluated.

Mr. Coleman: Is the Under-Secretary of State aware that there is great anxiety among medical practitioners in Wales over the uncertainty that the Minister outlined again this afternoon about the provision being made by the Welsh Office? Will the hon. Gentleman get the Welsh Office to move more quickly, so that doctors can be doctors, not book-keepers?

Mr. Grist: Doctors in the hon. Gentleman's constituency may have encountered some problems in receiving initial allocations from their family practitioner committee, which I believe adopted a slightly different policy from some others. The inherited commitments were not available to FPCs until well into the current financial year, and they had to be dealt with first, although there is an allowance for an increased payment above the inherited commitment. Nevertheless, the fact remains that allocations arrived late as a consequence of bunching in the previous financial year.

NHS Reforms

9. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to meet the chairman of the area health authorities in Wales to discuss the Government's national health service reforms.

Mr. David Hunt: I met the chairmen of the health authorities in Wales on 10 July. I look forward to meeting them again collectively in October.

Mr. Davies: Is not the reality that few people in Wales support the so-called reforms? They will lead to the worst kind of chequebook medicine and divert real resources that should be used to heal the sick to useless exercises such as form filling and counting pills. Is it not time that those so-called reforms were abandoned?

Mr. Hunt: No, it is not. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that funding for the Welsh national health service has risen from under £500 million in 1979 to more than £1,500 million today. The reforms now seek to target those substantial resources more effectively. The right hon. Gentleman should also consider the clear objectives that ministerial colleagues and I have set the health service in Wales—I shall send him a copy if he likes. Everyone knows that we have set a target to become the best in Europe, and we are well on the way towards achieving that.

Mr. Rowlands: But if the resources are available and the policies are so successful, why are beds lying empty in hospitals in Merthyr because of lack of staff, while qualified staff are unable to get jobs and, at the same time, the area authority is employing agency staff? In the name of heaven, what has that to do with the reforms? Let us make the present system work more effectively rather than creating stupid and foolish competition within the health service.

Mr. Hunt: What we are doing is to make the present system work more effectively. No one can dispute the tremendous additional resources that have gone into the health service in Wales. I hope that even the hon. Gentleman will admit that there has been a substantial real-terms increase in the amount of resources devoted to the health service in his constituency. We must now follow the clear target that we have set, of adding years to life and quality of life to years.

Mr. Raffan: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread recognition in my constituency of the Government's record on the national health service, as seen in the renewal and upgrading of each of our four cottage or community hospitals? People recognise just how much the Government have spent compared with the previous Government who cut—slashed, indeed—public expenditure on the health service. In Delyn we recognise the need for the Government to get value for money in terms of the NHS reforms.

Mr. Hunt: How right my hon. Friend is. We will always win any argument about resources, because we have put substantial, additional resources into the NHS. We now have to have a meaningful, clear policy towards which we can all work—everyone involved in the NHS. We have now set that target, and we believe that we are the first health service in Europe to do so. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) should be proud of that, and not seek to make party political points out of health.

Mr. Barry Jones: May I congratulate the Secretary of State on reversing his predecessor's decision on Project 2000? I also congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his decision not to axe the community health councils—another of his predecessor's proposals. However, will the Secretary of State now decide to give the appropriate authorities sufficient funding to enable care in the community to become a reality? I speak for the elderly and the mentally ill and in the cities and towns of Wales, it is clear that all is not well. What will he do to make care in the community a reality, not a Government slogan?

Mr. David Hunt: Obviously, an announcement will be made about the subject to which the hon. Gentleman has devoted himself. I hope that he will recognise that the point of a consultation exercise is to listen carefully to the points made. After hearing the results of the consultation, I decided not to proceed with reducing the number of community health councils.

I regard Project 2000 as a vital element in the strategy we have been debating. It is important that that project is up and running in Wales. I recently had the opportunity to meet the nurses, and I told them the importance we attach to Project 2000.

Young Farmers

10. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to meet leaders of the farming unions in Wales to discuss the problems of young entrants to the agriculture industry.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend met the leaders of the unions on 27 June, although this subject was not discussed. He has also agreed to meet them and the young farmers' clubs during his visit to the Royal Welsh show next week.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply. He and his colleagues will be aware that the number of young people engaged in agriculture has dropped significantly in recent years, and that the number of students attending colleges of agriculture has also dropped alarmingly. I am sure that the Minister will agree that we need a comprehensive range of packages for young farmers, including more starter holdings, low-interest loans, which are available in France, and a milk quota pool for new entrants. As a result of discussions at the Royal Welsh show will the Minister assure us that the Welsh Office will take a bold initiative on behalf of young Welsh farmers?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The smallholdings, which are available for young entrants to the industry, are not a central Government responsibility, but a responsibility of the local authorities in Wales. During the five years from 1984 to March 1989, the number of smallholdings in Wales remained nearly constant—they increased in total size. A number of measures are being taken to encourage young entrants into agriculture, but some of them are dependent on suggestions from the industry. With regard to the availability of loans, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that loan subsidies are available in some continental countries, but the choice facing us was to have either subsidised loans or capital grants, and we opted for capital grants because they have advantages.

Earnings

11. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will commission a survey of incomes in the border counties of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: No, Sir. There is already sufficient information available in the new earnings survey details.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the earnings survey details show a remarkable convergence in average incomes between counties on both sides of the Welsh border? In the light of that, does he agree that there might well be a case for looking again at the economic, financial and other incentives available to individuals and businesses for moving to the Welsh side of the border?

Mr. Hunt: In Avon, the relevant figure, which we were comparing before, is £241·30, and in Gloucestershire it is £230·10, as opposed to a figure in Gwent of £212·20. Therefore, I do not accept my hon. Friend's initial premise.

Dr. Thomas: Will the Secretary of State give us an assurance that, as regards Mid-Wales, the activities of the Development Board for Rural Wales will be as fully supported during his tenure as Secretary of State as they were under previous Administrations? Will he ensure that there are sufficient resources for the board's economic and social programme, in view of the potential competition from over the border in Telford?

Mr. Hunt: As it happens, I was in the hon. Gentleman's constituency yesterday with the chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales, Mr. Glyn Davies, and I was able to reassure him once again of the importance that I attach to the work of the board, and my strong commitment to its future work.

Mr. Dickens: When my right hon. Friend answered an earlier question on incomes in Wales, which related closely to this question, he gave an undertaking to the House that his first priority was to improve the quality of life for the people of Wales. We all know that, once he was appointed by the Prime Minister, the House had a good Secretary of State for Wales. If he says that he intends to improve the quality of life in Wales, he will certainly do so.

Mr. Hunt: I thank my hon. Friend.

Corlan Housing Association

13. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next proposes to meet the chairman of Tai Cymru to discuss the collapse of the Corlan housing association.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend is meeting the Board of Housing for Wales tomorrow.

Mr. Morgan: Would the Under-Secretary of State agree that, following the collapse of the Corlan housing association and the Government's determination to give housing associations a greater role, which was previously occupied by council housing, the Government's housing policy in Wales is now in a shambles?

Mr. Grist: That is an extraordinary statement. I should have thought that for the hon. Gentleman's constituents, for mine and for those of other hon. Members in Wales, the hon. Gentleman should have expressed appreciation for Tai Cymru and for the Wales and West housing association for the remarkable job that they have done in safeguarding the homes of so many of our constituents.

Mr. Murphy: But does the Minister accept that housing associations, and Tai Cymru in particular, simply do not have enough money to cope with the problems of Welsh housing and that that is really a matter for Welsh local authorities? When will the Government give local authorities the right to spend their own money on building houses for people in need in Wales? When will he put someone representing local government on the board of Tai Cymru?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman overlooks the fact that local authorities' gross provision for housing this year has increased by 15 per cent. and that Tai Cymru's has gone up by 42 per cent. Local authorities are allowed to use their allowable money on new build, if they so wish. For instance, one of the hon. Gentleman's neighbouring authorities, Newport, has gone into new build consistently for several years, whereas for some reason, his own local authority seems to have ceased to do so.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Arts Council

31. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what discussions the Commissioners have held with the Arts Council about Church property.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): None, Sir.

Mr. Bowis: May I invite my right hon. Friend to encourage the leaders of the Church to discuss with Mr. Peter Palumbo his imaginative proposals for enabling this generation to repair the major national institutions and buildings, be they theatres or churches and cathedrals, as we approach the next century? If he does so, will he suggest looking into the fabric of the buildings and the security of buildings so that we can avoid such intrusions as occurred at Westminster abbey recently, when stained glass windows were broken?

Mr. Alison: I note, not without sympathy, my hon. Friend's supplementary question. I draw his attention to the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside in the debate on arts and heritage in the House on 4 July at column 1094, when he expressed his enthusiasm for the idea that something special might be done to help the cathedrals and said that he proposed to address the matter in the forthcoming White Paper. My hon. Friend may therefore be pressing at an open door.

Mr. Frank Field: Would the Commissioner agree that the greatest contribution that the Church makes to the arts and the development of the arts is in the maintenance of Church buildings? In that regard, will he congratulate the Priory parish in Birkenhead on spending £1 million on restoring its parish church? Does he agree that that contrasts vividly with the dilatory way in which the diocese has dealt with another outstanding church on the other side of the river—Christ church, Bootle?

Mr. Alison: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. The £1 million that he mentioned is a staggering sum for a local parish to raise. That is in stark contrast to the other parish, and the failure of the diocese to help is manifest in what he said. The Church of England, through its various funds, spends about £70 million a year on the refurbishment and maintenance of parish churches, and that is a considerable sum.

Community Charge

32. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, how much has been spent by the Church Commissioners on assistance with community charge for archbishops, bishops, clergy and others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: An estimated £8·5 million for the year beginning 1 April. The clergy and their spouses have no domestic rates savings to offset against their personal charge liability, and the Commissioners' contribution provides some three quarters of the costs of special stipend increases to help them meet the charge. The extra tax and national insurance on those increases amounts to about £4 million per annum, which is included in the Commissioners' contribution.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that clergymen, including archbishops, must take on a second home—they cannot own their main home—and are therefore required to pay the community charge twice? Will he press the Government to help them or to absolve them from payment on their second homes? On whom has he put his money for the next Archbishop of Canterbury? That is a matter of much interest.

Mr. Alison: On the second point, I certainly could not afford a stake on that hazardous betting lottery.

On my hon. Friend's main question, I share his sympathy for the predicament of clergy who are charged the standard community charge—often twice—on the second homes that they are buying. Such second homes are

often indispensable, because the houses that they live in as clergy are tied to the job; they must quit them when they retire. They must buy their retirement houses early to be able to afford them over the lifetime of their ministry. I hope that the Secretary of State for the Environment will take note of this point when he considers the future of the standard community charge, and I shall draw my hon. Friend's question to his attention.

Mr. Anderson: The right hon. Gentleman will know that, in an effort to reduce the injustices and absurdities of the poll tax, the Government gave a lump sum for the upkeep of Church buildings, which by definition mainly assisted the established Church. Is he aware of any means of compensating the nonconformist Churches?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman has pointed out a limitation of the substantial sum—more than £3 million—that the Government made available through English Heritage towards the support of Church buildings. He is right to say that a number of the buildings of the free Churches do not qualify for such help. I shall take careful note of his criticism of that limitation, and inquire whether anything can be done to help the free Churches. I cannot commit myself to an affirmative and positive answer.

Lambeth Palace

33. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what has been the Commissioners' contribution to the upkeep of Lambeth palace during the past five years.

Mr. Alison: As the owners of Lambeth palace, the Church Commissioners are wholly responsible for the upkeep of the buildings, which has cost some £329,000 over the past five years.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people of this country need an Archbishop of Canterbury who will preach evangelical Christianity rather than socialism?

Mr. Alison: I am entirely in favour of having an archbishop who is conservative all round. If I had to accept a limitation on that, I would prefer him to be theologically conservative, whatever his politics might be.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Management Consultancy

36. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what proposals have been put forward so far in the management consultancy exercise on the House of Commons conducted by Sir Robin Ibbs.

Mr. A. J. Beith (On behalf of the House of Commons Commission): None, Sir. The House of Commons Commission has asked Sir Robin to offer his advice to it by the beginning of the next Session of Parliament.

Mr. Allen: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that one of the problems of dragging this place into the 20th century so that it is a modern, professional legislature, is that its lines of accountability are rather blurred, there are few clear budgeting functions and responsibility is split between the Commission, the Services Committee and its sub-committees and the Department of the Environment? Will he undertake to ensure that the Ibbs report covers those matters so that we can be clear about where responsibility lies and about how to get things changed in this antiquated place?

Mr. Beith: Yes, Sir. I told the House that Sir Robin's terms of reference were to examine whether the responsibilities at present divided between the Commission, the Services Committee, the Department of the Environment and Leader of the House could be brought together

"with a view to ensuring that so far as possible there is a co-ordinated management and decision-taking structure under the control of the House".—[*Official Report*, 23 May 1990; Vol. 173, c. *179*.]

Mr. Soames: Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the likely findings of the Ibbs report—contrary to what was said by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen)—is that the Palace of Westminster copes in the most remarkable manner with the obligations that are increasingly thrust upon it? Does he also agree that one of the tremendous strains on the House is imposed by a battalion of so-called research assistants, who appear to clog our proceedings greatly?

Mr. Beith: The Commission would not have appointed Sir Robin if it had thought that it knew all the answers to all the questions that he has been asked to consider. Many people contribute most effectively to making the House run well. Many work within it—not just its employees, but those who assist Members as secretaries and research assistants. We believe that the work that Sir Robin is doing may assist us to have better systems for doing those things well in the future.

Secretarial Allowances

37. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick on Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the average delay between receipt of a bill for payment on behalf of hon. and right hon. Members out of the secretarial etc. allowance and its payment.

Mr. Beith: Direct payments to third parties authorised by hon. and right hon. Members to be made out of their office costs allowances are paid each week, normally on a Thursday. Depending on the day of the week on which a claim is received, the Fees Office would normally expect to make payment that week or the following week.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that answer. I am sure that he will join me in praising the Fees Office for the work that it does with the resources at its command. Nevertheless, it sometimes has to decide which bills are to be paid this week and which are to be delayed. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is deplorable that a temporary secretary should have to wait two months to receive the salary for which she has worked, and should still be waiting for her P45?

Mr. Beith: If the hon. Gentleman has a particular case in mind, I hope that he will bring it to my notice. It is the practice of the Fees Office to seek to ensure that Members' staff, in particular, are paid promptly. The only circumstance that I can think of in which that cannot

happen is where a claim is made for payment on the ensuing year's allowance, rather than the allowance for the current year.

Mr. Wigley: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that that is not an isolated incident? There has been an abundance of cases of delay in payment of allowance, of delay in implementation of an increase in salary and of Members' salaries being lost in the post and not being caught up with for months. That suggests there may be understaffing in the Fees Office, or that the system needs reviewing. One of those possibilities needs to be looked at.

Mr. Beith: Representations do not seem to confirm the widespread nature of the problem to which the hon. Gentleman has referred—least of all the problem of hon. Members not being paid. However, if cases are brought to my notice, I will certainly ensure that the Fees Office attends to them immediately.

Trade Union Side

38. **Mr. Carr:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, when he last met trade union representatives of the House of Commons staff to discuss terms and conditions of employment.

Mr. Beith: Negotiations between management and trade union representatives of House of Commons staff are delegated by the House of Commons Commission to the Board of Management and the Administration Committee, and take place within the framework of the House of Commons Whitley committee. Consequently, the Commission's involvement in negotiations is required only on significant occasions such as the breakdown of the agreed disputes procedure or the signing of recognition agreements. The last such occasion—the latter case—was on 10 March 1986.

Mr. Carr: Has the hon. Gentlman met trade union representatives of staff employed by hon. Members, especially in respect of health and safety provisions? If not, will he do so?

Mr. Beith: The Commission would certainly wish to be aware if there were problems of which representatives of staff members were aware. There are channels through which these can be brought forward. There is no current case of any dispute between the Commission and any trade union.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a problem for the Refreshment Department and that it would be better—for security reasons alone—if there were more permanent staff? Does he agree that, because of the wage scales of the refreshment staff in the restaurants, the turnover is very high, and that most people think that what those staff are paid is well below what they could earn outside? Is it not time that we paid people more, got better staff and kept them?

Mr. Beith: I fully share the hon. Gentleman's wish that the staff of the Refreshment Department should be well paid, and should have security and continuity of employment. I believe that to be in the interests of the House. Evidence to date suggests that the rates of pay in the Refreshment Department are in accordance with those paid outside the House, but the matter is under consideration by the Commission.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Bills

39. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to introduce plans to change the private Bill procedure; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): We shall look for an early opportunity to bring forward legislation to implement the proposals in our recently published consultation document, taking into account comments received in response to this consultation.

Mr. Skinner: I know that the Leader of the House has been very busy lately, what with all the problems surrounding the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and so forth, but why does he not get on with the job? When I came here 20 years ago, about 10 Bills would receive parliamentary time; now, there are as many as 30. Will not history record that, in 1990, while the Germans were taking over the Common Market and the rest of Europe, this Tory Government were pottering about with Bills about closing pits, running racing circuits and opening crematoria?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the contrary. I am interested to hear that the hon. Gentleman has noticed the upsurge in the number of private Bills being introduced. If he studies them more closely, he will see that they are to do with the promotion of private enterprise in many sectors and are representative of the tremendous expansion of enterprise and activity in this country as a result of the policies of the past 10 years.

Members' Offices

40. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any proposals to improve safety and access for hon. Members whose offices are outside the main House of Commons building.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The existing pedestrian crossing at the south-east corner of Parliament square is to be upgraded to a controlled crossing as part of a package of measures designed to improve the movement of pedestrians and traffic in Parliament square. This has been agreed between both Houses and Westminster city council.

Mr. Michael: Before chaos descends on Parliament square and elsewhere, may I ask the Lord President whether he has noted that his previous reply suggested that the main objective of Westminster city council is to accelerate traffic? That will present increasing danger to hon. Members who have offices across the road. Even the so-called traffic refuge seems to be used more as a private motorway for motor cyclists than as a safety resort for pedestrians. It seems that no hon. Members who have offices on the other side of the road have taken part in consideration of this matter. Will the Lord President give fresh consideration to the safety of Members rather than risking by-elections, which might pose a greater danger to his party?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I appreciate that some hon. Members feel strongly about this matter, and I have had an opportunity to talk to the hon. Gentleman about it. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee and the appropriate Committee of the other place have looked at the problem, which has also been carefully considered by Westminster city authorities. The object of the exercise is to regulate traffic into and out of Parliament square so as to provide more effective controlled opportunities during which traffic ceases to move. As the hon. Gentleman knows, Westminster city council is investigating the possibility of an additional central refuge.

Gymnasium

41. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he last paid an official visit to the Westminster gymnasium.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I visited the Westminster gymnasium on Monday 16 October 1989 in course of a tour of the parliamentary estate. I did not stay long.

Mr. Atkinson: I am not suggesting that my right hon. and learned Friend should make unofficial visits to the gymnasium. Is he aware of the growing number of hon. Members who visit the gymnasium and of the long waiting list of staff who want to visit it? Will he lend his considerable weight to current discussions about transferring as soon as possible the facilities in Norman Shaw South to the greatly enlarged premises vacated by the old Cannon row police station?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that the present accommodation is considered inadequate for the demands that are placed upon it. Relocation is being considered, and I understand that the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee has given approval in principle for the present gymnasium to be relocated in alternative accommodation within the parliamentary estate—in the place described by my hon. Friend.

Physical Education

42. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any plans to grant-aid the cost of courses undertaken by hon. Members who pursue physical education activities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no such plans.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that money spent on grant-aiding hon. Members to undertake physical education would be well spent because it would make us fitter to do our demanding job, reduce the weight of many overweight Members, and make us all more efficient in pursuing our tasks?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If my hon. Friend goes on advocating that cause with his customary zeal, I cannot see any case for spending public money on it.

Members' Staff

43. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has for improving the provision of personal staff to hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The provision of Members' personal staff is a matter for Members themselves. I have no proposals to change the financial and administrative arrangements that govern that provision.

Mr. Allen: I thank the Lord President for the work that I know he has put into setting up the review into Members' services. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman ensure that the review takes account of the previous exercises which have been undertaken, in which it was suggested that hon. Members could have an office in their constituency that would be staffed by the House of Commons Commission, so that hon. Members could do their job in this place and in their constituencies to an even greater degree and in even greater depth than they can at present?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's commendation of the establishment of the Ibbs committee, which is examining administrative matters within the House generally. His supplementary question goes beyond that and would require much wider consideration by hon. Members generally. It would go beyond the present principle of financing secretarial services within the present rules.

New Members (Induction)

44. **Mr. Carr:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the induction procedures for new hon. Members for a general election.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: New Members will receive, in advance of their arrival at the House, an updated briefing pack describing the services provided by Departments of the House. In addition, Heads of Department and senior Officers of the House are available for consultation. Induction in the Chamber will be in accordance with well-established procedure.

Mr. Carr: I have had the benefit of most valued advice from fellow Members since my arrival here about five weeks ago. It occurs to me that, in the event of a general election, when many new Members will be attending the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "Labour."] Yes, obviously Labour Members—the lack of any proper method of induction is an anachronism. Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman wish to consider redressing this problem?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: To sustain the quality of advice that will be given to the many Conservative Members who may enter the House after the next election, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question deserves consideration. If he wishes to raise any matters that come within his own experience, I shall be glad to examine them.

Mr. Jopling: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, in the United States, Harvard university runs a course every two years for newly elected members of the

Congress? Will my right hon. and learned Friend give some thought to whether something of that sort might be appropriate here?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is a novel suggestion in the British context. As it has the authority of my right hon. Friend, I shall examine it with care.

Stationery

45. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement concerning the recyclability of paper used for the official documents of the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: All the paper that is provided by HMSO for official use in the House of Commons can be recycled. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee has given approval for a number of items of stationery containing recycled paper to be introduced to the House.

Mr. Janner: How many thousands of tonnes of paper are used by the House during a year, and why is not much more of it recycled, bearing in mind the fact that we should be setting an example?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not have the figure at my fingertips. As the hon. and learned Gentleman was told on 5 February, all the paper that is provided for official use in the House can be recycled. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Comittee is considering ways in which recycled material can be used more widely. The matter is under active consideration, as the hon. and learned Gentleman would wish.

European Legislation

46. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what progress has been made in implementing the revised proposals for the consideration of EEC legislation.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Having heard the views expressed in the debate on 28 June on the Procedure Committee's report on the scrutiny of European legislation and the Government's response to it, I hope to put detailed proposals for change before the House very shortly with a view to operating the new arrangements from the start of the next Session.

Mr. Taylor: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, when three rather important directives on milk, meat and cadmium will have to be approved or disapproved by the House this evening in about 30 seconds, it is a bit of an insult to the democracy that many of us believe in? Does he agree that, if we go to the intergovernmental conference and agree to the control of our economy by a central bank, we may as well close this place down?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises a wide range of questions, which go well beyond the question that I have answered. I hope that he will derive some satisfaction from the fact that the arrangement which the House in general approved will be put in place at a fairly early date.

Federal Republic of Germany

3.34 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"relations between Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany and related matters concerning the role of a unified Germany within the European Community."

My application is specific because it relates to the Prime Minister's failure to sack the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) following his appalling remarks about Germany, published in *The Spectator* last week. Her failure to act immediately shows that privately she agrees with the right hon. Gentleman's views, if not his language.

The application also relates to the minutes of a confidential Chequers meeting on Germany in March, published in yesterday's *The Independent on Sunday*. The minutes of the meeting, which was attended by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, revealed grossly over-simplified and insulting views about the German national character. The Prime Minister evidently thinks that German characteristics include angst, aggressiveness, assertiveness, bullying, egotism, an inferiority complex and sentimentality. I submit that these xenophobic opinions, more appropriate to a football hooligan than to a responsible Prime Minister, have to be repudiated by the House of Commons as soon as possible.

My application is important because it concerns Britain's relations with Germany—our ally in NATO, a fellow member of the European Community and our chief trading partner. It is vital that the House takes the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to good Anglo-German relations as soon as possible.

My application is urgent because the Foreign Secretary is attending the European Community Foreign Affairs Council, which meets today and tomorrow. British trade Ministers will also be present at the Internal Market Council. Ministers representing this country ought to be reinforced by the views of this House. Therefore, it is essential that the House should be given the opportunity as soon as possible to disown the anti-German views of the Prime Minister and to reassure Germany of our friendship and co-operation in the European Community and elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"relations between Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany and related matters concerning the role of a unified Germany within the European Community."

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20, I have to announce my decision without giving my reasons to the House. I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman said. As he knows, I have to decide whether his application comes within the Standing Order and, if so, whether a debate should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that the matter which he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.38 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since the House last met, a very senior and, we hear, much-loved-by-the-Prime-Minister member of the Government has resigned in the most disgraceful circumstances, due to outdated xenophobia.

You have just ruled that the House cannot debate the matter under Standing Order No. 20. The Prime Minister has neither the guts nor the candour to come here and make a statement. There ought to be circumstances, through either those procedures or other procedures of the House, in which the Opposition have the opportunity to cross-question the Prime Minister about this state of affairs.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has made clear, British Ministers are currently embarked upon exercises to try to restore the credibility of the country and the Government in the European Community, NATO and elsewhere. Ought we not to have an opportunity to discuss this matter? Will the country understand that these matters can be discussed in Brussels and Strasbourg but not in the House of Commons when the Prime Minister, who has a duty and responsibility to build up the reputation of the country in a widening and developing Europe, displays attitudes of bigotry and malevolence?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to put my view on this matter. I have to take into consideration all sorts of matters when taking decisions on Standing Order No. 20 applications. One of them is other opportunities that the House may have for discussion. There is such an opportunity tomorrow at Prime Minister's Question Time and possibly an opportunity later this week on an Opposition Supply day.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Even if it is not within the knowledge of the shadow Leader of the House, is it not within your knowledge that the Prime Minister will be submitting herself to cross-examination in this place tomorrow and the new Secretary of State will be submitting himself to cross-examination by the House at Question Time on Wednesday? Is it not further the case that Wednesday is an Opposition Supply day when they could perfectly well choose to debate this matter? Indeed, many Conservative Members hope that the Opposition will choose to debate this issue on Wednesday.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I also submitted a request for a debate today on grounds not dissimilar from those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), but he was chosen first to make his application. These are completely new events that have come to light since the House last met. There is the document and the resignation. This is a day, as has been said, when the Foreign Secretary is speaking for us in Brussels, and tomorrow the future of Germany is to be discussed.

It is always open to the Opposition to use their Supply days, but this is an immediate occasion when all the news media in the world are allowed to discuss the issue but not the House of Commons. With great respect, Mr. Speaker, we have surrendered our legislative power to Brussels in many respects. Now, evidently, we are to surrender our right to be what we were originally—the great forum of the nation.

I beg you, Mr. Speaker, to defend the right of Parliament to have a voice. There are many different opinions on both sides of the House on these matters; there is not unanimity on the Conservative Benches or on the Opposition Benches. It is not true to say that the only choice is between nationalism and federalism. There are people who take a wholly different view about the future of Europe. It is all very well to say that we can cross-examine the Prime Minister for 15 minutes tomorrow or that the Opposition can change their business for Wednesday when we are supposed to be discussing care in the community. Dare I say it—I demand that the House be allowed to express a view when its survival is at stake and when the media are concerned with what may be exciting but secondary matters compared to the function of the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman is correct: the public may not understand the criteria laid down under Standing Order No. 20—[HON. MEMBERS: "Nor do we."] Hon. Members do understand the criteria and they also know that I am precluded by the Standing Order from giving the reasons for my decision. In fact, they have been stated by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow).

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to take up the point made by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). An important point arises from the seminar which was held on the racial characteristics of the Germans.

For the past 20 or 30 years, we have all been taught that there are no differences between the nations of Europe, that we are all the same, and that we must all become as bland and as similar as possible. The seminar was based on the proposition that there are distinct racial characteristics and that, from time to time, the nation states may represent a threat to each other. We may have heard such statements in private discussions—rather like kids going behind the bike shed for a smoke—but no one has heard them in public. We are all so shocked by the revelation that there are such things as nation states that perhaps my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will explain why she talked privately about such wicked things.

Mr. Speaker: That may be so, but it is not a matter for me.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members will face a difficulty if we try to find out precisely what happened at the seminar. I hope that you can help the House. I think that, if hon. Members tabled questions to find out what advice was tendered at the seminar and whether the leaked reports were correct, the Table Office would refuse to allow them on the ground that they were about advice tendered to Ministers. If we wanted to ask questions about what the entire resources of the Foreign Office were telling the Prime Minister about the state and characteristics of Germany, and if that advice were completely different from and much better put together than the advice at that

extraordinary seminar, we would not be able to table questions because it would be ruled that we were asking about advice tendered to Ministers.

As it is now apparent that the Prime Minister is seeking some extraordinary advice and is looking mainly for advice that confirms her prejudices, this leaves a gap which makes it difficult for us to challenge what is going on. I wonder whether in some way we can be allowed to table questions on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical matter at the moment. If the hon. Member were to table questions, we would look at them.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may have noticed that Her Majesty's Opposition have allowed the Leader of the Opposition to leave the country to travel to the United States on an official visit. Will you confirm that, traditionally, a leader of a major political party who is travelling abroad never indulges in attacking the Government and Prime Minister of his country? Is there anything that you can do to remind the Leader of the Opposition of his responsibilities?

Mr. Speaker: I am responsible for order in the Chamber, not for what any Member of Parliament says when he is away from this place.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The unusual feature of this matter is that yesterday the Foreign Secretary discussed on television a memo of a Cabinet meeting at Chequers. He did not deny it but went through it point by point. It is outrageous that the right hon. Gentleman and the Prime Minister do not come to the House so that we can discuss that matter and the resignation of the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman has asked to make a statement tomorrow. The House should be allowed to discuss these matters today.

Mr. Speaker: I have no authority to order the Prime Minister to come to the House, but she will be here on Tuesday and Thursday this week and on Tuesday next week.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is an unusual turn of events and the House would like to discuss them. As I understand it, there will be an opportunity to do so on Prime Minister's questions and a further excellent opportunity to do so on Wednesday, which is an Opposition Supply day. Should we not ask why the Opposition will not take advantage of that excellent opportunity?

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You decided, as is your right, not to allow the Standing Order No. 20 request; but many hon. Members have friendships with people in the Federal Republic of Germany and feel grossly embarrassed by the insulting language used by the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. In the absence of the opportunity for the House to debate the issue, can you make it known to Dr. Rita Süssmuth, the president of the Bundestag, that the views expressed by the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) are held not by anything like a majority of Members of the House?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting the president of the Bundestag, but I met the East German Speaker this morning and had a conversation with her. I shall be visiting Berlin and Bonn during the summer recess—in a private capacity.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Most unusually, I rush to the assistance of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). My right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) gave the House a graphic warning about the way in which its powers were being taken away by the unelected reject politicians of the Berlaymont building. We know that the Conservative party has a coherent European policy, agreed by all members of the party; we are Europeans and we want to do the right thing, sensibly and cautiously, with regard to Europe.

If we had a debate on this subject, the Opposition would be able to bring forward the myriad strands of their policy on Europe. We know that Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen go grovelling for the nearest crumbs from the Commission's table, whereas the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield take a diametrically opposite view.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March were confirmed by the Foreign Secretary when he was interviewed yesterday. As I understand it, if a document comes into the public domain it should be placed in the Library. There is no doubt that there was a meeting. It is somewhat of a surprise that the Cabinet discussed the national characteristics of other countries, but the meeting on 24 March was devoted to the German character. The document was leaked—rightly or wrongly. It has now been confirmed that such a meeting took place. Can you, Mr. Speaker, arrange for the minutes of that meeting and all supporting documents to be placed in the Library? If the document has been leaked and can be read in the press, surely we should be able to look at the minutes to see whether there is any conflict between what was leaked to the press and what was in the minutes?

Mr. Speaker Our rule would preclude that. Our rule is relevant to state papers quoted in the House, but not to papers quoted on television.

Dr. Cunningham: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding that the Opposition, through the Leader of the Oppostion, would usually have the right to ask a private notice question in these circumstances. Will you consider—while my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition is abroad winning friends for Britain and the Prime Minister stays at home sulking and losing friends for Britain—whether it would be possible for the deputy Leader of the Opposition, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), to ask such a question tomorrow?

Mr. Speaker: The rule is clear. The Leader of the Opposition never puts a question on the Order Paper for oral answer, and if he submits a private notice question the factor of urgency is not insisted upon. That is clearly stated in "Erskine May", on page 297. No such privilege is automatically given to any other hon. Member.

Dr. Cunningham: That is what I am asking you to re-examine, Mr. Speaker, because my right hon. Friends and I are very unhappy about the circumstances in which Parliament is being denied the opportunity to discuss this matter. For all any Conservative Member knows, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition may have been ill at this time or so far away—as he is—that he is unable to return to Paliament in time. The Opposition's constitutional right is being denied. That is what I am asking you to examine, Mr. Speaker, and to report on tomorrow.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to deal with one point at a time.

I have already considered this matter in some detail this morning. I am quite clear that the concession—the privilege—that is given to the Leader of the Opposition, for the reasons that I have already stated, does not apply to any other hon. Member. Of course, the cause of the Leader of the Opposition's absence at any time—for illness or for any other reason—would be a factor that I should have to take into consideration. However, that does not apply in this case.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): If this matter is as important as the Leader of the Opposition says—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is."]—and if it is of such national moment, why has the right hon. Gentleman decided to go to America to sell his country short instead of doing what he would call defending his country at home?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Do you agree, Mr. Speaker, that, although you cannot tell us the criteria for accepting an application for a Standing Order No. 20 debate, one of the considerations that would be uppermost in your mind would be whether it was a matter that could not be agreed between the usual channels? On this occasion, I think that we can safely say that the matter falls within that category. I expect that the chances are that Members of the German Parliament would have an opportunity to debate this matter if they wished.

As people are now complaining about the Common Market, many of us look forward to hearing why people such as the ex-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry —and other Conservative Members, and perhaps even some Opposition Members—are now changing their views about the Common Market when we told them all this 20 years ago.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is always helpful on matters of procedure. I am, of course, very much in favour of the usual channels coming to agreements about the management of business in this House.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am sure that the whole house has sympathy with you, Mr. Speaker, in the problems that you face in dealing with Standing Order No. 20 applications. We know that you cannot give your reasons to the House, but today you almost suggested that a remedy lay in the fact that questions will be put to the Prime Minister tomorrow. I am sure that you will agree that the opportunity to ask four or five questions in 15 minutes is totally inadequate for dealing with an issue of this gravity.

When you have turned down Standing Order No. 20 applications in the past, you have, on occasions, stated that you might consider an application on the following day unless various things happened. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has said that there would be an opportunity for the usual channels to rearrange the business so that there would be a debate. Will you give careful consideration to whether, if such a debate does not take place, arranged by the usual channels, you might be sympathetic to a Standing Order No. 20 application being made tomorrow, on the basis not only of the grounds set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), but also because we have failed to debate the subject today?

Mr. Speaker: I consider every application under Standing Order No. 20 on its merits, but if tomorrow I were to grant a debate for the following day, I should be taking the decision away from the Opposition, whose day it is.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Why are we beating about the bush? We all know what has been going on. I have no doubt that the people in Croydon feel just like my constituents in Ashfield. My ears are sore with listening to what has been happening in the past few days. The person responsible lives in the flat upstairs at No. 10. We want her to be here,. We want her at the Dispatch Box so that she can answer to Members of the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: I took the opportunity to go to my constituency on Friday and Saturday, and again yesterday where I heard many views expressed about the matter.

BILL PRESENTED

GAMING MACHINES (PROHIBITION ON USE BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN)

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, supported by Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. John Hughes, Dr. John Reid, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. Allen Adams, Mr. Thomas McAvoy, Mr. Michael J. Martin, Mr. Robert Litherland, Mr. Stanley Orme and Mr. Thomas Graham, presented a Bill to prohibit the use of gaming machines in cafes, small shops, amusement arcades, snack bars, fairgrounds and other places by persons under the age of eighteen:

And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 20 July and to be printed. *[Bill 185.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C.

Ordered,

That the draft Weights and Measures (Various Foods) (Amendment) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

As amended, (in the Committee and in Standing Committee), considered.

Ordered,

That the Finance Bill, as amended, be considered in the following order, namely: new Clauses other than new Clauses 2 and 3, Amendments to the Bill, new Clauses 2 and 3.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

New Clause 7

EXPENSES OF ENTERTAINERS

'The following section shall be inserted after section 201 of the Taxes Act 1988—

"*Expenses of entertainers*

201A.—(1) Where emoluments of an employment to which this section applies fall to be charged to tax for a year of assessment for which this section applies, there may be deducted from the emoluments of the employment to be charged to tax for the year—

(a) fees falling within subsection (2) below, and

(b) any additional amount paid by the employee in respect of value added tax charged by reference to those fees.

(2) Fees fall within this subsection if—

(a) they are paid by the employee to another person,

(b) they are paid under a contract made between the employee and the other person, who agrees under the contract to act as an agent of the employee in connection with the employment,

(c) at each time any of the fees are paid the other person carries on an employment agency with a view to profit and holds a current licence for the agency,

(d) they are calculated as a percentage of the emoluments of the employment or as a percentage of part of those emoluments, and

(e) they are defrayed out of the emoluments of the employment falling to be charged to tax for the year concerned.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2) above—

(a) "employment agency" means an employment agency within the meaning given by section 13(2) of the Employment Agencies Act 1973, and

(b) a person holds a current licence for an employment agency if he holds a current licence under that Act authorising him to carry on the agency.

(4) The amount which may be deducted by virtue of this section shall not exceed 17·5 per cent. of the emoluments of the employment falling to be charged to tax for the year concerned.

(5) This section applies to employment as an actor, singer, musician, dancer or theatrical artist.

(6) This section applies for the year 1990-91 and subsequent years of assessment."'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.1 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: (a), in line 10, after 'paid', add

'(whether during the year or subsequently)'.

(b), in line 21, at end add—

'(2A) a fee shall be regarded as satisfying the condition set out in subsection 2(a) above if it is calculated on a sliding scale such that the amount of the fee payable increases as the amount of the emoluments increases; including, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing words, a fee calculated on the basis of a fee of £X per £Y, or part of £Y of emoluments, or a fee calculated as a specified percentage of the first fraction of the emoluments and a different percentage of successive fractions.'

(c), in line 33, after 'artist', insert

'or employment of a substantially similar nature as an entertainer'.

Mr. Lilley: In Committee, both Conservative and Opposition Members made a persuasive case that we should take a further sympathetic look at the taxation of actors. I acknowledged that in some respects actors taxed under schedule E were in a difficult and perhaps unique position. In particular, my hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) emphasised that most actors engage an agent and that the fees that they pay to their agent, at some 10 to 15 per cent. of their income, are often their most important single cost. Those fees do not qualify at present for tax relief under the rules of schedule E.

[Mr. Lilley]

Therefore, I re-examined the matter. As I said in the debate in the House on 27 January, I hoped that the industry would take it upon itself to rearrange its contractual relationships so that the agent's fee never became part of the performer's income and the performer was not liable to tax on it. My talks with the industry, with my hon. Friends and with Opposition Members persuaded me that it would not be easy or, in the industry's view, desirable to make the necessary changes in the contract to bring about that effect.

Therefore, I announced in Committee that I proposed to introduce on Report a new relief for agents' fees paid by actors and other theatrical artists. The new relief introduced by the new clause will apply to fees paid by an actor, singer, musician, dancer or theatrical artist to agents operating commercially and licensed under the Employment Agencies Act 1973. Fees paid in respect of earnings received after 5 April 1990, and the VAT paid on them, up to a limit of 17·5 per cent. of earnings in all, will qualify for relief. That will give all members of the profession who are assessed under schedule E a significant and worthwhile measure of tax relief. There has been consultation with the industry on the precise form of the relief, so it should properly reflect the special circumstances in which agents' fees are paid by actors. I recommend it to the House.

The reason why it is possible to introduce such a major concession is that it is directed only at the particular circumstances of actors and other artists. Most types of employment agencies cannot charge fees to people who are looking for work. However, in the case of the entertainments industry, regulations made under the Employment Agencies Act 1973 permit a licensed agent to charge the artist rather than the employer. That exception shows that the fees are unique. The Revenue will consult the industry on the best way in which to implement the new relief. It may be possible eventually to set up arrangements to give the relief at source through the employer, to minimise the paperwork and to enable those qualifying for relief to receive it at the earliest opportunity.

Meanwhile, if the House approves the measure, and following Royal Assent to the Finance Bill, theatrical artists who believe that they are entitled to the new relief should claim it from their tax office.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I must begin by offering my warm congratulations to the right hon. Gentleman on his promotion to the Cabinet which, I suspect sadly for him, is delayed by two days to deal with the Finance Bill. I congratulate him especially because I always like to see my constituents doing well. As he falls into that eminent and extremely praiseworthy category, I am pleased for him. We shall miss him in our debates on future Finance Bills.

I hope that when the right hon. Gentleman gets his feet under the table at the Department of Trade and Industry, he will seek to reinvigorate its work, because that is badly needed. The right hon. Gentleman's performance at the DTI will be judged not on the degree of any adherence he may have to the Prime Minister's views on Europe but on what he does for British industry—and for the promotion of manufacturing industry and trade in particular. We wish him well in that all-important task.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, new clause 7 deals with the expenses of actors in following their profession. Earlier this year, the Inland Revenue switched its treatment of new and younger actors in the theatre from assessing their tax liabilities on schedule D to a new system under schedule E. The key problem brought about by that switch is that many of the expenses incurred by actors—especially items such as touring allowances, audition expenses and agents' fees—cannot be offset against their tax liability. Under the previous schedule D arrangements, they would have been. The crucial difference is that expenses are permissible under schedule D if they are wholly and exclusively incurred in the performance of a profession. Under schedule E, they must be wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred. That crucial difference between the inclusion or exclusion of the word "necessarily" causes the problem.

In an attempt to make the Government see reason, and to ensure that financial penalties are not unnecessarily visited upon the acting profession, the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and my hon. Friends proposed in Committee new clauses to improve the situation. I am sad to say that the Government rejected our proposals, as they did those of the hon. Member for Beaconsfield. However, the Government indicated that they would make one important concession, which is enshrined in new clause 7, whereby when, under particular circumstances, an actor pays an agent to operate in a general manner for him year by year, he will be able to offset his agent's fees against his tax liability. That change is welcome. However, I reiterate the point made in Committee: that is by no means enough because it does not completely tackle the problem.

Shortly after our debates in Committee, I received a letter from the British Actors Equity Association dated 11 July, which said:

"Although Equity, as the organisation representing actors and other artists, welcomes this concession"—

the concession now before the House—

"the agents' fee represents only a small part of the considerable expenses which our members incur as a result of their professional activities."

Therefore, although the relief is welcome, the profession believes that it is not sufficient to tackle the problem of the expenses that must be incurred in the course of an actor's work. The Government's concession is not adequate, for example, when considering touring allowances and audition expenses, which will continue to be taxable. Only agents' fees are covered and we believe that that is an insufficient concession by the Government.

We have tabled amendments (a),(b) and (c) because of other minor deficiencies in the new clause. Amendment (a) deals with the year in which the emoluments are earned. Paragraphs (a) and (e) of subsection (2) mean that fees are not deductible if they are paid after the year in which the emoluments that are being taxed were earned. We believe that that might present a problem for actors if an agent's fee was paid, for example, in the subsequent year—because of the precise wording of the clause that fee would not be deductible. The amendment seeks to put that matter right.

Amendment (b) deals with fees that are not paid on a lump sum, straight percentage or figure basis, but rather on some sort of sliding scale. It is conceivable, for example, that fees might be paid to an agent on the basis of 20 per cent. of the first £1,000 of earnings, 10 per cent. of the next £4,000 and perhaps £85 per £1,000 or part thereof

thereafter. Such a sliding scale is perfectly normal in many parts of the business world and an agent might reach a similar agreement with an actor. It is not entirely clear within the terms of the new clause whether such a sliding scale of fees paid to an agent would be wholly deductible on an averaged basis, year by year, against tax. Our amendment seeks to clarify that.

Although we appreciate that the Government want to draw the net of the new clause reasonably tight so that only genuine actors and entertainers who will benefit, none the less there are a number of people who, perhaps unintentionally, the Government might exclude by their definition of such people. The most obvious example is a stand-up comic who is clearly engaged in the entertainment business. That person frequently tours for a living and frequently engages an agent to secure bookings. Under the terms of the new clause a stand-up comic would not be included—I do not, of course, want the definition of a comic to extend to hon. Members. To ensure that everyone whom we believe the Government want to assist by the new clause can be so assisted, we believe that amendment (c) should be accepted as it would ensure that the definition is broader than that set out in subsection (5) of new clause 7. Those are our detailed amendments and we hope that the Government will either reassure us on those points or accept our amendments.

I reiterate that we remain disappointed by the scope of the Government's action. It is a small step in the right direction to provide assistance for new, young actors, who are coming forward in the acting profession and providing some of the essential life blood of the theatrical work in our country, but it is far less than actors want, need or deserve. We are disappointed by what the Government have done, but we welcome the step that the new clause represents.

4.15 pm

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate, and I do so with a sense of humility because I recognise that my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and other hon. Friends put forward a number of the arguments in Committee. I shall now get myself slightly confused as I refer to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary, alias my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who has encountered the arguments relating to the new clause. I add my voice to those who warmly congratulated my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Is it a record to be a Financial Secretary as well as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? Perhaps, with our mutual love of cricket, we can at some stage, have a detailed examination of that point.

It would be churlish not to recognise the spirit with which my right hon. Friend approached this difficult problem. In putting forward his arguments today in Committee, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has tried to assist in a process in which the House recognises some of the special claims of the acting profession.

I also declare my interest as a parliamentary adviser to the Society of West End Theatre. In this cause, the theatrical managers are at one with British Equity, the actors' union, of which I am also a member. I declare that interest conscious of the gaze of the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), who, I suspect, has a far better chance than I of picking up fees for performing. I perform on the radio; his experience covers a much wider spread.

I must declare another interest because my stepdaughter is currently appearing in a play in Guildford. I shall not advertise the play except to say that it is an excellent play called "The Dressmaker", and is on all week. As I have those interests, I am sure that the House will understand why I have watched with the closest interest and care what was proposed in Standing Committee and what appears before us in the new clause.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend will understand if I seek to point to some of the remaining practical problems and concerns. My right hon. Friend said—I think that I heard him aright—that those who sought relief in claiming agents' fees should do so as soon as they incurred those expenses. But the Inland Revenue press release of 6 July, which he kindly sent to those following such matters, states:

> "It will not normally be possible to determine finally the amount of relief due until after the end of the tax year when the total amount of earnings assessable under schedule E for the year, and the agents' fees paid out of them, are known. But where during the year it is clear that some relief will be due, tax offices may include provisional relief in PAYE code numbers."

If my reading of that is correct, what my right hon. Friend had to say earlier was not as helpful as actors may have assumed from his words. Therefore, there will be a squeeze in terms of the time that elapses between when the agents' fees are collected, normally at source, when fees come in, and the time when that relief is due.

I welcome the fact that, in an earlier paragraph of the same press release, the Inland Revenue said that it

> "is consulting with the theatre industry about the best way to implement the new relief and, in particular, on whether it might in the longer term be possible for the tax relief to be given, at source, by employers in broadly the same way as tax relief for employee pension contributions."

I hope that my right hon. Friend will take this opportunity to reassure the House that that review will continue. I strongly support relief given at source as much the best way to ease the problem.

I do not propose to rehearse the arguments that we have heard before about the broader considerations of schedules D and E, but they should be placed in a context that my right hon. Friend understands. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will appreciate that those who are paying agents' fees are, by definition, established, or are beginning to be established, in the profession. The worry for many fledgling actors and actresses is that it usually takes quite a long time to get an agent. Until they are established, they have the problem of getting an Equity card and an agent. A number of performers have no agent. Although they will be eligible for relief when they get an agent, many actors and actresses will get no relief because they are paying no agents' commission.

The category of people who will be most affected by switching from schedule D to schedule E and who will not be assisted by the new clause are typically those who are employed in the lower reaches of repertory, theatre in education and fringe theatre. That is the very seed-corn of the profession.

In view of the likely developments in the theatrical profession, it is inevitable that there will be pressure from those representing actors for wage increases to match what will be seen as a legitimate demand to offset what has been lost under the old tax relief. Anything that puts

[Sir Michael Marshall]

inflationary pressure on the bottom end of the fringe, start-up theatre, repertory and touring will bring into question the viability of those branches of the theatre.

Those aspects will remain, despite the new clause. I ask my right hon. Friend to stick to what was implied in the press releases about the willingness of the Treasury and the Inland Revenue to continue looking into the matter.

I shall be brief because I know that others wish to speak on this important issue. My right hon. Friend will shortly join another great Department of State where given the application and dedication that he has shown in tackling this matter, I have every confidence he will make a significant contribution. I urge him to make it one of his first tasks at the Department of Trade and Industry to set in hand a study of the impact of the British theatre on our invisible earnings and our direct earnings in foreign exchange. Such a study will not only be valuable in the wider context; it will show that anything that begins to cause increasing difficulties to the profession will undermine a profession which produces a substantial return in sheer, hard foreign exchange. Beyond that, it is part of the cultural richness of our lives.

My right hon. Friend has tried hard to meet the spirit and the letter of the law, but I hope that he will not give up his efforts to continue with what I believe he will have found to be a meaningful learning experience about the profession in the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill, and I look to him to provide an opportunity for the House to debate the matter in future, and perhaps to tackle some of the problems that I have outlined this afternoon.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): May I add my congratulations to the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on his appointment and on the concession that he has made this afternoon. He said that he was sympathetic to the case that was made on behalf of actors, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said from the Front Bench, although the concession is welcome, it goes less than halfway towards meeting the excellent case that actors, Equity and the Theatrical Mangement Asociation have made. By including only actors' agents' fees, he has disregarded a number of expenses which are vital to actors seeking work but which the Inland Revenue almost certainly will not include in the words "and necessarily". The inadequacy of the Government's concession turns on that point.

Will the Minister say why the Government believe that the cost of letters seeking work, the cost of photographs to promote an actor in search of work, of travelling to and clothes for auditions, of board and lodging when actors are away from home acting in the regions and other areas and of advertising in *Spotlight* their availability to work should not be included in the schedule? Schedule D included all those expenses and had the support of both sides of the House because it was specifically designed for the circumstances of freelance workers. The circumstances of actors were peculiarly suited to that schedule, but the Government are changing it. They must ensure that the use of the words "and necessarily" cover not only agents' fees but all the other expenses which are necessarily incurred, but which at present the Inland Revenue seems determined to say are not really necessary. The Government must justify in this debate the use of those words and their interpretation by the Inland Revenue.

The Minister is aware of the circumstances behind this debate. Actors are badly paid and their work is insecure. I shall quote a letter that I received from somebody who describes himself as a young actor, although rather coyly he does not give his age. Mr. Bill Britten wrote to me saying:

"The current average wage for an actor of my age at a provincial theatre is about £160 gross per week. This is low for a highly skilled worker, with three years' training, who must additionally maintain a home in London as well as digs wherever the job happens to be. If you consider that the nature of the profession is such that any actor will almost inevitably suffer periods of unemployment on either side of the job, it seems less still. If you further insist that tax is paid at source and that no expenses can be claimed, it becomes virtually impossible to make ends meet. Since many jobs last only six or seven weeks it is a nonsense to maintain that they are permanent."

The hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) dealt with the incoherent nature of employment and the different timings of payment that different forms of employment make. Mr. John Cater, a well-known actor, and his wife, Wendy Gifford, a well-known actress, wrote from the New theatre:

"The average fairly well-employed actor today may well do a telly, a short repertory season, another telly, and a few days on a picture in the space of six months, with unemployment in between. Television pays by the job, films by the day and invariably several weeks in arrears, theatres and labour exchanges by the week. Impossible to tax under Schedule E."

Mr. Cater and his wife make a good point to which the Minister must respond.

That unfairly creates two categories of actors—those who have been secure in the profession, and those who have entered it in the past three years. Mr. Hugh Williams, who was appearing in "Hamlet" at the National theatre in March, wrote:

"in a Cast being paid £200 per week our Horatio (who we shall say has been in the profession for a good few years), may receive in his pay packet £200 (less NI), whereas our Ophelia, a newcomer, will receive £150. Under Schedule D Horatio may claim, amongst other things, his Agent's Commission (£20 per week), his subscription to 'Spotlight' (£2) and Equity (£3), his publicity photographs (£4). Under Schedule E Ophelia may claim nothing."

Following the concession, she may claim her agent's fees.

"Before a line has been spoken at that evening's performance, Ophelia is some £30 per week worse off. No wonder the poor girl goes mad."

That is hardly surprising given that very unfair treatment.

The Minister must respond to that. He should also say something about the whole root of the Government's cause. He knows that the Inland Revenue pressed for the change on the basis of a test case that is 18 years old—that of Fall *v.* Hitchen—which was untypical, as it was a long-term contract. It is on that flimsy base that the Government's case rests. As his last act in his present job, the Minister should come clean and recognise that that is not a substantial or typical case on the basis of which to make a tax change that affects the whole profession.

4.30 pm

Actors have not been well treated by the Government: the infrastructure of the theatre shows that almost every repertory theatre in the country is in deficit, and all hon. Members accept that actors are badly paid. The Minister will recall that the Department of Social Security changed

the rules for claimants, and actors are now much worse off; they are now required actively to seek work other than acting work. That makes no sense, not least economically. The Minister and every hon. Member, through taxes, is subsidising the training of those actors. It is a silly system: we pay for their training and then encourage them, when they are out of work, to look for work for which they are not trained or qualified when they are able to do work for which they are trained and qualified.

Some hon. Members have spoken out on this matter, and the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) has been at the forefront. Perhaps the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) would like to explain to the House why, having moved a sensible amendment in Committee, he did not back it up with his vote, and why he is now supporting a Government concession that he knows does not go anywhere near what his excellent amendment would do.

The other person who should be accounting for himself is the Minister for the Arts, whose voice has been silent on an issue that affects every actor for whom he has governmental responsibility. I wrote to the Minister, who replied:

"I am, of course, well aware of the high level of concern in the profession about the possible impact of these tax changes both on individual performers and the live theatre as a whole. I have been in touch with Peter Lilley about this, and understand that he has now written to Michael Marshall saying that he does not see his way to reversing the decision on Schedule E treatment."

That was the end of the Minister for the Arts' interest. What a disgrace that the Minister responsible has nothing to say, and has done nothing but pass on the concern to the then Financial Secretary when he should be fighting for actors and making a case on their behalf.

Sir Michael Marshall: Within the privacy of this small group of hon. Members, the hon. Gentleman knows that, because of the way in which ministerial responsibility works in our system, he could not expect the Minister to say more than he said to him in writing. Those who have been in touch with the Minister are well aware of all the representations that he has made, and of the arguments that have gone on. He has been most helpful. I say that speaking with an interest that I have already declared. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept my remark in the spirit in which it was put.

Mr. Fisher: I accept the point, but the acting profession would have expected a statement on the public record from the Minister for the Arts, to the effect that he believes that actors have a good case. He is responsible for the conditions in the theatre, and the payment of performers there is vital. If the Minister for the Arts has not been able to find an opportunity to make a speech on actors' behalf, recognising their strong case, the theatre is being badly served by the Minister responsible for it.

I accept the point about the division of ministerial responsibility, but I do not accept that the Minister, with his responsibility to the theatre as a whole, could not find an opportunity to say trenchantly that actors have a good case, and that he is strongly pressing that case on the Treasury. That is the least that he could have done: the theatre has the right to be represented in that way.

Let me end on a more conciliatory note. There is a way out for the Financial Secretary tonight. It is not too late for him to issue guidelines to the Inland Revenue to interpret how it should use the words "and necessarily". If the Minister would say today that he recognises that there is a case for other expenses in addition to agents' fees, and that he will issue guidelines to the Inland Revenue to take into account the list that I gave at the beginning of my speech, he would genuinely receive credit and thanks from the profession. He would fully undo the damage that he threatened to do at the beginning of the Finance Bill, and which—to his credit—he has gone some way to repairing by allowing agents' fees. He must know that there are other genuine expenses that need to be deducted. If he would give the Inland Revenue guidelines, the acting profession would be in his debt and he would have done the decent thing.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): The shunting of actors from schedule D to schedule E alters arrangements that have operated satisfactorily for more than 50 years. Despite the consolation prize offered by new clause 7, I have no doubt that the move from one schedule to the other will cause extra hardship in a profession in which wages are notoriously low. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry spoke about new clause 53 in Standing Committee and said:

"The suggestion that the Revenue has been winnowing out the self-employed is manifestly false. If it has been trying to do so, it has been singularly unsuccessful, as the number of self-employed has increased by no less than 60 per cent. during the Government's life and it is still rising strongly." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 3 July 1990; c. 541-2.]

The move against actors is part of a general Inland Revenue campaign against the self-employed. Some of the self-employed secretaries and researchers who work in the House have been harried back into employment. One of my constituents, a self-employed typist, had her business destroyed because the Inland Revenue cast her as employed simply because she did not take her typewriter to her clients.

Any accountant will confirm that there is a general Inland Revenue campaign against the self-employed and that arrangements that are perfectly satisfactory to both sides in a contract are often altered. The reason for that campaign is that Inland Revenue inspectors earn brownie points if they can identify back tax, and the career of a tax inspector advances in direct proportion to the disincentive that is given to those who show initiative and self-reliance.

The argument that self-employment is growing and that therefore there cannot be an Inland Revenue campaign is a non sequitur. If the campaign were lifted, the number of people becoming self-employed would grow even faster. I find it strange that a Government who are supposedly wedded to the virtues of self-reliance and initiative are presiding over administrative actions which have a directly opposite effect.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield) *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I add my congratulations to those that have been offered to the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on his sparkling political progress—and so young, too. That must encourage some of us. I remind him of the old saying, "Whom the gods would destroy they first make Secretary of State for Trade and Industry." No doubt the right hon. Gentleman is in a good mood, or even in a generous mood, and perhaps we can tempt him a little and persuade him to leave us with something by which we can warmly remember him.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Hon. Members have welcomed the concession but it simply does not go far enough. I should declare my interest. In the past I have acted as a parliamentary adviser to Equity and I get the occasional walk-on part at Prime Minister's Question Time. As I say, I welcome the concession but I think that the Minister could go much further.

The speeches by the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) and for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) plainly demonstrated that there is much sympathy for actors. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) said, acting is an uncertain profession. I cannot remember the precise percentage but between 70 and 80 per cent. of all actors in Equity are at any given moment unemployed or resting. Many of them have to take jobs outside the profession in order to sustain themselves while they are waiting for auditions or while they are in rehearsal or promoting themselves. Between jobs they have to do a geat deal of that while hoping that a break will come along.

Agents' fees are only one part of the expenses associated with the acting profession. I have never understood why it was felt necessary to move actors from schedule D to schedule E. I cannot believe that it was considered that actors constituted an especially attractive group of taxpayers and that they were somehow getting away with something. The change will make their lives far more difficult. When the Financial Secretary replies, I shall be interested to know the source of the original suggestion.

Unfortunately, I was not a member of the Committee that considered the Finance Bill. Perhaps someone other than the Minister, someone who probably knows far more about these matters than I, can tell me the origin of the suggestion. Was it a ministerial proposition? Was the idea put into the minds of Ministers by the Inland Revenue so as to supplement what the Inland Revenue had done itself? There must be a reason for the change.

As there is a great deal of dissatisfaction within the acting profession and outside it, we need to know how the suggestion arose. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) suggests in a muttered interjection that it might have something to do with Ken Dodd and his tickling stick. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central will tickle our fancy with the truth.

Mr. Fisher: The change stems from a suggestion of the Inland Revenue, which was based on the case of Fall *v.* Hitchen of 1972. That case concerned a non-typical long-term contract for a performer. The argument on which the change of tax liability is based is therefore feeble and insubstantial.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is clearly learned in the trials and tribulations of the acting profession. He will make an excellent Minister for the Arts when we have the next Labour Government.

I am sure that it was said in Committee that actors and actresses, by definition, need to spend a great deal of money promoting themselves. That is one of the requirements of the profession. We need only to read the newspapers to learn just how much work they have to do to push themselves forward and to get their names known. As such expenses must be recognised as incurred by actors and actresses in pursuit of their profession, they should be allowable against tax.

It is true that many people within the acting profession receive extremely low wages. Few, if any, receive a pension. We are more parsimonious and more mean-spirited with our actors than most European countries. We spend a great deal of time almost living off the reputation of our theatre, including our actors and actresses. We are always telling others how wonderful the British theatre is and about the many people who come to Britain as visitors to go to the theatre because of the excellence of our productions. Surely there should be a quid pro quo. Given the great contribution that the theatre makes to the quality of life and the economic life of this country, the unique position of actors and actresses as a work force should be recognised.

I hope that the Minister, in the salad days of his time at the Treasury, before he moves on to other and perhaps greater things for a short while at the Department of Trade and Industry, will listen sympathetically to the arguments that are being advanced. He has heard what has been said about a compromise. Perhaps he could issue guidelines to the Inland Revenue so that it can treat sympathetically all actors and actresses. If he will not do that, will he give us an undertaking when he replies that he, or his successor, will carefully monitor the impact of the changes in tax liability for those in the acting profession? If he sees that something is going wrong, and if this becomes clear to others, I hope that he will be prepared to accept representations from hon. Members on both sides of the House. There is a great deal of sympathy for the profession within the House. I hope also that the Minister, or his successor, will consider returning to the House with a provision in next year's Finance Bill that will enable our actors and actresses to receive their just deserts. There are many of us in the House who think that their rewards are thoroughly merited.

4.45 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I start by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) on his appointment to the position of Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He has done an excellent job as Financial Secretary to the Treasury. He steered the Finance Bill through its consideration in Committee with great skill. I have noted the way in which he has always sought to balance the interests of the Inland Revenue against those of the taxpayer. His approach to the new clause exemplifies that. I wish my right hon. Friend well at the DTI. I am sure that all my right hon. and hon. Friends will wish to give him their full support.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) asked me why I withdrew a new clause in Committee. I did so because I was offered what I considered to be an important concession. Indeed, those words were used by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). He, too, said that it was an important concession. I made it clear that I was not entirely happy about creating special protection for a new category of taxpayers.

I am inclined to agree with the traditional approach, which is that taxation under schedule D or schedule E is a matter of fact that should be determined on the basis and merits of each case. That is exactly what happened in this

instance. The case of Fall *v.* Hitchen of 1972 led indirectly to the proposals made by the Inland Revenue to tax young actors under schedule E. The more that I considered the proposed change, the more I realised that the issue was not as clear-cut as I had initially thought. I shall explain why I think that the concession goes far enough for the time being.

First, the standard Equity contract is not like a contract for services. Instead, it contains many of the characteristics of a contract of employment or a contract of service. If Equity feels so strongly about the change which has been introduced, it should take another test case to appeal. Any young, taxpaying actor who is now to be taxed under schedule E should challenge before the commissioners the ruling of the Inland Revenue, which will take effect from 6 April.

Secondly, Equity should consider the terms of its standard contract. There is an element of Equity saying that it wants to have its cake and eat it. It wants its members to have all the protections that we associate more with employment protection and less with self-employment. I am sure that the House will be aware that actors, exceptionally among the self-employed, pay national insurance contributions under class I. That has always been an anomaly. That exceptional position demonstrates that the issue is not as clear cut as it appeared to be.

I think that my right hon. Friend the Minister has introduced an important concession. We should now wait to see what happens. For example, a test case might be brought. The other day I spoke to an accountant who has many young actors as clients. He feels strongly about the change in the basis of taxation. I told him that I hoped that he would be bringing a test case on behalf of one of his actor clients, and he said that he would do so. We should wait to see what happens when such a case is brought. It is true that the Fall *v.* Hitchen case involved a relatively untypical actor and a long-term contract at Sadlers Wells. The standard Equity contract has many of the characteristics that that particular contract had. That may be the reason why Equity is not prepared to take a case before the commissioners.

Only in the last resort should the House agree to a new clause which creates a special status for a special group of taxpayers. If we do that, another group will be asking for the same treatment. Journalists, for example, might come forward. The Opposition said in Committee that they wanted that to happen. If that happens, representations will not be assessed on their merits.

The Public Accounts Committee—I note that two of our members of it are present—has discussed——

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Why stop at two other members of the PAC?

Mr. Smith: I apologise to my hon. Friend. The members of the PAC whom I see in their places are my right hon. Friend the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and the hon. Members for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and for Islington, South and Finsbury. I am sure that they will all confirm that the Inland Revenue is always seeking, rightly, to limit abuse and to stop people fiddling by misusing the tax rules. There is as much concern about that under schedule D as under any other tax head. We should be well aware of that.

Mr. McCartney: I apologise for confusing you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few moments ago. Three actors wished to lobby my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on the matter. Therefore, instead of standing up I remained in my place. I suppose that in that respect I fluffed my lines.

By the end of the week the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will be fairly fed up with the congratulations heaped upon him by Opposition Members and, with some relief, by Conservative Members. I imagine that he is in much the same position as when he became a father for the first time: congratulations were heaped upon him but after he had been woken up during the night to change nappies and feed the baby, the gilt went off the gingerbread. The Secretary of State has been given the most accident-prone job in British politics. The only consolation that I can offer him is that if there is a general election next year he will be put out of his misery. I wish him well in his new post. I have met him about constituency matters on a number of occasions. Despite the fact that we hold different political views, he served me well.

I listened intently to the arguments advanced in Committee by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and others. I was surprised, therefore, when the hon. Gentleman did not vote for the amendments that he moved.

It is important to compare like with like. We ought to bear in mind the types of concession that we provide for ourselves and compare them with what we shall be taking away from members of the acting profession. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) pointed out earlier, under schedule D, board and lodging, applications for work, self-promotion, clothing, and travel to and from auditions were allowable expenses. Those concessions were needed if people who try to make a living in a difficult profession are to make ends meet. The public see the stars on television and at royal command performances, but the vast majority of actors and actresses are not employed; even when they are employed their salaries are very low. Both before and since I became a Member of Parliament we have made special arrangements for ourselves. We have board and lodging allowances. Hon. Members have to come here from all parts of the country. We cannot find board and lodging out of our parliamentary salary, so we have made substantial financial arrangements to cover that expense. Our allowances amount to more than what many actors and actresses receive during a year.

We are also given a clothing allowance and an allowance to cover the cost of clothes care, because of the nature of our work. We claim travelling expenses to and from our place of employment. The cost of visits by our families is also covered by the special arrangements. When, however, it comes to the acting profession, it seems that, despite the Minister's concession, we are prepared to withdraw allowances. That will lead to hardship for many people who are already on low incomes. It is hypocritical of hon. Members to provide special concessions for themselves but to withdraw them from the acting profession.

If we are serious about promoting the theatre, for both cultural and educational reasons and also to attract tourists to Britain, it is vital to provide security of employment. The taxation system must be sufficiently flexible to allow people who enter the profession to remain in it, develop their skills and use them for the benefit of us

[Mr. McCartney]

all. The Government and local authorities spend substantial sums of money on encouraging tourists to come to Britain. The arts are at the forefront of that campaign. It is nonsensical, therefore, that the acting profession should be under attack. My hon. Friends have rightly pointed out that the Government have made a concession. However, actors and actresses do not believe that they have been granted a concession when they find that they have lost £30 out of £160 a week because of changes to the taxation system. A major cut of that kind in their income makes no sense whatsoever.

A member of the education committee in my local authority is developing the role of theatre within education. If that is to be effective, a nucleus of young actors and actresses is needed who are prepared to work with the local community and develop their skills within the educational curriculum. If we are to encourage young people to enter the acting profession, we must ensure that a pool of young actors and actresses is available to do that work for a number of years and then go out into the wider profession. The new clause will make it impossible for them to do educational work. That will undermine the profession; young actors and actresses will be unwilling to develop the role of theatre within education.

When the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry gives advice to the Inland Revenue, will he consider the inclusion of a clear definition of what is meant by "necessity"? I hope that he will include board and lodgings, applications for work, self-promotion, clothing, and travel to and from auditions within the definition. It would ensure that the acting profession is in a far better position than it is now, even with the concession.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I, too, willingly congratulate my right hon. Friend on his promotion. The acting profession is powerful and important. Who knows what position my right hon. Friend would have achieved had he given the acting profession all the concessions for which it asked? No doubt he has already been rewarded for the concessions embodied in the new clause. I thank him for the work that he did in Committee. He made an important mark there. All of us marvelled at his breadth of knowledge and at the fluent way in which he dealt with questions from both sides.

I support the new clause, but I do so with a certain amount of regret. Many hon. Members have referred to the fact that actors in the theatre are among the lowest paid in the profession. Film and television actors can be well paid, but theatre actors earn the lowest of wages. Moreover, the change will affect the newest entrants into the profession—the lowest paid in a low-paid profession.

I do not wish to repeat a speech that I made in Committee. However, as an accountant I ought to refer to the fact that I understand the Inland Revenue's desire to cut out abuse and its wish that as many people as possible should be on schedule E. However, it is unacceptable and unforgivable to make a young actor pay tax on income that he will never see—the agent's fee. The concession is important. It can mean between 10 and 15 per cent. of a young actor's regular recurring income, not just from the theatre but from other work such as voice-overs, extra parts in films or on television and other work that will be calculated under schedule D taxation. Therefore, it is a substantial concession and it would be churlish to say that I am not grateful for it.

I will accept this major concession but the wise words of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) must be supported by Conservative Members. He said that we must look carefully at the pattern of employment following the imposition of schedule E on this end of the stage profession. I have evidence already that certain theatrical producers are not hiring young actors but prefer slightly more experienced actors—schedule D actors rather than schedule E actors—because of the lack of bureaucracy entailed. Also, a young actor will look, rightly, for extra income to compensate for the extra burden of taxation that will be suffered in travelling expenses.

5 pm

Travelling expenses have to be sorted out. The cases mentioned in Committee such as Gurney v. Richards must be looked at again. The way in which travelling expenses are dealt with in taxation is unfair. There is no logic between the taxation treatment of a schedule D person and a schedule E person. The Revenue must grasp the issue once and for all. It has ducked the matter, hoping that case law would, bit by bit, take away some of the theoretical advantages to the taxpayer. The issue needs wide consultation within the accountancy profession and the business fraternity, such as the Confederation of British Industry, and with any person who feels strongly about it. There should be a Green Paper to discuss the issue of travelling expenses.

It is traditional in the House that a Parliamentary Private Secretary should not speak on the subject matter of his Minister's responsibilities. I do not intend to break that tradition and I do not believe that I have done so because I have been dealing with the effect of taxation on actors rather than with actors themselves. If a Minister is not seen publicly to be disagreeing with other Ministers, it is purely because that is the tradition of Government and the House. To accuse a Minister of not trying hard merely because there are no public speeches on the issue is a disgrace and an abuse of the normal procedures. Therefore, I have to defend a certain Minister because of what was said earlier by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hanley: I will not give way because I promised to be extremely brief.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Giving way is another tradition of the House.

Mr. Hanley: Will the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) hold his mouth closed? I do not intend to give way.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not correct that collective responsibility applies to all Members, not only of the Cabinet but of the Government, and that a Parliamentary Private Secretary, although not additionally remunerated, is a member of the Government? Is not it improper for a Minister to use his Parliamentary Private Secretary to indicate a reservation?

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It was not a point of order for me. The matters raised have nothing to do with me.

Mr. Hanley: A Parliamentary Private Secretary is not a member of the Government. However, he is bound by certain agreements, to which I have adhered. In showing his ignorance, the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has shown how long it has been since he was a member of any Government and I am sure that his memory will not be refreshed in the coming years.

The change from schedule D to schedule E is regrettable because it will have a bad effect on the ability of young actors to carry out their profession at its very root. Actors should be encouraged to carry out their work so that, having learnt their art properly, they can move on to the more remunerative parts of the profession. It would be wrong to disagree with the new clause. When the hon. Member for Newham, North-West was temporarily out of the Chamber, I said that there should be a proper study, as he suggested, into the effect of this change on the acting profession. If it appears to be damaging, I hope that my right hon. Friend and his successors will look at the matter again.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful for the kind remarks of hon. Members. My mother-in-law is the only person who has not shared their congratulations. She is not happy that her daughter has married someone who has gone into trade. However, she will be relieved to hear the assurances of Opposition Members that it is likely to be short lived.

I am happy to be judged by the criteria laid down by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and will endeavour, as he hoped I would, to do my best for industry, manufacturing and all aspects of trade in this country. I hope that the attitudes I have just attributed to my mother-in-law do not survive, because trade and industry are vital to the country. One of the great industries is entertainment, with which we are dealing now.

I can, in general, give the assurance sought by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury that his amendments—which are mainly probing amendments—reveal that the new clause, as drafted, already achieves what he wishes. For example, on amendment (a) I can confirm that the words that he proposes to insert—

"whether during the year or subsequently"—

are otiose. The clause already allows for relief in the tax year for which the income is charged to tax, whether or not the fees are paid in the same year of assessment.

Similarly, I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern as expressed by the second amendment. I am advised by the Inland Revenue that under the normal rules for construing legislation, the reference in subsection (2)*(d)* of the new clause to fees which are, "calculated as a percentage" is able to include fees that might be calculated on the basis of more than one percentage or by reference to a sliding scale or to a specified proportion on the lines set out in amendment (b). I have been assured that new clause 7 as drafted will enable relief to be given in the circumstances envisaged by the amendment. Therefore, I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that the amendment would add unnecessary complexity to the legislation and that he will not press it.

On amendment (c), I am glad to say that we have had an opportunity to consult representatives of the industry while preparing the new clause. I understand that they are content with the definition that we have adopted. By referring to "theatrical artist" we have included not only performers such as magicians, who might not fit the description of "actor", but choreographers, assistant designers and directors who are regarded as part of the acting profession and frequently take an acting role in productions. Some of those people pay agents' fees and are engaged under contracts of employment and are affected by the switch to schedule E. I can assure the House that all those categories of theatrical performer, together with stand-up comedians—whether in or out of the House—will be able to claim relief under the new clause.

Mr. Chris Smith: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his comments on amendments (a) and (b) and fully accept what he said.

On amendment (c), I understand that the term "theatrical artist" is wider than the term "actor". What would happen to a magician or stand-up comic who was engaged not at a theatre but on the club circuit as an entertainer? Because that person is not employed at any time in a theatre, would not the term "theatrical artist" be inappropriate and would not he fall outside the terms of the new clause?

Mr. Lilley: As I understand it, such a person would be included in the new clause. "Theatrical" has a wider use than activities in the theatre. Many hon. Members are theatrical from time to time, and the definition is quite wide. I am assured that there is no difficulty in this respect. Those in the industry with whom we have discussed the matter are content with our definition. If we discover that it does not work properly, my successor will consider it in that light.

My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) mentioned the timing of tax relief. I assure him that we shall, as promised in the press release, continue our discussions to find out whether it is possible to give relief on the same basis as relief for pension contributions. I recognise that the profession would welcome that.

It would be sensible if I were to return to the fundamental issues that have been raised in the debate. I have discovered that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is 137 days older than me——

Mr. Tony Banks: If you don't mind!

Mr. Lilley: We are both well preserved, despite our great age. The hon. Gentleman asked why the status of actors was changed. There are two reasons. First, a decision in law was made. Secondly, the interpretation of the law that was more generally available to the Inland Revenue required the Revenue to make that change. The decision was not made by whim or fancy of Ministers or the Revenue. It was made in response to an interpretation of the law laid down by the House.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) argued that the case that triggered the decision was old and atypical. The matter is up to Equity. One reason for the long delay in implementing the change was that we were waiting to see whether Equity would challenge the decision and appeal. It did not do so.

Mr. Fisher: Eighteen years have passed.

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentlemen cares to look at the chronology of events that I related in Committee—I shall not bore the House by repeating it—he will see that the cases were spread out and he will note that Equity had several opportunities to appeal but did not. I believe that Equity is now considering an appeal. I have already given an assurance that the Revenue will co-operate with Equity in developing test cases which will provide appropriate coverage. I admit that I am not wedded to a particular legal ruling reached by courts in the past. If they reach one that is more satisfactory to the House, so be it; but let us go through the correct legal procedures.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) suggested that there was a Revenue campaign to winnow out the self-employed. I assure him that there is no such campaign. The Revenue is under an obligation to implement the laws passed by the House, according to advice by its legal advisers or according to how the courts interpret the law and require it to act. In this respect, the Revenue has a certain amount of discretion in terms of the transitional arrangements which it may in certain circumstances, under its care and management powers, deploy in introducing a changed legal interpretation.

5.15 pm

As the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central pointed out, the changes have taken a long time. The Inland Revenue has not been precipitate in implementing this decision. I should have thought that, in its generous concession to established artists, it has used its discretion to the full. In effect, it has said that, although the law says that all actors on such a contract are employed—not self-employed—those who, over the past three or more years, have been treated as self-employed may retain that status not just for one or two years but for the rest of their working lives.

The generosity of this concession to established members of the artistic and acting professions has created the disparity between them and newcomers about which hon. Members have been rightly concerned, and we have tried to allay those fears a little with the new clause. We have a problem because of the Revenue's generosity, not its meanness, and because a protracted period has passed, not because the Revenue has acted precipitately. I hope that hon. Members will not blame the Revenue for the consequences of laws that we in our wisdom, or lack of it, choose to pass. If we do not like the consequences of those laws, it is up to us to change them, and not to rely on civil servants to use a discretion which, rightly, they have not been given.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that the key to achieving more generous treatment of new actors lies in the "necessarily" condition on the treatment of expenses. I understand that the issue concerns not just the "necessarily" condition but, as I said in Committee, the phrase

"in the performance of those duties"

which rules out many expenses which are allowable against income under schedule E. Auditions, which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), and several other items which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Stoke-upon-Trent, Central are not expenses incurred

"in the performance of those duties"

as the law has established the meaning of those words. So long as we leave that test in the legislation, we will not be able to render those costs deductible.

Mr. Fisher *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is going to say that we should replace that phrase with wording that would allow those costs to be deductible. I have been persuaded that that would not be appropriate because it would be impossible to ring-fence it to actors. It would be difficult to do so initially in law, but I am certain that, if it could be done just in the first drafting of the law, countless other professions that incur similar expenses and want similar treatment would, before long, be knocking at our door, and we would find it difficult to resist them. In a new clause tabled in Committee, the Opposition began that process of erosion by joining journalism to the entertainment profession so that journalists could receive the benefits of such an extension.

Mr. Fisher: Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why agents' fees are incurred

"in the performance of those duties"

rather than "in the pursuit of work"? I think that he would agree that the other expenses which my hon. Friends and I itemised are definitely expenses incurred "in the pursuit of work" because unavoidable expenses are incurred. As I understand it, the right hon. Gentleman is making a distinction between "in the pursuit of work" and

"in the performance of those duties".

I am not sure that he can justify that in terms of his concession on agents' fees. Will he be a little more sympathetic and look at the possibility of issuing guidelines to the Inland Revenue? If he said that those guidelines should take into account the other expenses in pursuit of work which are unavoidably incurred, he would satisfy all hon. Members.

Mr. Lilley: I was not arguing that agents' fees meet the present terms and conditions under schedule E. On the contrary, they do not. We introduced the new clause to override the normal expenses rule in the case of agents' fees. We are doing that because it is capable of being ring-fenced. All other professions, apart from entertainment, are forbidden by employment law to charge an employee for the fees of an agent in obtaining employment —they have to charge the employer. Therefore, there are no other people in a similar position waiting to knock at my door, my successor's door or even the door of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, if we did as he suggested, we would open a Pandora's box of demands to widen relief on all expenses. We would find it costly, not especially in the case of actors, as we are not arguing about the cost of relief to actors, but, once one has started on that slippery slope, one would have to extend the provision further and further before very long, as the new clause introduced by the Opposition in Committee illustrated.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is an argument that one often hears when a case is being put forward. People say, "If we do it for this group, we will have to do it for every other group." That does not necessarily follow. Given that the Inland Revenue is allowed to exercise discretion when considering individual cases or groups of workers, why should it not consider the cases of other groups of workers who might come forward? If they have a good enough case

the relief could be extended to them as well. If one concedes that a case is good when it is made well by one group of workers, it does not follow that a Pandora's box is opening up or that we are on a slippery slope.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman underestimates the political pressures that erupt when one creates a precedent. As I have already mentioned, before we have even given a concession to actors, journalists are being linked with them and piggy-backed on to the concession. It would be damaging to determine people's tax status, not by the terms and conditions of their engagement, but by the profession to which they belong. If we try to decide profession by profession whether people are self-employed or employed, we shall rapidly find that we are determining people's tax status by the political lobbying power of their profession, rather than for objective reasons. That would be a dangerous step to take.

Mr. Chris Smith: In general terms, the principle that the Financial Secretary has just adumbrated is entirely correct. However, taxation law and taxation administration single out a number of professions—North sea divers are an obvious case; postmasters and certain peripatetic doctors are others—whose nature makes them a special case. To a certain extent, the new clause renders actors a special case. So the Minister cannot argue against the existence of special cases. Obviously, we have to be careful about who is judged to be a special case, but it is appropriate to regard some professions as a special case.

Mr. Lilley: That intervention perfectly illustrates the point that I was trying to make. Only one profession is treated analogously with what some hon. Members are now seeking—definition by law as schedule D—and that is deep divers. That resulted from an anomalous change made in 1978 by the last Labour Government for somewhat obscure reasons, which seemed to have something to do with the strategic importance of the developing North sea oil industry at that time and with the considerable sympathy that the profession evoked because of the high mortality rate suffered by divers. It did not have anything to do with the cost of getting to the place of work, which was one of the issues that we discussed in Committee—even though North sea divers face considerable costs in getting to the sea bed. However, as that is now being used as an argument for actors, and as the actors' profession numbers about 40,000, once it is defined in law that they are entitled to schedule D treatment whether the nature of their engagement is self-employed or not, it will be a much greater precedent for others to demand similar treatment.

In Committee, I listed the different groups and professions that had approached me and the Treasury relatively recently to demand some sort of concessionary treatment on schedule D. It was a long list. They are already asking for such treatment and having to be fended off. Once 40,000 actors were allowed schedule D treatment by law, year by year we would have to add to the list and before long we would find that anyone who wanted to be on schedule D and could get powerful support in the House would do so. That would erode the tax base considerably and tax rates would have to go up to compensate and we should all be back where we started. That is not a path that I can advise the House to take, any more than I advised the Committee to take it.

The Committee largely accepted that we should try to seek a concession which could be extraneously ring-fenced and which would benefit actors, as it affects a considerable proportion of their income. There was agreement that agents' fees are the largest single item that most actors have to pay as a cost, and that they would welcome some tax relief on such fees. Although the clause does not achieve the perfect state that many hon. Members would like, it was right to go that far and no further. Therefore, I commend the clause to the House.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central mentioned the stance of my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) rightly illustrated that taxation and the arts are essentially different responsibilities. He is participating in this debate and made a notable contribution in Committee because of his knowledge and expertise in the arts, happily reinforced by family involvement in the arts and a professional knowledge of taxation.

Mr. Fisher: A beautiful baby.

Mr. Lilley: So he told us. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend, in discussion with the Government, as everyone would expect, made the position of artists and the views of entertainers and others involved in the profession known to me. He explained their circumstances to me and therefore fulfilled his responsibilities to the arts, in the excellent way in which he always fulfils them, while ultimately leaving the decision about taxation to me and to Treasury Ministers, once we were fully informed of the needs and circumstances of those in the entertainment profession. It is utterly wrong to criticise my right hon. Friend in the way that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central did.

I commend the new clause to the House and I hope that the amendments will be deemed unnecessary by the Opposition.

Mr. Chris Smith *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Smith: I simply wish to pick up the last point that the right hon. Gentleman made. We entirely accept the assurances that he has given us on amendments (a) and (b), but we remain a little concerned about amendment (c)—the definition of theatrical artists. However, we accept the Government's assurances that they have acted in good faith. We will wish to study carefully the way in which the Inland Revenue interprets the clause.

Mr. Fisher: May I take the opportunity to respond to the Minister and to the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley)? I entirely accept that the Minister for the Arts made positive and full representations to the Financial Secretary—as he then was—as the House would expect. I also accept the point made by the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes that no hon. Member would expect the Minister to speak against Government policy—that would be one Minister speaking against another. I was trying to make a wider point. While not contradicting the point that the Secretary of State was making about tax, I believe that the Minister for the Arts could have made a positive statement at some stage about the poor treatment

[Mr. Fisher]

of actors and the substantial case for their protection. That would not have gone against the Treasury's position, or breached ministerial guidelines. I accept the points that the Secretary of State made about representations, although I believe that the Minister for the Arts could have found some time to make a general statement in support of the acting profession.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend has made an extremely apt and helpful intervention.

I shall not seek, on behalf of the Opposition, to press our amendments to the vote. We wish new clause 7 all speed on to the statute book. However, we remain a little sad that the Government did not take the opportunity to go further, and to give a better deal to members of the acting profession.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 1

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

'1. Not later than 14 days after the date on which any Finance Bill is read for the first time in the House of Commons, the Chancellor of the Exchequer shall lay an Environmental Assessment before the House of Commons stating the anticipated environmental effects (if any) of each clause of the Bill.

2. For the purpose of this section the anticipated environmental effects of a provision shall be taken to include its anticipated effects on

(a) land use in the United Kingdom.

(b) the levels of pollution of the atmosphere, any body of water, or land, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, as a result of agricultural or industrial activity

(c) the rate of usage of natural resources (whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere),

(d) the rate and types of energy production and use in the United Kingdom,

(e) encouraging the use of renewable sources of energy or raw materials in the United Kingdom, or

(f) human and animal health (whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere)

as well as such other matters as the Chancellor considers to be relevant.

3. This section shall have effect in relation to any Finance Bill read for the first time on or after 1st January 1991.'.—*[Mr. Chris Smith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Chris Smith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider new clause 4: *Catalytic converters*—

'1. After paragraph 5 of Schedule 6 to the Taxes Act 1988 there shall be added the following new paragraph:

"*Cars with catalytic converters*

6.—(1) Where a car is made available to an employee for part only of the relevant year, the cash equivalent derived from Table A, B or C after any reduction or increase provided for by paragraphs (2) to (5) above shall be reduced by 10 per cent if the car has been fitted throughout that part of the year with an exhaust emission reduction device, or by 5 per cent if the car has been fitted with such a device for more than one half of, but not for the whole of, that part of the year.

(2) Where a car is made available to an employee for the whole of the relevant year, the cash equivalent arrived at above (that is to say, after any reduction or increase provided for by paragraphs (2) to (5) above) shall be reduced by 10 per cent if the car was fitted with an exhaust emission reduction device at the end of that year and for the greater part of that year, or by 5 per cent if the car was fitted with such a device at the end to that year but not for the greater part of that year.

(3) For the purposes of this schedule an "exhaust emission device" means

(i) a catalytic converter or

(ii) any other device of a similar nature which the Treasury may from time to time prescribe".

2. This section shall have effect for the year of assessment 1990-91 and later years of assessment.'.

5.30 pm

Mr. Smith: New clause 1 seeks to place a duty on the Chancellor of the Exchequer each year when publishing the Finance Bill to publish also an environmental assessment of the impact that its provisions will have on our environment.

We hear much these days about how green the present Government seek to appear. The Prime Minister has now made five major speeches on environmental issues. Much to the astonishment of the environmental world, she has been awarded a good conduct prize for her actions in relation to the environment. However, when we look at what the Government actually do rather than what they say, we see that their record on the environment does not, I fear, bear much examination.

The contrast with what is happening elsewhere in the world could hardly be greater. Many of the countries of the developed world are now realising the importance of environmental issues and the fact that, as a planet, we need to cope with the consequences of the industrial and economic policies that we pursue. That realisation is finding its expression not only in statements from Governments around the world, but also in their actions. At the end of June, when President Bush launched "Enterprise for the Americas", which is a new partnership for trade, investment and growth, he said:

"One measure of prosperity—and the most important long-term investment any nation can make—is environmental well-being. As part of our Enterprise for the Americas Initiative, we will take action to strengthen environmental policies in the hemisphere."

He then laid out a detailed agenda for action on, for example, debt for nature swaps for the countries of Latin America. We pressed that issue on the Government in Committee. President Bush also referred to a whole range of trading issues and to the impact that trading patterns can have on the environment of the developing world.

If we consider environmental taxation policy and what is happening elsewhere in Europe, we discover that, in Italy in 1989, a special tax was imposed on non-biodegradable plastic bags, which was to be paid by manufacturers and importers. At 100 lira per bag, the tax is five times more than the cost of manufacturing the receptacle. In Norway, a charge has been imposed on non-returnable beverage and food containers since 1987. In Sweden, there is a high charge on batteries containing mercury or cadmium, amounting to 3·22 ecu per kilogramme of batteries sold. In Germany and the Netherlands, cars are divided into three categories, according to their air pollution characteristics. The cleaner the car, the higher the tax advantage for the car purchaser.

Many other examples could be given. It is clear that Governments elsewhere—Governments everywhere—and of all political complexions, are waking up to the need to

ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account in their economic policies, and especially their taxation policies.

Here in Britain, before the Chancellor's Budget, the Labour party proposed a series of proposals for green taxes which the Chancellor could have adopted as part of this year's Budget. We were told in advance that it was likely to be a Budget for savings and, to a limited extent —in fact, it was to a very limited extent—a Budget for the environment. Well, it was not. The Chancellor announced only two minor measures to benefit the environment. The first was a minor adjustment to the differential between leaded and unleaded petrol, making a further difference of less than 1p. The second item was a small increase in the tax to be paid for having the benefit of a company car. Subsequently, it must be admitted that in Committee the Government came forward with a further measure on mileage allowances.

However, there have been no other proposals, in the Budget, in the Finance Bill, or in the 30 or 40 pages that the Government added to the Finance Bill in Committee, which could be said to have any environmentally beneficial effect in terms of adjustments to the taxation system.

In contrast, the proposals put forward by the Opposition before the Budget would have provided a ready agenda that would have enabled the Government to take positive steps in the right direction. We proposed, for example, that we should consider reducing or even altogether removing VAT on particularly environmentally friendly products or processes, such as recycled materials or energy-efficient appliances.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does my hon. Friend agree that another advantage of that approach to securing higher environmental standards is that producers are given a choice? A producer can decide to produce a product that he can produce more cheaply, but on which he pays a higher level of tax, or he can produce another product on which he might pay a lower level of tax. Does my hon. Friend agree that that approach will, through taxation, build into the mind of every industrialist the consideration that, if he wishes to reduce his tax liability, he must ever be seeking new technological processes that secure higher environmental standards?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Using the taxation system to promote good environmental behaviour offers not only the producer but the consumer a choice. That means that producers will be encouraged —there will be an incentive—to look for alternative products that are less damaging to the environment.

As well as some carrots in terms of reductions in VAT, we also proposed some sticks with increases in VAT on, for example, items of non-biodegradable or non-recyclable packaging or on products with an excessive or unnecessary amount of packaging. We also proposed to increase VAT on CFCs, although, of course, we should like CFCs rapidly to be prohibited altogether. We proposed a review of corporation tax allowances, with additional allowances for anti-pollution or conservation investment, together with a provision to make non-allowable expenditure on items that create pollution. Therefore, if a company used or created pollutants such as CFCs, it would not be able to offset their costs against corporation tax.

We suggested that, instead of levying vehicle excise duty at a flat rate regardless of engine capacity, it should be graded so that owners of small cars would pay less duty and owners of larger cars would incur more duty than at present. We proposed also a substantial additional difference between the price of leaded and unleaded petrol. The tax incentive to use unleaded since 1988 has been a success story, because its use has increased from single percentage figures to more than 30 per cent. of all petrol sold in this country. As my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said, that clearly shows that using the tax system to alter environmental behaviour can be most successful. However, its effect on unleaded petrol usage appears to have reached a plateau, so we suggested a further boost to try to ensure that the graph continues to climb.

We suggested also incentives for the fitting of catalytic converters, including zero rating for the purposes of VAT and a concession on the level of car tax where a converter is fitted to a new car. New clause 4, which is linked with new clause 1 for the purposes of this debate, advances a further measure to encourage the use of catalytic converters, in the form of an incentive to the users of company cars to persuade their employers to ensure that their cars are fitted with catalytic converters, by setting the tax levied on the user at a lower level.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I recently asked the Secretary of State for Transport when it will be compulsory to fit catalytic converters to new cars. I am advised that, because of EEC legislation, the Government do not intend to make the fitting of converters compulsory until 1993. Would it not be in everyone's interest for the Government to speed up the legislation and to make the fitting of converters compulsory, rather than leave that to market forces?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend rightly identifies the problem of the three-year time scale before the fitting of catalytic converters is made mandatory. Converters are extremely helpful in removing or reducing exhaust emissions of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and hydrocarbons. They do not tackle the carbon dioxide problem, but are valuable in a number of other respects. The tax incentives proposed in new clause 4 will ensure much more widespread fitting of catalytic converters over the next two or three years—even before the mandatory provision comes into effect.

5.45 pm

We also proposed before the Budget a series of measures relating to company car taxation, to encourage the Government to raise the scale rates at which benefit is assessed, in line with the principles set by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer in his 1988 Budget, when he pointed out that taxation on the benefit of a company car was substantially less than the value of the benefit received. In both his 1988 and 1989 Budgets, the former Chancellor began the process of raising that rate, but the progress that he made has not been advanced to the degree that it should by the present Chancellor in this year's Budget and Finance Bill.

Those specific proposals for improvements to the tax system would have shifted environmental behaviour in a responsible direction, but none of them was taken to heart by the Chancellor or the Government. New clause 1 seeks to highlight the paucity of the Government's action in relation to the environment in this year's Finance Bill. It

suggests that, when the Government decide upon taxation changes each year, they ought to report to the House what will be the environmental impact of those changes.

That duty would exist whether or not the Government actually did anything in environmental terms, and it would provide a powerful incentive for the Chancellor to sit down and think carefully when drawing up his Budget —in respect of not only the fiscal stance that he intended to take or the amount that he wanted to raise, but the environmental consequences of his actions. The requirement placed on him to think through the environmental issues would be a powerful tool in the hands of those of us who are concerned about our environment.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Confederation of British Industry has produced a helpful information booklet for its members on how to conduct environmental audits, not only for the purposes of company accounts but for presenting information about company activities more usefully and constructively? Is that not a good example of the leadership that should come from the Government rather than from the CBI?

Mr. Smith: I am always delighted to hear that leadership is coming from the CBI. Not only in respect of the environment but in relation to interest rates, levels of investment and other issues, the CBI is increasingly demonstrating the kind of leadership that the Government are lacking. We suggest that the Government should be required to undertake an environmental audit each year in relation to their Budget and Finance Bill proposals.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Can the hon. Gentleman say who would advise the Chancellor of the Exchequer each year on the technical aspects of any environmental assessment in respect of any individual clause in the Finance Bill?

Mr. Smith: I do not see any problem in the Chancellor, together with his advisers, sitting down to make a presentation of a sensibly argued case about the likely environmental consequences of particular measures. Doubtless he would also call upon the assistance of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and his advisers. In order to be helpful in this matter, we have set out in the new clause a series of items that could be looked at each year by the Chancellor in relation to particular items of taxation.

At present, each year the Chancellor presents us with a Red Book in which he must set out the financial consequences of each of the measures he proposes and their cost. Why is it such an outrageous idea that the Chancellor should present us with a green book as well that sets out the consequences for our planet of his proposals?

It is too often forgotten by politicians that the environment does not simply refer to specially labelled separate issues that stand apart from the so-called main stream of politics. The environment and environmental concerns should run through all Government policy and everything that the Government are about. Nowhere is that more true than in relation to the economy and taxation. The interaction between the economy and the environment will grow rather than diminish in importance. We believe that our new clause offers a way in which to highlight those issues to ensure that that interaction is properly scrutinised.

Taxation measures that change environmental behaviour through financial incentive are no substitute for the range of statutory and administrative measures that are also needed to protect our environment. Ultimately, it is regulation on polluting activity, integrated transport policies and energy conservation measures that will secure improvements in our environment in which we can all share.

However, taxation has its part to play as it can help to make a start to change behaviour. That is why we made a series of proposals before the Budget. That is why we urge on the Government a proper mix of financial incentives and regulation in relation to the environment. That is why we urge the Government to act in an environmentally responsible manner—they should settle their taxation policies so that people also act in that manner. Our new clause goes a considerable way to start that process, and it will ensure that, in future, the Chancellor will take more notice of the environment than, sadly, he has this year.

Mr. Gow: I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and I understand and respect the motives that prompted him to table his new clause. Certainly the six signatories to the new clause are among the most agreeable Members of the House. It is possible, however, even for agreeable people to be mistaken. I do not know which among that sextet will claim to be the draftsman of the new clause, because the drafting is strange indeed.

Subsection 2(b) refers to "any body of water", which is a breathtaking description of the water around us. Who could have dreamt up such a phrase? There are six paragraphs to that subsection, four apply to the United Kingdom only and two apply worldwide. Who was the environmental genius who managed to distinguish between those paragraphs that apply to all mankind and those that should apply to the United Kingdom only?

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury proposed some further discriminatory taxation designed to protect the environment, but I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is able to assure the House that all his proposals are such that they would not require the consent of folk in Brussels who were described in such picturesque and in some ways extremely attractive language by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley)? I fear that my right hon. Friend's Budget proposals are now constrained more and more by the need to obtain permission from unelected and unaccountable Commissioners in Brussels. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman if he can give us an assurance that none of his proposals requires the consent of the folk in Brussels.

Mr. Chris Smith: Of course a number of the VAT proposals require consent across the European Community—not necessarily the consent of the bureaucrats in Brussels, but the consent of the member state Governments. However, the action on catalytic converters could be taken tomorrow, as I understand that agreement already exists on that. One or two of the VAT items would require the consent of the other member states, but some of the other EC countries have already taken steps in that direction.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman confirms my worst fears: increasingly the taxation proposals that affect the British people require the consent and approval not only of Parliament, but of unelected, unaccountable folk in Brussels.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), formerly Parliamentary Private Secretary to the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, asked who would fashion the environmental assessment, given that that assessment must be presented to the House by the Chancellor. Mercifully, my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, himself an expert in all matters environmental, is to reply to this debate.

Let us go through the Treasury Ministers to find to which of them will be assigned the task of preparing the environmental assessment. Let us first consider my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We cannot heap further burdens upon him because he will be too busy in the coming weeks and months having discussions with German Ministers who have studied with close interest the article in *The Spectator*.

We then come to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. We are told that in the coming weeks he will be engaged in the important matter—certainly I hope that he will be so engaged—of trying to restrain some of my right hon., and even hon., Friends, presently Ministers in the Administration, from spending more money than they should. Happily I note that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has hastened into the Chamber for this debate. He takes a keen interest in environmental matters and he alone of all Ministers will be assisting my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary. He will do his duty by seeking to diminish spending while some of my other right hon. Friends will be seeking to increase it. We cannot heap an extra burden upon my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, especially in the coming important months before the spending plans for 1991-92 are fashioned.

We have excluded the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary. Who is the next on the list? My right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General who, it may be said, as an hereditary earl, is well qualified to prepare the economic assessment. But he also has other duties. He has to try to placate noble Lords in another place——

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Not on the Finance Bill.

Mr. Gow: No, not on the Finance Bill. The hon. Gentleman, to whom I shall give way, does not seem to have read his own new clause, which provides that the Chancellor shall lay before the House, no later than 14 days after the Finance Bill has been laid before the House, the environmental assessment—that is a proposal in the new clause. The question my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington asked the House and I am trying to answer is, who will prepare the assessment. My hon. Friend did not answer that question, nor did the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, and so it falls upon me to try to answer it.

6 pm

The list has now come down to my right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General. We have not always had a Member of another place as a Treasury Minister. The first Treasury Minister in another place, under the premiership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, was my noble Friend Lord Cockfield, who went on to Brussels. He is one of the folk of whom I am speaking. Perhaps he could be called back from retirement to assist with the preparation of the environmental assessment. Lord Cockfield was sent to Brussels to challenge the Commission, but when he got there he facilitated the Commission's task in seeking to impose its will on the 12 member states of the Community. To whom do we come next?

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Perhaps Lord Cockfield changed his line from one of attack to facilitation because he was persuaded by the merit of the argument.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman's own party would be happy to submerge this kingdom into a federal Europe. That view is not shared by Conservative Members.

Mr. Hughes: We know that.

Mr. Gow: Yes—that is why I shall not give way again to the solitary representative of the Liberal party. That party once represented Eastbourne, but once only, and we shall not give way to the Liberal party again.

I am pleased to welcome to our proceedings my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), who is an expert in these as in other matters, and to whom I shall give way presently.

I was just coming to the fourth of the Treasury Ministers—who is he? He is my right hon. Friend the former Financial Secretary. My hon. Friends have been falling over one another in paying tribute to my—is he now my right hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]* There is disagreement among Treasury Ministers about whether he is right hon. or honourable. My hon. Friends have been falling over themselves in congratulating my right hon. Friend, the former Financial Secretary, on his appointment as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I do not join them. I deplore the appointment of my right hon. Friend as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The House will not misunderstand me when I say that I deplore it because I deplore the departure of my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury. I give good wishes to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and congratulate him, but I deplore his arrival for that reason, and that reason only.

Can my right hon. Friend the former Financial Secretary be engaged in the environmental assessment? How can he when he is about to go off to the Department of Trade and Industry which, according to some people, is one of the greatest pollutants of the environment?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I help the hon. Gentleman and put it to him that all the work will have been done before the Budget statement has been made, so he does not have to worry himself about such matters? The Chancellor will have the statement in his pocket when he stands at the Dispatch Box because it will have been produced as part of an assessment made prior to the introduction of measures in the Budget. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Gow: I have just been told by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), who normally sits on the Front Bench, that he wants a vote to be called and so I have been invited to shorten my remarks——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Or perhaps make them more pertinent to the new clause.

Mr. Gow: Even if I am not willing to accept the rebuke from my hon. Friend the Lord Commissioner, I shall, of course, accept the rebuke from you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I have been going through the Treasury team, and one Minister remains—the Economic Secretary, who is today, as usual, wearing a green tie and who is to reply to this debate.

The new clause is unnecessary. The Treasury, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, already takes proper account of all the relevant environmental matters. I have no wish to heap further burdens on Ministers, particularly Treasury Ministers. Therefore, when my hon. Friend replies, I hope that he will say that an environmental assessment is surplus to requirement.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The new clause is one of the most important new clauses that we are debating this evening because, while the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) spent much of his speech humouring the House, he was, in effect, referring to what I perceive to be very much Labour's policy as it will be at the next general election. Built into the new clause is a proposition that is electorally saleable, certainly administratively practical and environmentally popular. It is the way to go in future, and I suspect that the hon. Member for Eastbourne, if he were more candid with the House this evening, would have found much in the amendment with which he could agree.

I shall deal with one part of the new clause and produce an example of how, if such matters were not considered when tax policy was framed, things could simply go wrong, damage could be done to the environment, and local authorities could spend lots of money repairing damage and preventing potential damage to the environment. If new clauses such as this already formed part of the existing law, one case would never have arisen —the sale of the Westminster cemeteries in London.

My example is relevant to the new clause because three of Westminster city council's municipal cemeteries were sold, two of which had been owned by the council for more than 100 years. Graveyards at Hanwell in west London and Finchley and Mill Hill in north London were sold for 15p, together with millions of pounds worth of land and buildings. The relatives of those buried in the cemeteries were not informed.

The sale of the cemeteries involved two factors. First, the land involved was raped in that it was not properly maintained. Historically the area had been well kept, well maintained and, I understand, well walked by people in the immediate vicinity. Those pathways and walkways were destroyed because of the nature of tax law in Britain.

Tonight I shall show how those issues interact and how in the absence of a proper tax framework—I shall explain how the law did not cover those matters in the way in which they would be covered by new clause 1—those who wished to pillage land and to speculate were able to destroy a beautiful area of London which had been immensely popular for a century.

I shall refer to how clauses 65, 66 and 67, on dual resident companies, and clauses 89 and 90, on income and corporation tax returns, would interact with positive tax legislation in the event that an environmental assessment were made of the Chancellor's proposals for tax legislation. I shall demonstrate how the Government lack the will and the way to tackle the problem, thereby giving rise to new clause 1, by reference to the sale of the cemeteries in Westminster.

It was a callous act. Lady Porter, the leader of Westminster city council, sold the graveyards for 15p. In some cultures, people fight to defend the graves of their ancestors and the immediate environment that surrounds those graves. In this case, some beautiful cemeteries were desecrated as a result of tax law and the absence of any provision such as new clause 1. Lady Porter was happy to sell off hundreds of graves—I am told perhaps thousands —for less than the price of a pint of beer. Those 90 acres of land used to be looked after with respect; they were a fitting memorial and a place for contemplation. Now they are a wilderness because of tax law. The grass and briars grow waist high and the graves that once were tended with care are now choked with thorns and abused by vandals. The hon. Member for Eastbourne nods in agreement; I am sure that he feels as strongly as I do about this matter.

It is environmental blight on an immense scale. The land, the graves and the memory of the dead are now no more than another counter in a commercial game of poker between the cynical policies of Westminster city council and the financial interests of the owners of the cemeteries. The mischievous, wealthy landowners who have profited by buying and selling graves have used misrepresentation to achieve those profits and offshore, foreign resident companies to preserve their anonymity and to avoid paying tax. Had new clause 1 been on the statute book, the framing of law governing investments overseas would have provided sufficient protection to ensure that the transactions in respect of Westminster city council's cemetery privatisations would never have occurred.

Despite a so-called in-depth investigation by the district auditor, and despite the supposed investigations of the police fraud squad, the dealers who have blighted the land and insulted our memories continue to live anonymous, well-heeled lives in big houses in St. John's Wood or the Thames valley. They are able to do so because they carry out their transactions through shadow companies based in the Channel islands, Cyprus, Panama or Liberia.

6.15 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is a sufficiently clever parliamentarian to relate what he has to say to the clause. I have listened to him very carefully, but he has strayed some way from it. I should be obliged if he would relate his remarks to the new clause, and then he would remain in order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I understand your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am sure that you realise that I considered these matters before I came into the Chamber today.

One section of the new clause deals with land use in the United Kingdom, and I am referring to land use to show that unless environmental impact assessments are carried out on tax law relating to land use in the United Kingdom, inevitably stories such as that relating to Westminster cemeteries will recur. By relating that story, I am illustrating where the tax changes should take place in compliance with new clause 1.

The district auditor and the police are unable and unwilling to discover who those people are. They are even unable and unwilling to chase up the tax which should be paid on the multi-million pound gains made by those

wealthy malefactors. I shall reveal for the first time in public who are some of the people behind the dealings and how they have successfully blackmailed Westminster into dropping its policy——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have given the hon. Gentleman quite a lot of leeway, but he is rather taking advantage of the clause and of the present debate. He should relate more directly what he has to say to the clause. I understand his great concern, but I hope that he will now speak to the clause before us.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am speaking specifically to the queston of land use in the United Kingdom and the need for an environmental impact assessment to be made by the Chancellor when devising tax policy that affects land use in the United Kingdom. The only way in which I can argue the need for that is by producing an example of where the law has been deficient and showing its consequences. That is what Parliament is about. One cannot simply set one's proposition; one has to explain the basis on which one wishes to argue a case for reframing the law. I should have thought that I was in order, but I bow to your judgment, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gow: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. He may know that Westminster city council now accepts, and leading counsel has advised, that the sale of the cemeteries by the city council was unlawful. In my judgment, the consequence of that is that in law the cemeteries are still owned by the city council.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I should like to think that that is the case, but I understand that that is not accepted by the developers and that Westminster city council is already negotiating a compromise which may well be at a substantial cost after all the environmental damage that has taken place.

In my view, local authorities should not be able to act in that way. If a provision such as new clause 1 already existed in legislation and there had been an environmental impact assessment of any tax policy changes that the Government were introducing, we should not be in the position that we are in today.

I ask the Government to take appropriate executive and legislative action to ensure that those people are made to answer for their actions. New clause 1 would prevent the activities of such people in future in so far as they blighted our environment. The graveyards which, as I have said, were beautiful, and which have been the subject of an environmental disaster, were sold on 30 April to a Mr. Clive Lewis, of Lewis and Tucker, in Hanover square.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have listened with great interest to the hon. Gentleman, but I find it difficult to identify the exact relationship between the problems with the graveyards of Westminster council and the new clause. Surely, according to the amendment, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is obliged to bring before the House the environmental implications of the Budget. The graveyards affair related to a local authority. It has no bearing on the environmental considerations of a Budget.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I advise the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that to give an example is perfectly in order, but to pursue the example as he does in such detail is an abuse because it shifts the purpose of the debate to a different subject. It is perfectly legitimate for the hon. Gentleman to give an example, as it is for any hon. Member, but he is pursuing that example to such an extent that he is shifting the subject of the debate from the new clause.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am tired of Conservative Members raising spurious points of order to prevent the truth from coming out every time that I come into the Chamber to say something that is controversial and causes concern among the general public and to set out the truth. The facts are simple.

Mr. Roger King: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I protest at that.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman wants me to be thrown out because I wish to explain matters——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. King: I do not accept that allegation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us keep it cool. The temperature is very hot outside, but let us keep it cool in here.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The truth is coming out.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have explained to the hon. Gentleman that it is perfectly legitimate to give examples, but he should not pursue them to such an extent that he shifts the subject of the debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I understand that, but I find it hard to accept that I am shifting the debate. The words "land use in the United Kingdom"
are on the amendment paper. The new clause is about building into Budget calculations an environmental impact assessment and about the need to report 14 days later to Parliament on what is in the assessment. It refers specifically to land use.

In my 10 years in Parliament, perhaps on less controversial issues, I have heard hon. Members speak many times at great length, setting out by way of example the reason why they adopt a cause.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman to do that. He has set out his example. It is perfectly legitimate to do that. I ask him not to shift the subject of the debate, that is all.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I use every debate, as any hon. Member does, to make my case. My argument is based on what happens in a particular case. If it had not been for interventions from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), I should have been well on in my case. As it is, I am still arguing defensively that I have a case and a right to raise it here in the House. If Parliament wants to shut out the truth, so be it, but the truth will come out.

The graveyards were sold on 30 April to Mr. Clive Lewis, of Lewis and Tucker, in Hanover square. His home is at 33 Carlton Hill, St. John's Wood. At this point I should say that there is another Clive Lewis, who runs a surveying company called Clive Lewis Associates. He is entirely unconnected with these events.

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

With the beautiful lands of the graveyards came 12 acres of even more beautiful land—building land—three gatehouses, a flat, £10,000-a-year rental from a crematorium, a car park and a nursery plot, together with a cheque from the council for £70,000. Those items were subsequently split up and bought and sold for millions of pounds through companies in various different tax havens. Most of the land is now in the hands of a company called Wisland Investments, which is based in Switzerland and registered in Panama.

Mr. Forman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am an old friend and great admirer of the hon. Gentleman and I am very fond of him. He has his eccentric ways. Do you agree that his case is eminently an example of a matter which, if he wishes to go into it in great detail, he should raise on the Adjournment?

Mr. Allen: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not know whether you were present earlier when the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made an entertaining speech about four or five different Ministers and whether they would be capable of producing a report.

Mr. Chris Smith: He gave five examples, not one.

Mr. Allen: I bow to my hon. Friend. Entertaining as the hon. Gentleman's speech was, many of us felt that it was wholly irrelevant to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was speaking about people who have abused the tax system for gain. The relevance of that to the debate has been outlined. If there was an environmental impact assessment of tax proposals, such abuses could not arise. With the greatest respect to the Chair, the items that my hon. Friend has raised are absolutely and strictly in order and certainly——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is for the Chair to determine. I remind the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) that the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) was also called to order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Most of the land is now in the hands of a company called Wisland Investments which is based in Switzerland and registered in Panama. The land is environmentally significant to London. It includes natural walkways and is on the edge of the green belt. The land is being environmentally damaged due to the absence of precisely the environmental impact assessment called for in the new clause.

In order to sound like a credible purchaser, Mr. Lewis initially misrepresented himself to the counsel of the agent of the Western Synagogue in west London. As Rabbi Rosen of the synagogue rightly said, and will confirm:

"No instruction was ever given to Mr. Lewis. Indeed, it would have been beyond the constitution of the Synagogue to have purchased the land."

Mr. Lewis insinuated his way into the counsel's confidence by taking in vain the name of the church where his father was an officer. Mr. Lewis was soon the only buyer, and when he declared his interest in the scheme Lady Porter was too pig-headed and her officers too frightened to stop the sale from going through. Right from the beginning, it seems that it was Mr. Lewis's intention to asset strip. New companies were set up to buy the different pieces of land. In particular, a company called Cemetery Assets was set up 13 days before the exchange of contracts to take over the graveyards. The graveyards cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to maintain, yet Cemetery Assets had capital of just a few pounds.

Much of the other valuable land went to a Cyprus company called Bestwood Property Limited. Again, that company took advantage of British law.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is taking great advantage of the Chair and the House. I ask him again to relate his comments directly to new clause 1. Otherwise, I shall have to invoke Standing Order No. 41, which requires me to stop any irrelevance that the hon. Gentleman utters. His comments during the past five or 10 minutes were irrelevant to new clause 1. I seriously ask him to relate his comments to the environmental assessment of land and not to do so with the detailed examples that he has used so far.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I understand that in Sweden, where one of the beneficial owners and principal investors in Wisland is part resident, the matters that I bring before the House are commonplace. The cemeteries are now in the hands of a Panamanian company, Wisland Investments. For years, the company has sought to conceal its true owners. I can now reveal that one of the investors in the company is a Swede by the name of Bertil Rosquist of Orchard Dene, Riverdale, Bourne End, in Hertfordshire.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I now ask the hon. Gentleman to discontinue his speech. It is totally irrelevant to the new clause.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have spoken in the House on many occasions in the past 10 years. It may be that you cannot see the connection, but I feel sure in my mind that there is patently a clear connection. It has been drawn to your attention by several of my hon. Friends. You may not be prepared to accept the connection, but there is one, and if, in this mother of Parliaments, we are to be prevented from arguing our case on the basis that Parliament never wishes to consider the real arguments that lay behind our decisions to amend legislation, it will be much the poorer. I can say only that, under pressure from Conservative Members, you have conceded, and I take strong exception——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I take great exception to what the hon. Gentleman has just said. I have been extremely tolerant since he started his speech. I understand the passion with which he speaks about this matter. He has never been stopped by me. I am sorry to have to stop him now, but I have given him ample warning about speaking directly to the new clause. I ask him to resume his seat.

6.30 pm

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I do not refuse to resume my seat, but, on a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, may we assume that, for the rest of this Finance Bill, the strictures as they have operated in relation to me tonight will operate for every other speech? If so, over the next two days some Labour Members should spend their time in the Chamber, and every time that, in our view, Conservative Members step out of line—that is what has happened

oday; representations were made about me—we should bject. If that is so, we shall find that the Finance Bill erminates tonight by—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. As long as I am in the Chair, hon. Members will speak directly to the clauses or mendments before us.

Mr. Ian Stewart (Hertfordshire, North): I very much egret the aspersions that have been made against you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) pointed out, in his usual vivid and graphic way, the bsurdity that would follow from the implementation of ew clause 1. I do not wish to add anything to what he aid, but I wish to pick up one point made by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), not luring his strange speech but in an intervention. He said hat all the measures in the Budget would have to be hecked for their environmental consequences before the Budget statement was made. Presumably, drafts of the Budget would have to be circulated around the globe and Governments of friendly, or perhaps less friendly, ountries would have to relay information on the nvironmental consequences of clause 120 long before the Chancellor announced to the House that it was to be ntroduced.

That point adequately emphasises the nonsensical mplications of the new clause. If the Opposition's purpose s to debate the usefulness of the tax system for dealing vith environmental matters, they have a point that is ommon ground among hon. Members. I compliment my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and his colleagues in he Treasury on the way that they have taken effective and ractical steps to achieve that.

By speaking in support of the Government, I should ot wish you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to think that I was making a bid for a vacancy at the Treasury and to return o where I spent much of the 1980s. Unfortunately, nfirmity prevents me from attempting to do so.

Over the past few years, it has been shown how the tax system can be used to encourage environmentally friendly measures and to discourage those that are environmentally damaging. I refer in particular to the differential between the price of lead-free and leaded petrol. Some people criticised that differential as inadequate, but it has meant that almost a third of all petrol consumed is lead free.

I very much approve of the way that the Government have increased tax on company cars and I should like to encourage them to continue to do so, because so far as I can see there is still a substantial gap between the real value of a company car to the recipient and the amount at which it is assessed for tax. That is partly because the value of a car to the recipient has risen rapidly in recent years and it has been difficult for the tax charge to keep up, despite increases in successive Finance Bills. A further reason is that the amount assessed for tax is not a gross but a net figure. If the recipient had to buy, service and maintain his motor car, he would have to receive a substantially higher salary because he would have to pay income tax at the basic rate or perhaps the higher rate. If the value of a company car to a basic rate taxpaper were deemed to be £3,000, he would have to be paid £4,000 so that he could pay 25 per cent. in basic rate tax to be left with £3,000 to spend on his car. A higher rate taxpayer would have to be paid £5,000 extra and, therefore, to pay £2,000 in tax before he had the necessary money left over.

I encourage Treasury Ministers to continue the difficult and probably not very popular process of increasing the taxation on company cars. I shall probably be lynched by half my constituents for saying that those allowances are unduly generous and have led to more motor cars, and larger motor cars, being bought than would have been the case if the tax system had been neutral on whether cars were provided privately or by employers.

I do not believe that the motor industry needs that incentive. Several of my constituents work for Vauxhall in Luton. The new Cavalier is an extremely effective motor car which has been taking some market share from imports. Much of the market in imported cars could be regained by domestic manufacturers, even if the number of motor cars sold did not increase as rapidly as it does because of the incentive provided under the generous company car taxation system.

I encourge my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury to go further and to reduce the company car allowances in years when they feel that it is right to reduce the basic rate of tax. This option is not open to the Labour party because it wants to increase taxation. It will not be in a position, as we have been in one or two years recently, to reduce the basic rate. Those reductions have made it possible to make a larger adjustment to tax concessions such as those for company cars. I hope that we shall again reduce the basic rate and make the position fairer between one taxpayer and another. As things stand, in effect those who do not have company cars bear a higher proportion of the overall tax burden, whereas those who are fortunate to have the cars receive an undoubted financial benefit, which needs further adjustment.

Hon. Members set a bad example by having a three-tier system for reimbursing mileage allowance. A few years ago, when the new system was introduced—I think in 1984—I found that my mileage allowance went down each month because I had a small car. Those who had large motor cars, which used far more petrol and caused more pollution, found that their mileage allowance was rising. They were rewarded for their greater consumption of fuel and greater contamination of the environment, while I was penalised for doing the same thing on a smaller scale—although I do not complain. I do not understand the anomaly whereby we provide those who have large cars with a mileage allowance more than twice the size of that given to the owners of small cars. In examining the environmental consequences of the motor car—which must figure largely in our thoughts when we are discussing the new clauses—we must realise that we are not setting a good example to the rest of the country. I hope that the time will come when we can change that.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I shall deal shortly with the important and specific question of cars and car taxation that was raised by the right hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart). I agree with some of his propositions.

I support, in general terms, the two propositions in the new clauses: that there should be an environmental assessment of proposals put by the Treasury regarding changes in taxation, and that the tax system should be used to give advantage to forms of motoring and technology that are environmentally acceptable.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

There is nothing new about the proposal that economic policy should be subject to environmental assessment; indeed, my first criticism of Labour's new clause is that Labour has come round to that view so belatedly. I remember taking part in a debate almost as soon as I became an hon. Member—my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) also participated—in which we discussed proposals from the Royal Commission on environmental pollution for an environmental audit and assessment. My colleagues and I have urged that policy mechanism on Government for many years. I would also go further than the Labour party does in its proposals, although I accept that in the new clause it is addressing itself to the specific inter-relationship of the environmental assessment and budgetary proposals in the Finance Bill.

One of the ideas that have been adopted in other countries is that of environmental assessments of all Government policy. Just as we receive legislation in the House that incorporates a Treasury indication of the economic implications as part of the financial memorandum, so we should have an environmental assessment of all legislation, which should be presented to hon. Members as advice before they assessed their reaction to each specific piece of legislation. That proposal could easily be implemented.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) asked a fairly rhetorical and somewhat whimsical set of questions about who should carry out the environmental assessment. If he really wants economic matters to be taken seriously by Government, he should address his mind to serious questions, and not to the somewhat irrelevant byways into which he went.

As part of the structure of Government, there should be a Ministry or office that has the same authority that the Treasury has now. At present, anything that requires implementation requires a Treasury imprimatur to ensure that it comes within the general acceptability of Government public expenditure plans. I do not dispute the propriety of that, but, if Britain is serious about environmental matters, all Government proposals should also go through a similar environmental audit. The only way to do that is to create a Department of environmental protection that has the same authority in government as the Treasury.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne asked who should do the environmental assessment. It would not be Treasury Ministers, as they have another principal function: they are there to be specifically expert in economic matters. However, they would be aware that no matters—even micro-economic matters—could be put through as Government proposals until they too had been vetted, costed and assessed in environmental terms. The hon. Gentleman is conservative in his view of what Government should do; he justifies it and relishes his conservatism, but I encourage him to be less conservative.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development now regularly recommends in its Social Trends an environmental assessment of economic proposals. Many other countries do an environmental assessment. As part of his annual address to Congress, the President of the United States uses indicators other than gross national product and gross domestic product. The ultimate governmental responsibility falls to the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister's office: it should also be able to assess—if we think that these matters are important—the environmental impact of anything we do.

If the Government are as serious in practice about environmental matters as they say they are in theory, I would hope that they would be considering the practicalities. We know that the Secretary of State for the Environment has employed an environmental adviser. The Government should be seriously considering including in their expected autumn White Paper the proposal that there should be a Department with the clout to assess the environmental implications of all matters of public policy. The same process should be continued in the Prime Minister's office. That would go much further than the Labour party's new clause, as it would cover all matters of public policy, not just the matters set out here. It would be a test of the Government's commitment to put the environment at the top of the agenda.

6.45 pm

I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) that it is impossible and illogical to regard environmental and economic matters as separate, as they are fundamentally intertwined. Government economic policy in this and every country will inevitably have an impact on the environmental agenda, on our environmental development and on environmental production and pollution. The levers of economics that we choose have a direct effect on the damage we do to or protection that we give our environment: the amount by which we tax resources, whether we tax carbon or whether we tax the use of vehicles—all those matters have a direct interrelationship, and we must recognise that.

One good development is that this debate has moved on from the debate in the 1980s, when many people thought that green politics and environmental issues were separate from other issues on the political agenda. There is now a ready awareness across the political divide, and among all who consider these matters, that environmental questions touch every area of public policy.

Mr. Cousins: I have been following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely, but I must express a sense of caution about the creation of an all-embracing Ministry, let alone one that is accompanied by a large central department in the Prime Minister's office. The stock of skills that the country has to enable us to carry out environmental assessments is, sadly, quite limited. We hope that, in the course of time, it will develop but it is limited now. Surely it would be entirely wrong to centralise and limit the impact of those environmental assessment skills by tying them all up in one great Department of State.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, and I shall deal with it, although it merits more debate than we have time for now.

A great deal of work has been done on other economic indicators of an environmental nature. The hon. Gentleman may know of some—for example, the other economic summit, and the work of such people as Paul Ekins. A great deal of work has been done on the theory of assessing, in economic terms, the impact of environmental matters.

At the moment in government, there is an illogicality: the Department of the Environment deals with far more than just environmental protection matters. It deals with local government, local government finance, housing and many other matters. My colleagues and I believe that it would be better to have an environmental protection Department that took the responsibility for environmental matters from the Departments where it currently lies. For example, the Foreign Office has some responsibility.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No—not until I have dealt with the matter raised by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins).

It would be better if all areas of Government dealing with environmental matters came under one Ministry. It is important also to have somebody in the Prime Minister's office or in the Cabinet office because, unless the Head of the Government is persuaded about the importance of a subject, those who try to promote it will not carry the necessary clout. The Treasury is currently at the top of the Government pyramid; if the Treasury says yes, a policy will be approved, and if it says no it will not. However, at the end of the day it is the Prime Minister who would give the green light to policies proposed by an environmental protection Ministry and that is why there must be somebody in the Prime Minister's office to encourage her and her successors and point to the merit of such things.

Mr. Martlew: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument. Is he suggesting that the Secretary of State for the Environment should present the Budget? That seems to be the obvious conclusion of the argument that the hon. Gentleman advances.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman has not clearly understood what I proposed. The Chancellor will continue to present the Budget but the Budget and all other Government proposals should come before the House only after they have been through an environmental audit which would be carried out by a department of environmental protection. That would be headed by a Secretary of State of Cabinet rank who would have cross-departmental responsibility in the same way as the Chancellor.

New clause 4 deals with vehicles. I agree with the general propositions advanced by the right hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart). For too long we have encouraged the use of large and high energy consuming vehicles and commensurately discouraged the use of small vehicles by giving a larger tax benefit to those who use gas guzzlers. That is not a sensible policy on taxation of our resources.

We have already given great advantages to people by giving them company cars and the tax benefits that flow from that. The company car should be given no advantage over the private car. In all our taxation policies we should seek to encourage the use of cars that are more environmentally acceptable, whether they are company cars or cars that are bought and serviced privately. The right hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North mentioned some of the ways in which the tax system can be adjusted to bring that about. It could be done by graduating vehicle excise licences, fuel could be taxed at different levels or tax credits could be given for adaptations such as catalytic converters. We should not encourage people or companies to use vehicles that are not environmentally acceptable.

The proposition advanced by the Opposition is limited and muddled. It may be advantageous to give tax benefits to those who fit catalytic converters, but why should it apply only to company cars? Should not we try to discourage the use of company cars rather than encourage it? If we gave a tax benefit only to those who have company cars we would encourage the extension of company fleets. The Economic Secretary to the Treasury nods in agreement. There is an inherent inconsistency in such a proposition.

I welcome the indications of a few months ago that the Government are starting to address such questions. I am sure that the Minister and his colleagues will have an input to the White Paper proposed by the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, I read rather worrying reports that the Treasury will veto some of the tax implications in the proposals. I hope that the Minister will agree that we must have a consistent policy that deals with all vehicles.

There are many ways in which the motor car can be made more environmentally acceptable and, above all, of course, we should help the environment by discouraging its use. While it is wise to encourage the fitting of catalytic converters, this proposal is a partial and muddled solution. It shows that the Opposition have a long way to go in thinking through the implications of their belated conversion to green issues and their linking to economic policy. Their conversion is apparently still no more than skin deep.

Mr. Forman: I shall be brief. The new clause raises important matters and is a legitimate device by which we can discuss green issues, and especially the interaction between environmental policy and economic policy. I commend the new clause for that.

For straightforward reasons, it is unnecessary to add to the Bill the requirements called for in the new clause. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has impeccable green credentials and carefully considers such matters when preparing his Budget. He has a reasonable record for introducing environmentally friendly measures. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) mentioned some of those, but only disparagingly. He talked about the tax differential between leaded and unleaded petrol, the tax scale on company cars and mileage allowances which were adjusted in Committee.

I would wager the hon. Gentleman that, by the end of this Parliament or some way into the next, when I hope that my right hon. Friend will still be Chancellor of the Exchequer, we shall see a wide range of environmental measures which will go a long way towards meeting the needs of that aspect of our policies. I am confident that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will continue to do what he judges to be prudent in this area of environmental and fiscal policy.

When one looks at the proposal on its merits—which is often a dangerous thing to do in the House—one finds an almost fatal flaw. I sought rather politely to raise that in an intervention on the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. It is not at all clear to me where the hon. Gentleman, if he were a Treasury Minister, would find the necessary competent advice of the type that he suggests. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) made it clear that we would be talking about

[Mr. Forman]

advice proffered before the Budget, and one must assume that such expert advice, which is often highly technical and in an area of scientific expertise that is not widely spread in Britain or throughout the world, would somehow be available either in Whitehall or in the Treasury.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman should be wary of referring to an environmental assessment document that might be produced prior to a Budget, because new clause 1 says:

"Not later than 14 days after the date on which any Finance Bill is read for the first time".

I am sorry to correct the hon. Gentleman, but he might find himself ruled out of order.

Mr. Forman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. In an earlier intervention, he said that advice would be available in advance of the Budget.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I got away with it.

Mr. Forman: We can agree that that advice would form the basis of the Budget statement.

My key point is that I do not think that there is a great fund of competent advice in the Treasury. The Treasury is renowned for its formidable advice to Ministers, but I do not think that the environment is one of its strongest areas. Perhaps the Minister will take that into account. I am not at all sure that the well-known and honoured tradition of Budget secrecy would be assisted by inviting people from the Department of the Environment or experts from the inspectorate of pollution or any such worthy body to become more fully involved in the process of Budget formulation in advance of the Finance Bill.

7 pm

Mr. Chris Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene. I have considerable respect for him. I hope that his rise through the ranks matches that of other former Parliamentary Private Secretaries to the Chancellor of the Exchequer . In this instance, however, I believe that he is making a bad point. If, for example, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is proposing in his Budget changes in taxation measures that apply to cars, he will consult the Department of Transport in preparing it. There are no leaks when those consultations take place. Why should not the same principle apply to the Department of the Environment?

Mr. Forman: The main sources of advice for the measures that the hon. Gentleman outlined in introducing the new clause would have to come from the scientific community, including Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. Many people within the scientific community are not covered by the Official Secrets Act 1911, and are not within Whitehall in the same way as officials of the Department of Transport, for example.

I do not wish to make heavy weather of the argument. I wish only to emphasise that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury is being rather sanguine about the prospects of achieving the quality and range that would be necessary to make sense of the new clause.

My objection to the new clause goes further than that. I am unconvinced in principle that it is necessarily wise to introduce what must be a large element of greater complexity into the taxation system. We are all familiar with the argument against additional complexity, even when it is introduced in furtherance of a good cause. Greater complexity introduces inefficiency and distortions, which have an effect on the behaviour of individuals in dealing with the tax system. Above all, it increases what are known as compliance costs, all of which tend to reduce the revenue raised from what it would have been in any given fiscal approach.

I understand the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. I think that it is interesting for the House to have a brief opportunity to discuss the interaction between environment and economic policy, and I think it is important for Conservative Members on another occasion to have the opportunity of hearing what the Opposition think about measures such as a carbon tax or the idea of——

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on what he has just said? Surely environment taxes would increase economic efficiency.

Mr. Forman: There is a case for saying that such taxes would lead to an increase in resources. Much depends on how the concept is understood and measured. It is a difficult concept fully to understand, because resource economics is still in its infancy, as I believe the hon. Gentleman would concede. The ideas that it embraces need much further thought before they are adopted and set out in a Finance Bill.

I think that the House would be assisted if it had the benefit of a thoughtful and expert speech from my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, and I am sure that we shall hear one when he replies to the debate. I am sure also that he will tell us that, although the Government are sympathetic to the environment and wish to make proper progress to protect it, they do not accept the new clause.

Mr. Martlew: I support new clause 1. It seems to be a sensible proposal. It would be desirable if the Chancellor of the Exchequer were obliged a fortnight after the Budget to explain to the House and the country its effect on the environmental problems of the nation. That obligation would concentrate the mind of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the environmental consequences of the Budget during his preparation of it. He appears now to have regard to political consequences first and then fiscal consequences. The environment lobby seems to have no input.

Last year's Budget led to no real increase in taxation on cigarettes or alcohol. Would the same policy have been adopted if the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been obliged to tell the House after making his Budget statement, "We decided not to increase the tax on cigarettes, and that will mean X million extra cigarettes smoked this year. That will result in Y deaths and will increase the costs of the national health service by £Z"?

Similarly, last year's Budget did not lead to a real increase in the taxation of beer, wines and spirits. The new clause would place an obligation on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to explain to the House that his policy would result in so many extra gallons of beer being drunk, along with so many more bottles of spirits, and that that additional consumption would lead to so many extra deaths through alcohol-related diseases as well as percentage increase in the crime rate. That would be the effect of the environmental audit. I doubt whether a

Chancellor of the Exchequer would wish to explain the consequences of concessions that were made only for political reasons.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury used to be the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. He will remember especially well the famous 1988 Budget of the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). The right hon. Gentleman is not in his place, and he will probably be absent for four days of the week because he has found himself another job. The House will remember that considerable pressures were placed on the then Chancellor of the Exchequer by many people and organisations because Terry Wogan, among others, was making a great deal of money by investing in tree planting and enjoying major tax concessions. The right hon. Member for Blaby decided that that must stop. He decided to bring the concession to an end there and then without warning anyone that that was to happen. There was no phasing out of the concession. The relevant clause in the Finance Bill of 1988 was generally accepted, but it was disastrous for the forestry industry. About 9 million saplings were destroyed in the year following the tax change. Tree planting has still not recovered.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the Labour party supported the decision of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) in the 1988 Budget?

Mr. Martlew: I have already said that it was generally accepted in the House that the decision was a good one. Hindsight tells us that the decision was wrong. If the hon. Gentleman reads the reports of the Select Committee on Agriculture, he will find that that is the Committee's view. If the environmental audit obligation had applied, the problems that followed the decision would have been brought to the attention of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer.

We are being told that we are facing great problems because of CO_2 emissions and global warming. Planting more trees makes a significant contribution to resolving the problem of global warming. The decision of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1988 had a disastrous effect on that aim. The right hon. Member for Blaby opted for the short-term political expedient and ignored long-term environmental consequences.

We must have an environmental audit. The Chancellor of the Exchequer must have the responsibility of telling us why he has taken certain decisions and the effect that they will have on the environment.

There is a need for a nitrogen fertiliser tax. It is accepted that putting nitrogen on the soil has many advantages. We grow more and better crops, but we now have a large surplus. A tax on nitrogen fertiliser would dissuade farmers from using nitrogen on the land and would encourage the water industry to remove nitrates from water, which render it unfit for human consumption. If we are living in a world in which the polluter pays, surely a tax on nitrogen fertiliser would be a good start.

The Government have made concessions over unleaded petrol. That is to be welcomed. However, they did not go far enough in the Budget. There has not, therefore, been any increase in the use of unleaded petrol. I note with dismay that the price differential between petrol and diesel has been reduced over the years. Provided that diesel engines are kept in good repair, diesel is preferable to leaded petrol.

I disagree to some extent with my Opposition Front-Bench colleagues about vehicle excise duty. The Labour party has proposed that larger engine sizes should attract an additional tax. I understand the logic of the proposal, but I believe that it would be far better to phase out vehicle excise duty—the car tax—and increase the price of petrol. I was told in Committee that the price of petrol would have to be increased by 40p a gallon. That is on the high side; it presupposes that everybody has a vehicle licence. I noticed in the House of Commons car park the other day a few vehicles that were not licensed. However, they had a lot of dust on them, so perhaps they had not been taken out of the car park for a year or two. That is very annoying, especially if one cannot find a parking space.

The Government have been dishonest in not increasing the cost of the car tax for the last four years. Do the Government intend to abolish the tax by keeping it at the same level when inflation is increasing dramatically? This year's car tax will be worth much less than last year's because inflation is at least 10 per cent. The Government appear to be carrying out that policy by stealth. If we really want to reduce energy consumption, we should abolish the car tax and increase the price of petrol. Then the polluter would pay. Those who run cars with big engines and who do a large mileage would pay much more, while those who use their cars for essential purposes only, not for business or leisure, would pay less.

I understand that Stockholm is considering introducing a system whereby regular car users coming in to the city will have to buy a season ticket for the public transport system and display it on their windscreens. That would result in those who have a season ticket for the public transport system using it. The money raised would be used to provide a better and cheaper public transport system. I believe that a similar policy would be popular in London.

The Finance Bill does nothing to encourage recycling. Tax concessions have been provided for refuse tips. That is the last thing we need; we ought to reduce dumping by encouraging recycling. Disposable bottles and cans that are not recycled should attract a tax penalty. The money raised ought to be handed to organisations that are prepared to go to the expense of recycling bottles and cans.

The Finance Bill is a wasted opportunity. The number of ways in which we can help to save the world is strictly limited. I hope that next year there will be a Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer who will put forward green policies. If, however, the election is delayed beyond next year, note will have been taken of the speeches tonight.

7.15 pm

Mr. Roger King: Nobody denies that there are fears about the environment. However, new clause 1 takes us no further along the way. It does not help us to tackle the fundamental challenges that we face.

Many years ago a new industry was created that has become almost self-perpetuating and impinges on all our lives. I refer to the race relations industry. Whenever anyone in Birmingham's local authority wants to do something, there is always a reference to the implications for race relations. In most cases there are no implications for race relations. Nevertheless, behind the inclusion of

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those words is the implication that several people have been involved in evaluating whether there are any race relations implications.

Embarking on environmental assessments would lead to a brand-new industry which would provide additional work for bureaucrats and administrators. They would have to examine every facet of our lives to establish the environmental impact. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) asked, in his cogent speech, which Department would have the job of evaluating environmental assessments. I go further than my hon. Friend. A department of environmental assessment would be required. Nothing else would suffice.

My fear is that as soon as that department had been established at national level, every council chamber in the land would have to take account of environmental assessment as a matter of law. That may or may not be good in some people's eyes, but I believe that it would do nothing to improve the local environment and local amenities and to provide the infrastructure that we need. Every suggestion would be shipwrecked because of environmental assessment. Therefore, it would not be a good step forward.

New clause 1 charges the Chancellor of the Exchequer with producing an assessment of the environmental effects, if any, of each clause of a Finance Bill. How on earth the Chancellor could do that with all the clauses in the Finance Bill, I do not know. I cannot see that there is any environmental assessment to be made of lodgings for officers in charge of a distillery, or of the power to assess, or of supplies to groups, domestic accommodation, goods shipped as stores, or pool betting duty. An army of bureaucrats would be required to establish that there was no environmental impact.

In previous years I was instrumental in tabling new clauses for inclusion in Finance Bills. I sought to provide financial encouragement for those who fitted catalytic converters to their cars. Rather than new clause 4, I should prefer a fiscal measure that applied to everybody who buys a car that is fitted with a catalytic converter. The new clause would provide financial encouragement only to fleet owners or their employees. That is wide of the mark. Fleet cars are bought every two or three years. To suggest that, beginning in April 1990, the legislation should be retrospective would create chaos. Cars that are allocated to employees are not necessarily the cars that remain in their use for the entire year.

The clause says that a 5 per cent. discount would be allowed on personal tax allowances if people used a car with a catalytic converter for part of the year. However, what happens about those who have access to a car pool and take whatever car is available? How could such a system be worked out? It is a recipe for confusion and cannot possibly work. It will not benefit the environment one iota.

New clause 1 cannot work, because it would be impossible to monitor and evaluate and would require an army of bureaucrats. New clause 4 cannot work because it would be grotesquely unfair and impossible to operate.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): With respect, I do not think that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) understands the process of environmental impact studies. A great deal of data already exists in data banks, computer programmes, analyses and reports. That has been collected over many years. If there are to be environmental impact assessments, that data will have to be evaluated and people may have to be employed to do that. However, that is a small price to pay for improving our environment and ensuring that our fiscal policies are linked to a sensible and sound environmental programme.

I remind the hon. Member for Northfield that the EEC has produced a directive under which major planning applications will be subject to environmental impact assessment studies. That will be European law. If other countries are aware of the importance of such studies, there is no reason why the concept cannot be extended to financial policy.

It is an important concept and I support it because we are talking about environmental impact assessments and not simply taxation policy. In some cases, even if people damaging the environment were forced to suffer a tax penalty, they would continue to operate in the same way and simply pay the penalty if it suited them. Environmental impact studies are a more sophisticated way of approaching the matter.

Mr. McCartney: Local authorities that currently carry out environmental impact assessment studies on, for example, opencast coal include within them the impact of the local economy in terms of new job opportunities and the loss of other job opportunities. Such investigations try to assess what the consequences will be for the local and regional environment and employment opportunities. Local industry and planners welcome such assessment studies.

Mr. Morley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, as it demonstrates yet again that in terms of being sensitive to the financial, social and economic needs of local communities, local authorities blaze the way. The Government seem to be inert in dealing with policies that would benefit local people.

Many hon. Members have mentioned the advantages of new clause 1 and I do not wish to repeat them. However, I stress that the environmental impact of financial policies will have a great bearing on industry and social life in Britain.

We have heard a great deal about company car taxation policies. I recognise that tax relief on company cars has benefited the car industry and motor dealers. However, it has been a poor use of public resources. If the tax relief were restructured according to engine size, as has been suggested, car dealers or manufacturers would not be disadvantaged as they would construct cars to meet those requirements.

It might be worth considering for the next Budget that if we accept that there is a case for tax concessions on company cars—that could be argued for those to whom the car is essential—we should give tax concessions to those who buy season tickets for public transport. If we encourage people to shift from private car use to public transport, it could lead to a tremendous environmental advantage and benefit our infrastructure. There is a strong case for providing a tax concession to those who buy season tickets, whether for the train or bus, because they are doing the environment a favour by travelling to work in that way. It is not unreasonable for them to deserve recognition for that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) mentioned the proposals in Sweden and I understand that similar proposals have been put forward in Paris whereby those who have the advantage of a city centre parking space will have to purchase a season ticket for that city's public transport system and display it on the windscreen as the price for that advantage. That is a reasonable suggestion. It should be extended to the House of Commons. There are cars in the car park gathering dust. Some people seem to be taking advantage of a first-class facility in the centre of London for storing their antique cars and aging Rolls-Royces. I see no reason why such people should not make a contribution to the public transport system by buying a season ticket.

The great advantage of the new clause has not been recognised. We have people such as Professor Pearce advising the Government and making some useful suggestions. I do not wish to criticise him, as he is on the right lines. However, it is not good enough to have a tax regime based on a cost penalty for those who are damaging the environment. As I have said, many producers would simply pay that penalty. For example, many of those who come to central London and enjoy the benefit of car parking space would cheerfully pay a road-pricing tax. They would pass it on to their company accounts and then to their customers. It would not do a great deal to stop cars coming to the centre of London. That is why we need something more sophisticated than a simple tax regime. We must have an environmental impact study of the benefits to the environment, the economy and our society.

I have not heard a good case against the new clause. Although there might be different ways of applying it, one cannot get away from the fact that today there are many pressures on the environment such as global warming, overcrowding on our roads and the collapse of our transport infrastructure. Much of that is related to Government policies, but that can be argued in other places at other times. We can use our economic policies, particularly taxation policy, to encourage certain parts of the economy such as the development of less waste in packaging. There is no reason why those who produce glass bottles and jars designed to be recycled should not have some tax concessions for doing so. It is better for the environment and, in the long term, the economy to encourage people to use recyclable glass containers rather than disposable ones which may have taken a great deal of energy to produce. Such issues can be addressed through a taxation regime.

It is not good enough to use taxation as a way of penalising the bad and rewarding the good. We must take account of the long-term environmental impact of what we want to achieve and the benefits that will result.

7.30 pm

Mr. Cousins The debate has been extremely depressing, and I do not intend to speak for long and depress myself further. Each of us recognises that there are certain problems which force their way on to the political agenda. We do not have a choice in that matter. Our choice is either willingly to accept these problems on our political agenda and find a framework to deal with them, or to confine them and keep them off that agenda, and deal with them later in less favourable circumstances, using cruder methods than we would have used if we had been willing to deal with them sooner.

Many problems do not appear on the balance sheet of society, although they impose long-term costs. The proposals in new clause 1 to put these matters on the public balance sheet must surely be in the long-term interests of everyone. It is foolish to deceive ourselves that we can continue using the world's capital stocks and resources as though they were not finite, given the horrendous costs that will result from the near-exhaustion of those stocks.

The framework within which we discuss these matters is absurd. We are either treated to a comic display of entertaining irrelevancies or plunged into a swamp in which people refer to administrative mumbo-jumbo as an excuse for not dealing with the problem. As I said in an intervention during the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I do not particularly welcome a scenario in which the stock of skills which can be deployed to assess the environmental impact is contained within civil service rules and within a Ministry. I should prefer independent agencies on which the Government, local authorities, companies and the public could draw. The last thing I would want is that stock of skills deployed in such a way that only the Government within the confines of civil service rules had access to it. It would be worth discussing that important matter, yet it has not been taken seriously in this debate.

Mr. Simon Hughes: My proposition did not anticipate that the Government would be the sole controller of that expertise. The academic world is vital, and we must retain independent agencies to give advice to everyone. I agree that there is a problem in terms of the number of people to go around, but it should never be proposed that only the Government should draw on that resource.

Mr. Cousins: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's point. If I may say so in the politest possible way, however, it puts a gloss on some of his remarks, when he placed far too great an emphasis on the creation of Ministries to secure his objective. No doubt he did that with the best of intentions, but he set up the Aunt Sally with which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) dealt. We must avoid such an idea.

In new clause 1, we are not talking about taxes to deal with environmental problems; we are asking the Government to consider these issues as part of their normal routine. It would be worth considering the effect on the environment of a variation in income tax. That would not just be an academic exercise. It might point to important conclusions about our taxation system. My hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) referred to the last glorious Budget of the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). If the tax concessions advocated in the right hon. Gentleman's Budgets had been studied in terms of their environmental impact, they might have been reconsidered, and the difficulties might have been perceived.

The Standing Committee on the Finance Bill dealt with the petroleum revenue tax system and taxation of waste disposal sites. Our debates were limited because we did not have the information to determine whether the most efficient, effective and cheapest methods were under discussion. We had no idea of the effect of our proposals on the cost structure of the relevant industries.

Many hon. Members in this debate and elsewhere have been willing to consider various proposals, for example,

[Mr. Cousins]

for carbon taxes, which is an interesting academic idea. I hope that, before we essay that development, there will be careful examination of the environmental and cost implications. By not considering such issues now, the Government are not providing themselves with the information, expertise, knowledge or understanding that would enable them to resist proposals which appear later in a much more crude and much less acceptable fashion. We cannot disregard the interaction between the taxation system and the cost structure of industry.

My fear after listening to the debate is that we shall manoeuvre ourselves so that we are encumbered by blunderbuss solutions which have unwarranted and unwanted effects on the cost structure of industry. That is why it is necessary for the Government to generate the necessary information now and start subjecting taxation and other proposals to scrutiny. The choice is not whether but when. It is important that, when we enter the era of environmental taxation, we do so against a background of acknowledged expertise, understanding and thoughtful consideration of all the secondary issues and that we do not land our industry with cost consequences that cannot be supported and are not in the interests of our people. The problems are not avoided by not confronting them now. Only by confronting them now and testing everything that we do against those considerations can that bad outcome be avoided.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I came into the Chamber for this debate only to hear some of the most utter drivel I have heard for a long time. My colleagues and I are very much aware that there should be environmental assessments of what we do as we move the country forward and develop the economy. There is no need for the clause. The Government are led by a Prime Minister who is driving forward the country's consciousness of green issues—I refer to the London conference on CFCs, to her awareness of the greenhouse effect and of carbon dioxide emissions.

I do not believe for one moment that any Minister does not consider the environmental impact of what he is doing. For that reason, the clause is totally irrelevant and unnecessary. I shall have a laugh at the Opposition's expense——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Hind: No, I shall not give way.

The clause provides that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is required,

"not later than 14 days after . . . any Finance Bill is read for the first time in the House",

to set down his environmental assessment. The Opposition are so short of ideas that the Treasury must provide them with environmental arguments against any new tax proposals that it brings forward.

Surely, as elected representatives of the country, we have the wit and the sense to be aware of what is happening to the environment and to be able to put forward arguments to deal with such issues. If we cannot, it is pretty pathetic.

New clause 4——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: No. We are up against time. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can make his own speech.

It is a splendid idea that we should all have cars fitted with catalytic converters, and I believe strongly in it, but why should it apply only to fleet cars and company cars? The clause is nonsense; if it is to have any sensible basis, it should include all cars. Hon. Members have to buy their own cars, as do thousands of people outside the House. Why should they be excluded from the tax concessions advocated here, which would give them the incentive to fit catalytic converters?

On the grounds that I have given, the new clauses are not worthy of merit, and I advise my hon. Friends to dismiss them.

Mr. McCartney: The contribution of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) proves that if one wants to participate in a debate it is best to listen to it and to know something about the subject. The hon. Gentleman is a member of the Government's Back-Bench effluent tendency. On occasions he tries to upset Opposition Members and pick an argument. We know the hon. Gentleman well. He comes here and argues against new clause 1 and against environmental assessments. He does not do that in his constituency when planning applications in Up Holland and elsewhere are involved—he jumps up and down screaming in my local newspaper about the need for environmental impact assessments on planning matters in his constituency. He says one thing here, in an effort to move from the Back to the Front Benches, and another in his constituency, because he hopes that he will remain here after the next election.

Mr. Hind: What is the hon. gentleman talking about?

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman knows Up Holland very well.

New clause 1 fundamentally affects the way in which future Governments will operate. We are dealing not merely with a new clause, but with the whole concept of government at national and local level, and with the impact on the environment of the relationship between the Government and industry. We are also dealing with the way in which local authorities have an impact on local communities and with their relationship to the development of industry and the provision of services in the public and the private sector.

Our attempts to discuss the issues tonight are about five years behind such attempts in Europe and the United States. Hon. Members on various Select Committees have been abroad to study these issues, and we have seen that environmental impact assessment studies are used more and more in the United States when water and electric utilities are being developed. European Governments are increasingly aware, irrespective of their political persuasion, of the need to provide environmental assessments for their policies. At local authority level, there has been an attempt, albeit imposed by the European Commission, to introduce environmental impact assessments.

As you now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Chairman of Ways and Means, there have been amendments to the private Bill procedure. In future, new private Bills will have to have an environmental impact assessment attached to them; without that they will not be able to proceed. Those are welcome extensions of the use of environmental impact assessment of policies at national and local level, but we must go further. That is why my

hon. Friends are pushing out the parameters of policy discussion on the environment in Britain by means of the new clause.

All hon. Members are sometimes faced with environmental issues that impinge on the local economy and on regional environmental considerations. The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) is involved with other hon. Members representing constituencies in Lancashire in the issue of long outfall discharges of sewage and attempts by Conservative and Labour county councillors to prevent such a policy being imposed locally because the effect that such discharges will have on the sea and the Lancashire coast is totally unacceptable.

Hon. Members from both parties in Lancashire and the Labour Lancashire local authorities have argued against such a policy, and have argued for an environmental impact assessment of the cost of introducing such a scheme as well as of the cost to the environment. The use of impact assessments forced the Government virtually to abandon the long fall discharge of sewage on the Lancashire coast. The policy was changed only because of such pressure. Until the assessments were carried out, the Government said that they would introduce the scheme because it was cheaper to treat sewage by dumping it at sea than to invest in inland sewage treatment plants.

7.45 pm

Mr. Mans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, despite an environmental impact assessment on the scheme that he mentioned, done by the local authority in Wyre, the long sea outfall is still likely to go ahead? Does he agree that merely having an environmental impact assessment had no effect upon that decision?

Mr. McCartney: Assessments do two things: first, they raise public awareness of the issues. Secondly, Ministers are ill-prepared or unprepared to take the right action when evidence is presented, and the new clause would prevent Ministers from not taking environmental impact assessments fully into account. Hon. Members' experience of such matters should persuade them to support the clause rather than to oppose it.

We cannot simply rely on taxation as a way of dealing with environmental assessments. It is fine for short-term issues, or to impose certain environmental changes on agriculture or industries such as chemicals. But, in the long term as well as introducing changes in taxation, we have to change attitudes of mind on the way in which we deal with environmental issues. Even when fines of £1 million or more have been imposed by the courts, oil companies in Britain are still not prepared to deal seriously with the issue of discharging oil into places such as the River Mersey. The imposition of huge fines in court is still not deterring some companies. We must therefore change the philosophy and attitude of industry towards the environment in terms of the production processes that affect the environment.

The new clause is simply a step along the road to changing attitudes in the Government, industry, the local authorities and the wider community. Without the change of attitude, taxation changes will work only in the short term and, in the long term, the processes that debilitate and destroy the planet will continue unabated. We must change our attitudes fundamentally. Therefore, I welcome the new clause as part of the argument to ensure that those changes take place in Britain—and throughout the world—before the planet is damaged irrevocably.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): At the outset of what I describe as a lively debate, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) claimed that the Government do not take account of the effects of our financial policies on the environment and that the new clause is necessary to oblige us to do so. As the hon. Gentleman knows full well, that claim is incorrect. When preparing the Finance Bill every year, we take full account of all relevant factors—environmental, financial, those relating to employment, and a range of others. It would be irresponsible not to do so.

The new clause would not result in the Treasury paying greater attention to the environmental effects of our policies because we already take full account of such effects during the pre-Budget consultations when we consider all the representations that are made to us by a range of outside bodies, including those representing the environmental lobbies.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister suggesting that the comments of his hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) were ill-founded when he assumed that Ministers would not be able to find the time to do all these things? Is the Minister saying that his hon. Friend was simply wrong?

Mr. Ryder: If we were to accept the new clause, we would necessarily have to provide an environmental assessment along the lines recommended by the Labour party. If those circumstances turned out to be the case, I cannot envisage a more suitable hon. Member to provide us with the environmental dimension of monetary policy than my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). He is so well-suited to considering all the environmental aspects of the Government's financial policy as to write a long thesis on the environmental dimensions of monetary policy and especially M0. I should not be surprised if, before the summer was out, my hon. Friend did not send me a clipping from his local paper, "The Eastbourne Trumpet," providing us with an article along those lines. I very much look forward to receiving a copy in the next few months.

I do not think that the new clause would lead to the House being better informed about the effects of the Finance Bill. It would be an unnecessary claim on the resources of the Government to be obliged to prepare a specific assessment of the environmental impact of each clause. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) was right to say that the new clause would lead to extra bureaucracy and would not cast any extra light on Budget changes.

As the House knows, notes on clauses are already produced and provide a summary of the purpose of Government clauses. They provide most of the technical information that the House requires. As hon. Members know, if they have a specific and detailed question about the impact of any clause—environmental or otherwise—they can ask a Minister to expand on the subject in Committee; they can write to a Minister; they can table a question; or they can bring a delegation to see a Minister.

In Committee we had some interesting and constructive debates about the environmental aspects of the Budget. Debates on the early clauses related to indirect taxes and

[Mr. Ryder]

when we discussed vehicle excise duty, for example, the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) made some valid points. I recall saying two or three months ago that his advice to previous Ministers, in his capacity as shadow economic spokesman, was taken into account when we framed the VED policy. The same applies to any other hon. Member who wishes to take an interest annually in this legislation. I see no reason to believe that the existing arrangements do not allow hon. Members to come to a view on the merits of a clause, and to take all the relevant considerations, including environmental ones, fully into account.

The Government place—and will continue to place—a high priority on environmental issues. We have taken several steps to benefit the environment, such as action on CFCs, on sulphur dioxide and nitrodioxide emissions, on water quality, and with the establishment of the climatic change centre. The increase in the differential in favour of unleaded petrol in this year's Budget should increase the uptake of unleaded petrol to 40 per cent by next year's Budget. All that has been achieved within four years of starting down this route.

The Environmental Protection Bill, which has just passed through the House, provides for integrated pollution control, strengthens local authority controls to combat air pollution and to control litter, and includes provisions on waste disposal and recycling. As the House knows, we are preparing a White Paper on the environment, which will be published in the early autumn.

The Budget measures for unleaded petrol and relief for waste disposal operators will bring worthwhile environmental benefits. The Government are conscious of the importance of the environment, but a whole range of factors must also be considered, including, as my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) emphasised, scientific analysis and the effects on the economy in determining the right response to problems. We are prepared to make tax changes for environmental reasons, where tax is the right instrument with which to do so. Unleaded petrol was an example. We shall continue to ensure that measures are based on the best possible scientific and economic analysis.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury alleged that the car scale increase had been small. He knows that that is not the case. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart) pointed out to the hon. Gentleman, over the past three Budgets, the Government have tripled the car scales, having inherited small scales from the last Labour Government. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury suggested that we should issue a green book at the time of the Budget each year, in addition to the Red Book. Does that mean that we shall also have to provide a crimson book for energy, a purple book for agriculture, and a grey book for education? Where do we stop in producing such documents? The Opposition have not made it clear. But perhaps when the hon. Member for Wrexham replies to the debate, he will do so.

New clause 4, which has also been tabled by the Labour Front Bench, seeks to provide an incentive to fitting catalytic converters in company cars by reducing the car benefit scale charges where that has been done. That proposal is an unnecessary measure which would complicate the tax system, reduce the tax revenue, and introduce a new fiscal incentive for company cars. That is probably unintended, but several of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield, have pointed out that consequence. However, it would make very little difference to our progress towards the important objective of reducing car and lorry pollution. The House knows—several hon. Members have mentioned it—that the EC exhaust emission standards will require all new petrol engine cars sold in the EEC to be fitted with a catalytic converter by the end of 1992. Company cars are replaced every two or three years on average. As the company car fleet is predominantly composed of new cars, the new EC provisions will bite quickly into the company car sector. For that reason, the Government consider that a fiscal incentive to change over to cars with a catalytic converter is unnecessary in view of the obligations that we have been asked to meet by the EC.

As I have already described, the proposal would be expensive. With just under 2 million company cars on the road, a cost of about £1 million would be incurred for every 1 per cent. of cars fitted with converters. Much of that cost would be dead weight, for example, as employers begin to buy more cars fitted with catalytic converters in the run-up to 1992. Indeed, some manufacturers already fit converters to all their cars.

The other defect of the clause is that it has no time limit. It would continue to run even after we met our obligations in 1992 when converters will be compulsory for all new cars. By then, the proposal would cost approaching £100 million for no benefit whatever.

8 pm

Mr. Hind: Is not by far the most important point against the proposal that there is no reason for introducing a tax incentive for company cars alone to fit catalytic converters? Surely our aim should be that all cars are fitted with catalytic converters to reduce the fumes from cars. Therefore, people who buy their own cars, who represent a large section of the public, should not be cut out from such a tax benefit.

Mr. Ryder: I agree with my hon. Friend. I shall deal with that argument shortly.

The Government believe in principle that benefits in kind should, as far as possible, be fully taxed to provide neutrality in the tax treatment of payments in cash and in kind. The benefit to the employee is not reduced by fitting a catalytic converter to a company car. In general, larger and more expensive cars tend to be fitted with catalytic converters.

While accepting that the new clause would put back the Government's determined action over the past three years, in particular to reduce undervaluation of company cars for tax purposes, the Opposition have argued that company car taxation should be increased, partly for environmental reasons. In the new clause, they would introduce a new fiscal privilege confined to company cars which would have no counterpart—this is the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind)—for the private motorist who must buy his own car. I amplify not only the remarks made by my hon. Friend but the argument deployed by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). Over half the number of cars purchased by individuals go to companies for purposes such as short-term car hire, car pools and driving

tuition, which are not subject to the scale charges. The new clause would do nothing to encourage that group of purchasers to buy cars equipped with catalytic converters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield, with his experience of Birmingham, knows that the motor industry is gearing itself up for the new regime that will apply after 1992. It will require more than simply bolting on a catalyst-equipped exhaust. The introduction of catalyst-compatible engines and engine management systems, particularly for smaller cars, will take time.

"There is no question of providing an incentive to fit catalytic converters. It has to be done. We have agreed it with the EC. There are cases for incentives in certain circumstances, but they should be argued on their merits. I regret that I have to say that I do not think that the case has been proven here. I would rather that the money which would be lost to the Treasury were spent on other environmental concerns."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1989; Vol. 156, c. 902.]

Opposition Members, including Front-Bench spokesmen, will realise that I have just quoted directly from the speech made by the hon. Member for Wrexham in last year's debate on the Finance Bill on the Floor of the House on a similar proposal to reduce special car tax for cars fitted with converters. I say to my hon. Friends and to the House that the hon. Gentleman's arguments deployed then are as true today. For that reason, I urge the House to reject the new clause.

Dr. Marek: We have had a good debate, with the exception of the speech made by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). The hon. Gentleman came in late, he would not give way, he was bad-tempered, and my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) had it absolutely right. Many of us were surprised when the hon. Gentleman told my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that he should make his own speech. My hon. Friend tried to make his own speech earlier, but the hon. Gentleman was not present.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman referred to me. I resent the suggestion that my speech was in any way bad-tempered. It was perfectly good-humoured. Opposition Members reacted badly, perhaps because the arguments that I marshalled against the Opposition's case were penetrating. The only reason why I did not give way to the hon. Gentleman was simply lack of time.

Dr. Marek: I looked and listened in vain for any argument in the hon. Gentleman's speech. However, he makes his own case, and the House can judge him.

The Minister dealt at some length with new clause 4, but not with new clause 1. In some ways, that is not surprising. I have some sympathy with what he said about new clause 4, but new clause 1 is the important clause. We have received support from the Minister's hon. Friends on the Back Benches for similar clauses, if not outright for new clause 1. The Minister said that he already takes account of environmental impact with his colleagues when Ministers prepare the Budget. If I remember correctly, he said, "We already take account of such effects."

What is wrong with the public knowing exactly how Ministers take account of those effects? If Ministers put their fingers in the air to feel which way the wind is blowing, perhaps they should keep that secret, but if they take account of such effects in a meaningful and quantitative way, surely it would do the environment good if the public knew exactly how the environment and environmental considerations would be affected by the Budget statement. That is important.

The Minister asked me to answer a point and I shall do so. He asked whether the Treasury should issue crimson books or purple books for different Departments. I suspect that at the end of the day the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) will prove accurate. Environmental considerations will be forced on to the agenda, not only of parties in the House but of public conversation and therefore of attitudes to the various parties. My hon. Friend was right. That means that we need an environmental assessment of the work of Government.

The only argument deployed by the hon. Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and for Lancashire, West was that we would need armies of bureaucrats to carry out environmental assessments. It need not go that far. In many ways, the work is already being done by the Government and their Departments. Because we believe in freedom of information, we need to know exactly how they do it, and what account they take of that work, so that the public can make their own assessment.

New clause 1 is a very timid measure that does not go very far, and hon. Members will be able to beef it up so that the global problems of the environment can be tackled more effectively. New clause 1 asks that the environmental effects of the Budget should be reviewed and that any effects—or anticipated effects—that it may have on, for example, land use in the United Kingdom—and there are six cases—should be assessed. If that has already been done by the Treasury, why can we not know? What is secret about that? Many statistics are already known.

Mr. McCartney: The Department of the Environment, for the purposes of designating local authorities for the use of derelict land grant, currently does precisely as my hon. Friend says. It designates the area of the derelict land and then stipulates the purpose to which it can be put. It is only when that assessment has taken place that the authority can develop the land and receive project grants. The Department of the Environment states that 20,000 acres of derelict land in the north-west listed in its land bank are suitable for assistance.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend is knowledgeable on these matters. He is right to say that an enormous amount of information is held by the local authorities, but it is also held by the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office, and the Northern Ireland Office. It need not require an army of bureaucrats and administrators for such assessments to be made public.

New clause 1 will make the Government assess the pollution levels and the effect that the Budget would have on them. It requires an assessment of the rate of usage of natural resources, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, and the effect that the Budget will have on that rate of usage. It also seeks to assess the rate and types of energy production in use in the United Kingdom, and the effect that the Budget will have on them.

Paragraph (e) urges and imposes upon the Government a general duty to encourage

"the use of renewable sources of energy of raw materials in the United Kingdom".

[Dr. Marek]

That is a subject on which I hope that there will be no dispute. It is important that the effects of the Budget are assessed in this regard.

8.15 pm

New clause 1 asked for an assessment of the Budget's effects on human and animal health, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. That is a sensible and moderate new clause, and not one that would impose an intolerable burden on the Government. It would inform the public and ensure that we had more information on which to base future policy. It would also enable other countries to give greater weight to our views on environmental protection, because they too would have more information on which to base their judgment. Such an assessment must be good for the environment.

New clause 4 has been criticised, but its provisions would look very well as part of any environmental assessment. The hon. Member for Northfield was wrong when he said that it is defective because people provided with pool cars would not be taxed. If the hon. Member for Northfield—although he is not listening at the present—will study the clause properly, he will see that he is wrong.

I have some sympathy with the Minister when he says that new clause 4 is unnecessary because, when catalytic converters are required for all new cars, the rate of turnover in the company car sector is such that they will all have them quickly. Nevertheless, the amendment would be an incentive to fit company cars with converters in the remaining years before they are mandatory.

The Minister was stretching a point when he said that excise tax will remain even when all cars are converted. If I heard him correctly, he said also that the proposed concession would cost about £100 million per year at some future date. It must have occurred to the Economic Secretary that new clause 4 is meant as an incentive for only a number of years, and that any tax relief given this year can be taken away in two or three years' time.

The right hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart) gave welcome support to new clause 1. He got it slightly wrong about the Labour party being the high tax party and the Conservative party being the low tax party. Taxation as a percentage of GDP is higher now than it was when Labour left office in 1979. I forget the precise figures, but taxation is today about 3 or 4 per cent. higher—so the party that taxes the British people more is the Conservative party, not Labour. Conservative Members try to mislead the public and are not accurate with their use of words. Members of the Government and Back Benchers talk about income tax, sometimes about tax, and at other times about indirect tax.

At the end of day, one cannot get away from the fact that the lowering of income tax has been more than made up by the increase in value added tax from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent. and a large increase in the national insurance contribution.

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) largely supported new clause 1. The Liberal party also supported it—although, as usual, rather churlishly. More forthright support would have been welcome.

Important considerations include whether we look after the environment by regulation or by the judicious adjustment of tax and taxation policy. Minimum standards must be set, but the use of a taxation policy must be a club in the bag. We would try to see whether value added tax could be differentiated so that, for example, non-biodegradable and non-recyclable substances would bear a higher rate than substances that were recyclable and biodegradable.

In the corporate sector, there should be additional allowances against corporation tax for companies making specific anti-pollution or conservation investment. As a straightforward example, it must be wrong that there is just one rate of vehicle excise duty of £100 for a small or big car. Changes could be made there.

We have long advocated that the price differential between leaded and unleaded petrol should be increased still further and I am pleased that the take-up of unleaded petrol is still increasing. The Government have promised that, by the end of the year, or by next year's Budget, that take-up will have increased to 40 per cent. of the market. I wish them luck, but if they do not achieve that target, I look forward to the price differential between leaded and unleaded increasing in due course.

If company cars receive a benefit in kind that is untaxed, that should be changed. Most hon. Members believe there are large classes of company cars which do not bear the correct rate of tax and which receive a great untaxed benefit in kind. I hope that the Treasury will consider addressing that in the next Budget.

I am not arguing that taxation should be increased in aid of the environment—that public debate will be held in the next two years. It is an argument of swings and roundabouts. Taxing for environmental purposes means that incentives are changed to reflect the true cost of any particular goods. Such tax changes are good for the Inland Revenue and also encourage innovations to reduce pollution. We believe that, as a first step, tax allowances should be made in particular areas to encourage conservation of the environment and improvements in the quality of life.

I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) for their well-informed speeches, which were listened to with interest. On a slightly churlish note, it is a pity that many of the Conservative Back Benchers who were members of the Finance Committee have not been present. I hope that that will be redressed in our later debates.

There is an unanswerable case for a new clause similar to new clause 1. For that reason, I urge my hon. Friends to press our new clause to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 206, Noes 261.

Division No. 293] **[8.22 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Bermingham, Gerald
Allen, Graham	Bidwell, Sydney
Anderson, Donald	Boateng, Paul
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Boyes, Roland
Armstrong, Hilary	Bradley, Keith
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Ashton, Joe	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Buckley, George J.
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Caborn, Richard
Barron, Kevin	Callaghan, Jim
Beckett, Margaret	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Beith, A. J.	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Bell, Stuart	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Canavan, Dennis
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*

Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy

Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trimble, David
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 5

CHILD CARE VOUCHERS

'(1) Where an employee makes arrangements for care of his or her children aged under sixteen, and pays for this child care with vouchers provided by the employer which can only be used for this purpose, the provision of these vouchers will not be subject to basic rate tax in the hands of the employee.

(2) This section shall only apply to vouchers up to £75 per week in regard to child care being provided for a child aged up to five. For children aged over five to sixteen the limit of the value of vouchers which will not be subject to basic rate charge tax will be £1,500 per annum.

(3) This section shall only apply subject to the provisions of the Taxes Act 1988 section 155A(1)(d) and Taxes Act 1988 section 155A(4) (as proposed in the 1990 Finance Bill).

(4) The registration requirements under section 20(1)(4) shall apply to this section.'.—*[Mr. Beith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider new clause 6—*Child care and the self-employed*—

(1) The Taxes Act 1988, section 74, shall not operate to deny tax relief for child care provision, at basic rate only, and on payments up to £75 per week, where a self-employed person makes provision for child care for his or her children aged up to five. For children aged over five to sixteen the limit of the payments which will not be subject to basic rate tax will be £1,500 per annum.

(2) This section only applies where—

(a) the provisions of the Taxes Act 1988, section 155A(1)(d) and the Taxes Act 1988 section 155A(4) (as proposed in the Finance Bill 1990) are satisfied.

(b) the registration requirement in section 20(1)(4) has been met.

(c) the self-employed person works full-time at his or her trade, profession or vocation.'.

Mr. Beith: New clause 5 deals with child care vouchers, and new clause 6 applies a similar principle to the self-employed. It looks as though the about-to-be Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is to reply to the debate. I look forward to that and congratulate him on his sudden and unexpected promotion, and wish him well in his new responsibilities.

We have been campaigning for better provision for child care in successive Finance Bills. There is some provision for child care in the current Finance Bill, but it is so inadequate that we feel obliged to table the new clause. It is my contention and the view of many groups and organisations that workplace nurseries are only a tiny contributor to dealing with the problem of child care. Such nurseries provide only a small number of employers, whose work force is concentrated on one site, and even if such nurseries became much more widespread among employers, they would not cater for large numbers of parents for whom child care nearer the home is more appropriate. Such nurseries make no contribution to solving the problem of child care for children of school age, after school and during school holidays.

We have always proposed an alternative approach based on vouchers given by the employer that are free of tax up to a certain level at the hand of the employee if those vouchers are used in registered forms of child care, nursery education or play groups. That idea is widely supported. I was particularly struck to discover that it has gained support in Government circles. Therefore, I shall be surprised if the Financial Secretary, when he replies, does not catch the mood of his party and the feelings of those who are already expressing themselves on the issue.

The Guardian on Monday 9 July stated:

"A voucher scheme for nursery facilities to help young mothers wanting to go out to work has been endorsed by the Government's inter-departmental working group on women, chaired by John Patten, the Home Office Minister of State.

The proposals are likely to be the subject of strong debate within the Conservative Party and Whitehall as the Government tries to reach a consensus on its approach to the family and morality."

I shall not go into the further reaches and implications of the Government's current studies of the family and

morality but will concentrate on child care, which has obviously been considered in Government circles and found to be of interest. Perhaps the Government are beginning to react to the widespread disappointment that what initially looked to some people like a major concession on child care in the Chancellor's Budget speech turned out to be so limited in its effect and implications.

A small number of mothers will be able to continue to use workplace nurseries and avoid the tax that they have been paying up to now on the benefit in kind of those nurseries. That is quite right, but many more women will continue to pay for nursery care out of their taxed income. Not merely are they failing to receive a benefit on which they would be taxed; they are paying for child care out of their taxed income.

The Government have included child care provisions in the Finance Bill because they believe that the changes in the labour market and the need to make use of the skills that women can offer dictate that the Government should make some effort to encourage women back to work and to encourage employers to help women to return to work. They may also have been influenced by the wider issue of principle that, regardless of the needs of the labour market, women should be given the maximum opportunity to deploy their skills in the workplace. I agree with that principle. The Government must have been influenced by that thinking to have introduced such provisions into the Finance Bill. They have been criticised by some of their own supporters for moving away from the level playing field and for opening the door to schemes such as the one for which I am now arguing. However, they have made a very limited move. They must recognise how disappointing it will prove to many women who hoped for a real advance in their opportunities to continue their careers.

Of course, it is a matter of choice. No one is arguing that the Government should put any pressure on women with young children to go out to work. That must be a matter of choice. Many of the arguments relating to child benefit relate to whether women are able to stay at home when they have young children. We would prefer the regular uprating of child benefit which, among other things, would ensure that those women who choose to stay at home would be in a slightly better financial position than they are at present. However, the Government should provide some encouragement to employers to assist those women who wish to exercise the choice to work, particularly as their children reach school age.

I have spoken to many employers and employers' organisations, and I understand that there would be a considerable response from employers if it became clear that offering child care vouchers would provide a tax-free benefit to employees. Clearly the Government are hoping that even their limited proposals will invoke some response and that there will be more workplace nurseries. There probably will be some more as a result of the provisions that the Government have included in the Finance Bill, but many employers are already saying that they cannot open a workplace nursery as they have too few employees with a relevant need gathered in any one place. If they were to provide for those employees, it would seem unfair to the majority of their employees who may work in branches scattered around the country. Many of the large retail chains face that problem, as do almost all small businesses. What small employer can hope to set up a workplace nursery if he has only a handful of employees, one or two of whom have young children, although their needs are no less because they work for a small business?

The Government have an opportunity to encourage employers to make provision for child care. We are not putting to the Government a plea for a massive injection of Government funds directly into the provision of child care, although we should like there to be more investment in nursery education. However, we see considerable scope for the activities of the private sector, whether in voluntary sector playgroups, commercial nursery provision or individual registered child minders, who play such a large part in child care.

There is a wide range of possibilities that could be met by a voucher scheme. I do not understand how the Government can resist the logic of such a scheme, particularly as they have embarked on giving some tax relief for nursery education. Workplace nurseries cannot provide the answer for the vast majority of women who wish to exercise the right to work. Therefore, we urge the Government to adopt the voucher scheme that we propose and say that they should listen to the voices of those—including many Conservative Members—who have advanced that case. Although the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is not present tonight, on previous occasions she has advanced that view most strongly, as have others. Ministers privately seem to be expressing interest in such schemes.

New clause 6 makes a comparable provision for self-employed people. There is a strong case for full-time, self-employed people to have a limited ability to set child care costs against tax. The Government, quite rightly, have encouraged self-employment. Many women are becoming self-employed as self employment offers flexible opportunities for work. Many women work in sectors where self-employment seems a natural development and their expertise can be used in various forms of consultancy work.

8·45 pm,

Self-employment is sometimes appropriate for women who wish to work only part time while their children are very young and then resume full-time work, taking on more contracts and more work as their children reach school age. There seems no reason why such women should not be allowed to make the same provision as an employer could to set child care costs against tax. I hope that the Minister will consider that ancillary feature of our scheme, which is set out in new clause 6, and will be sympathetic to our case. I see no serious prospect that he will do so at this stage as I do not consider that his last action as Financial Secretary will be to make that major change.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I was hoping that my hon. Friend would encourage the Minister to do so. We understand that, when she was disturbed at the weekend, the Prime Minister was writing a major speech on the family, or was planning to do so, at Chequers. It may be that the right hon. Gentleman is party to any proposals that the Prime Minister is about to make, and before he moves onwards and upwards he may be able to tell the House that the Government plan not only to talk about these matters, as the Prime Minister often does, but to do something practical to implement policies to encourage that aspect of family economic growth.

Mr. Beith: My hon. Friend conjures up the slightly frightening prospect that a Government seminar is about to be arranged in which the characteristics of women would be discussed in a misleading and inaccurate way and the contents of which would be leaked.

I hope that the various moves and discussions within the Government will eventually lead to someone waking up to the fact that workplace nurseries are not a solution and that something along the lines of our suggestion is essential.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): We thank the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) for enabling us to discuss such an important topic at this stage. However, he is somewhat optimistic if he believes that the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will take into account in his response the new wind which the hon. Gentleman discerns to be blowing through the Conservative party. I doubt that, but I am sure that in the fullness of time there will be a translation in the attitude of the former Financial Secretary. We all congratulate him on his appointment.

I expect that there will be a transformation in the right hon. Gentleman's approach to this topic as child care not only involves education and welfare, but strikes to the heart of our competitiveness with our European partners. As a nation, we have the worst child care record in Europe. Only 44 per cent. of three to five-year-olds in the United Kingdom receive public pre-school education—the second lowest percentage in the European Community. That is bound to impact on our success in obtaining a skilled work force in terms of the educational advantages to children in receipt of pre-school education, and, more importantly, drawing on the pool of skills that women are able to offer in the economy. It is an economic issue and an equal opportunity issue to which no Secretary of State for Trade and Industry can be blind.

The Government are in the grip of a dilemma. Some in the Conservative party continue to oppose any measure along these lines because they believe that it would weaken and undermine the family, while others appreciate the needs of the economy and of women to be free to make a contribution to economic growth and to the growth and prosperity of their family if they so please. The two are engaged in an enormous war within the Conservative party. That is why we have seen an almost schizophrenic approach to this issue among Ministers. They change month in and month out. I join the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed in celebrating the current approach of the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), who chairs the ministerial group on women's issues, and his willingness to consider new ideas such as vouchers with a more favourable mind than is normal in the Conservative party, but we cannot forget that only months ago he said in *The Guardian*:

"I don't think the state should step in to help the working mother unless her life has collapsed."

That was what the Minister said then, but what has happened in the interim? One hopes that there has been a new dawn and an awakening, but one doubts it. The Government's attitude to this issue is one of indecision and uncertainty. The Prime Minister may have been poring over her speech on the family while she dithered and vacillated over the future of her Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at the weekend, but we say that she was also dithering and vacillating on child care and equal opportunities for women, and we are not alone in that. The *Daily Mail*, no less, said of the Government's attitude:

"The Government takes the view that good old private enterprise needs no prompting. That is the official line. This is dangerously complacent. Our competitors are far better geared to woo the working mother and beat the labour shortage that results from falling birth rates and aging populations. In Europe, there are many more publicly financed nursery places. Here, Margaret Thatcher and her Ministers still dither about how to defuse the demographic time bomb."

Dithering and vacillation are the hallmarks of the Government. We say that that should end and we look to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in his new role, to play a part in bringing it to an end.

We find the new clause wanting in several respects. We find it technically deficient and therefore are unable to commend it to Labour Members. Nowhere is a definition of the word "care" suggested. We are concerned that it would be so wide as to include schooling and elements of private schools, as, arguably, schools care for their pupils. It makes no attempt to incorporate section 155A(7), which would have prevented that.

We are concerned that the new clause would allow payments to a wife to look after children at home to be tax deductible. Even if the registration requirements of the new clause were technically effective—we fear that they are not—those requirements apply only where the carer or the premises in which care is provided require registration. That does not apply to parents looking after children at home, which is a major defect.

We are also concerned about the reference to section 20(1)(4) in new clause 5(4) and new clause 6(2)(b). That does not exist and cannot be satisfied. We must presume that it is a reference to section 155A(4), which is introduced by clause 21, formerly clause 20. The wrong reference invalidates both new clauses.

The new clauses refer to basic rate tax. We presume that that means income tax at the basic rate, because under the Finance Bill there is no such thing as basic rate tax. There is certainly no basic rate charge tax, as mentioned in new clause 5(2).

Nor do the clauses make clear the limits of relief. Is it £1,500 per year for all children aged between five and 16 or for each child? Likewise, there are no provisions to deal with abuse of the classes.

For those technical reasons, we shall be unable to recommend the new clauses as they stand, but we find another cause for concern that goes to the principle of accepting vouchers without taking on board the wider context in which they are introduced.

Above all, we are concerned that there should be quality provision of child care. We are concerned to ensure that in increasing the supply of child care there is variety. A parent should not be obliged to take second best. Therefore, we envisage a role for the public and private sectors in child care, but a central role for local authorities in maintaining and improving standards and in co-ordinating child provision. As the new clause would expand provision without guaranteeing that it was of sufficient quality, we shall have to oppose it.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman is now dealing with the substance of the new clauses, but I am not sure what he is arguing. Is he arguing that the Labour party would accept

vouchers if they were so controlled by a local authority that it could determine whether the level of provision was suitable, or is he still opposed to vouchers in general?

Mr. Boateng: We are not opposed to the principle of vouchers; we believe that it needs careful examination. However, we are opposed to giving vouchers priority at a time when we have not created a context in which their introduction can be guaranteed to produce quality provision. When we are dealing with limited resources, we must see how they can best be spent.

The unit cost of workplace nursery care is relatively high, at some £4,500 per place, compared with £1,350 per unit spent on under-fives in nursery schools, nursery classes and reception classes in primary schools in the public sector. Those figures reflect the cost-effectiveness of child care provision. We are not satisfied that it would be right to forgo the resources that would be the inevitable consequence of a new clause of this nature while there is still so much to be done, not least in improving the training and status of child minders and those who provide nursery care.

Some 43,000 child care workers are employed on regular contracts in this country, compared with some 125,000 in West Germany and 150,000 in Italy. Child care workers in the United Kingdom are among the worst paid, with nursery workers earning on average some 70 per cent. of the average manual worker's rate. By comparison, West German nursery workers earn up to 170 per cent. of the unskilled rate.

The figures for child minders also give cause for concern. In the United Kingdom, their average wage is 46 per cent. of the manual worker's rate, whereas in France it is 71 per cent. of the minimum wage plus holiday pay. In Portugal it is 100 per cent. when the child minder is looking after four children, and in Denmark it is 72 per cent. of the unskilled worker's rate, including holiday and pension rights.

We have a long way to go to improve training and registration, and to give local authorities the means to take the innovative steps that some have been able to take already—even with limited resources—to bring the public and private sectors together to maximise the quality as well as the quantity of child care provision. Labour local authorities have led the way in that regard. Each of the 25 local authorities with the best provision is Labour controlled. That is a credit to Labour's approach to the issue of child care, which is centred on the child and on enabling and empowering parents to participate fully in the workplace and in a growing economy. That will happen when we can harness fully the resources in our country to a common purpose, geared towards maximising the opportunities of all our people to contribute to economic growth.

If we are to meet the challenges of the 1990s, to compete successfully with our European Common Market partners and to take advantage of the single market in 1992, it is vital that we get this matter right. A survey for the European Commission called "Childcare and equality of opportunity" found that in Britain there were wide differences of quality and quantity in the available provision. That is not compatible with the concept of the single market. As a result of that survey, there was a recommendation that there should be a Community directive to encourage the development of adequate provision.

Although it presents a principle that is worthy of examination, the new clause does not provide a complete answer, and we cannot support it in the Lobby.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): May I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on his elevation? I am sure that he will do a good job for us, but I suspect, as has been said, that this issue will pursue him to the Department of Trade and Industry, as it is now a major concern for many employers.

The proposals before us are not at all the answer. They are sweeping, extravagant and, as one would expect from the Liberals, badly drafted. The Opposition think that they are so important that most Opposition Members have gone home. Whatever my right hon. Friend says, I hope that he will not close the door on consideration of this issue at some time in the future.

There is no doubt that we need more women in the work force in the 1990s. It has been estimated by the Department of Employment that, of the 1 million new jobs likely to be created between now and 1995, about three quarters will have to go to women because of the demographic time bomb. The issue becomes more acute as time goes on, because by 2000, less than a decade from now, about 90 per cent. of all new jobs will have to go to women either those who are not working at all at the moment, or those who are working part-time and who can be encouraged to work full-time and to improve their productivity.

It helps briefly to set out one or two principles. First, we should not be heading for state-run, state-funded nurseries. That is the way it has been done in the Soviet Union up to now, and it has been a total disaster. We should not propose or contemplate such a system. It is what the Labour party would like and what it often advocates but it would be disastrous.

We should press employers, including state employers, to carry part of the burden. I share the belief of my right hon. Friend the Minister that, left to itself, the market works very well on such issues. The problem is that the jobs market is often inflationary and simply pushes up pay. One of the most expensive ways to provide child care is to pay employees extra so that they may pay for their own child care. That is inflationary, and would make it much harder for us to reduce inflation to the sort of levels that our international competitors are achieving. We have a supply side rigidity and should be wary of shutting the door on any proposals that might help it.

Mr. Beith: When the market seeks to address these problems, it has to face the distortions in the system as well. Now, of course, there will be an invitation to workplace nurseries, but it remains the case that, even after all that the Chancellor has done, it would be more tax-efficient to give the woman a car as part of her remuneration, because that is still not fully taxed, than to give her money to pay for child care.

Mrs. Currie: I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has his beady eyes on our cars as well, and that is probably a good thing. I am generally against giving tax relief on any kind of perk. To me, it has to be argued very hard that the tax relief on some kind of benefit, whether or not one dubs it a perk, is better than simply putting all the tax reliefs in the pool and charging everybody less tax. I

[Mrs. Currie]

am, however, bothered by the fact that some of these issues appear to be hampered by what is seen as penal taxation on workplace nurseries, which is covered in the Bill.

We should remind ourselves of the problems that face single parents. The largest single group of available people who are not working are in that group. There are 1 million single-parent families in Britain, and most, but not all, of them are headed by women. In response to surveys, about 40 per cent. of them have said that, if they could resolve the problem of reliable and affordable child care, they would want to go back to work immediately.

We know from much research that that is often best for such people and their children. At the moment, if they go for training on the employment training scheme, they get £50 a week per child for child care, but there is little help when they seek a job. That results in a waste of public money. If we could get 250,000 of those single parents back into work, even low-paid work, then, according to calculations made for me by the Library, we could expect to save at least £1 billion a year net. That is also a good Tory principle.

The Bill contains changes that will affect workplace nurseries. Many people who have used such nurseries would agree that it is the most expensive way to provide child care and the least flexible. The family have a real problem when the children reach school age. It is all very well for small babies, but what happens when the child reaches the age of five? What do the parents do after school and during holidays? If we are effectively to press employers, we must press them to take much more flexible approaches to these issues. These sometimes include part-time work, as well as the provision of child care.

It seems that there is no evidence yet that the tax disadvantages of vouchers are a deterrent to their use. We are talking about something which is quite new; many of the concepts have not been fully argued. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends who are Ministers in the Treasury and in the Departments of Employment and of Trade and Industry will keep a wary eye on the issue and, if they feel that it is necessary in future, will come forward with their own proposals.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): We are grateful to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) for giving us the opportunity to discuss child care. I am sure that he will forgive me for saying—I do so in the friendliest of spirits—that it was easy for him to introduce the clause because he was not concerned with the problems of priorities that an incoming Government would face. It is priorities that bear upon our position on the clause. The Opposition have had to consider carefully as the next Government where we would place available moneys to ensure that we achieve the objective of increasing the number of places available while not sacrificing quality. Our thinking and proposals are based on that important first principle.

In a sense, there is a temptation to support the clause on the basis that anything is better than nothing. The Government are offering virtually no strategy for improving opportunities for women or children through a better structure and system of child care. An incoming Government must think beyond the view that anything is better than nothing, and we want to secure the best. Our policy, therefore, is based on getting the best.

It is interesting that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury has moved to the Department of Trade and Industry. As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has said, he will come across similar problems in the DTI. I recommend him to examine some of the partnership schemes that Labour local authorities and other parts of the public sector are developing with the private sector, with the support of the DTI. I am hesitant to recommend the right hon. Gentleman to take that course, however, because his reputation goes before him. If I mention good schemes that are providing more opportunities for child care, I am concerned that he will wish to stamp on them when he fully takes up his post as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I hope only that I am being over-cynical.

I commend to the right hon. Gentleman the scheme that is operating in north Tyneside. His new Department has made a significant contribution to the partnership that has developed, which is attracting finance from the private sector in a way which gives control and support for the best quality of opportunity and the widest choice of child care, from child minders to child minders in children's own homes, who elsewhere in the country might be called nannies. Care extends from full-day nursery provision to out-of-school and holiday care for children over five years of age.

That is precisely the sort of scheme that we in the Labour party want to support. We want to encourage partnership between the voluntary and private sectors and the public sector of the sort that removes from the employer the burden of deciding what is good child care. Most employers are honest and open enough to say that it is not their job to decide what is good child care. They say that they are experts in finance and money-making, not in child care. They argue that they must concentrate on the success of their businesses. They welcome the opportunity of being in partnership with the public sector. I know that the next Labour Government will be examining ways in which they can encourage the sort of partnership that will make available additional places and ensure that they are of the highest quality.

Even though the Government do not want to do so, they have been obliged to deal with the problem. They read the polls. They saw in *The Daily Telegraph* a few weeks ago that 87 per cent. of the people surveyed want more money to be devoted to child care so that women could go out to work. They also saw that 88 per cent. of the people surveyed want more money to be provided for nursery education.

The poverty of the Government's argument is there for all to see. Therefore, they are thrashing around. That is why they made their minimum concession on the workplace nurseries tax. It was not because the Government had worked out a strategy and that the concession was part of it; they did it because they were under pressure. That is the very worst sort of government. If we went down that road, which is what the new clause asks us to do, we should avoid the main question: how is the country to face up to its responsibilities both to children and women, and to ensure that opportunities are provided for them that at least bring us into line with our European competitors?

9.15 pm

This is a painful issue for the Government, but the European child care network has provided us with a framework. It says that it is the responsibility of national Governments to set the pace and the parameters and to provide a framework within which various opportunities can be encouraged. However, the Government say that that is nonsense and that we want to force women and children into a particular sort of care. The Government consistently confuse diversity with choice. Of course there is diversity of provision, but much of it is the result of the lack of basic facilities.

We want parents to be able to choose nursery education for their children, but if only certain parts of the country are able to provide it that is diversity, not choice. We believe that parents throughout the country should be able to decide what kind of care and education they want for their children. In each area, therefore, we shall develop a pattern of care. We shall hold discussions about it with local education authorities, social services departments and parents. We also want to involve industry and the voluntary sector in our plans.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. After a lot of waffle, she is now getting to the meat of the subject. Who is going to pay for all this?

Ms. Armstrong: I have already made it clear that it will be paid for by means of a combination of both public and voluntary sector funding. The public sector will set the pace, but it will attract money and support from the private and voluntary sector. I do not know whether the hon. Lady has spoken to representatives of industry, but I have spoken to representatives of a number of major industries. This morning, I had discussions with representatives of a number of them, who said to me, "We wish you would impose an employers' levy and make it really easy for us." We do not intend to do that, but three large industrial employers said that to me.

The Government have shown a lack of will to forge partnerships and opportunities. They cannot make up their mind what they mean by the family or by providing opportunities for children. They are not really sure that they want to provide women with any opportunities. We have, therefore, ended up with chaos, which is described as diversity. It means that our children will lose out. Instead of giving small concessions, the Government should begin to think seriously about what they intend to do to ensure that this country can move towards 1992. They must be committed to providing opportunities for women and children.

Mr. Lilley: There have been some astonishing appointments in recent days. I thought that my own was the most surprising until I saw my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) reappointed to the Whips Bench. I then realised that there was no limit to it.

As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary told the Committee of the whole House, the relief for workplace nurseries, which we introduced in the Budget, is a closely focused relief. It is designed to remove a perceived obstacle to the establishment of workplace nurseries and it should, thereby, increase the supply of such places. It is designed to put the tax treatment of workplace nurseries roughly on a par with taxation on other workplace benefits in kind. Therefore, it is a minor simplification and deregulation measure.

It is always difficult to draw the borderlines of tax relief, but I am convinced that, in general, they should be drawn as tightly and narrowly as possible. I agree with the general sentiments expressed in that respect by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie).

The relief that we introduced is not intended as a step towards the introduction of a general child care allowance, which would be hugely expensive. The Opposition have agreed, and the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) is on record as saying, that that would not be a priority use of scarce Exchequer resources for them any more than for us.

The two new clauses proposed by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) concentrate on extending relief to vouchers. That would be expensive as people latched on to it as they have to similar benefits in kind. It would be essentially unfair because it would give relief to those who receive vouchers while others who received cash or spent their own cash on the same facilities would not receive relief. It would be impossible to limit it to vouchers in the way the clause suggests.

Mr. Beith: The Minister can hardly level the charge that the relief would be unfair when it is the same for workplace nurseries. That is a tax relief available only to those able to make use of a workplace nursery.

Mr. Lilley: It is simply a supply-side measure. It is not meant to be a relief for child care as such. It is designed to remove an obstacle to the provision of such facilities and allow greater supply.

Extending relief to vouchers would be perceived as unfair and would inevitably be extended to wider groups. It would also be open to abuse. People would be able to use vouchers as a form of near cash. They would be able to use them to employ members of the family who were perhaps already helping to look after the children from time to time. Therefore, there would be a tendency to use such vouchers to the maximum extent available in order to obtain the maximum tax relief. That is not desirable.

The new clause dealing with provision for the self-employed is even less tightly focused. In fact, it is open ended and goes way beyond vouchers. It would give tax relief to wives of self-employed people looking after their own children at home or even elsewhere, as I understand the clause. Once such relief had been created for the self-employed, it would be impossible not to extend it to the employed. Therefore, I do not understand why the proposal in the new clause applies simply to the self-employed. I do not think that any responsible party could seriously envisage the massive use of fiscal resources suggested in the two new clauses. Naturally, I shall urge the House to vote against them.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said that he had read an article that stated that a ministerial group had endorsed his proposal. I urge him not to believe everything that he has read in the newspapers. I learned that lesson over the weekend, although I am not complaining, because many of the grossest inaccuracies in the newspapers were flattering. The hon. Gentleman said that the Government, as a matter of policy, must encourage women to go out to work rather than stay at home and look after their children. We have always made

[Mr. Lilley]

it clear that that is a sensitive and important decision that parents should make, and it is not for the Government to try to bias it one way or the other through the fiscal system.

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said, rightly, that one should not be profligate in the use of fiscal resources, but he implicitly proposed an expensive public expenditure programme of improved pay for child minders, an increased number of child minders and increased subsidy for child minding. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman said that it was not implicit but explicit, he should be a little—

Mr. Boateng: It was neither implicit nor explicit.

Mr. Lilley: That was certainly the logical concomitant of what the hon. Gentleman said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South asked what provision the Government thought appropriate for school-age children. Our relief for workplace nurseries applies to workplace nurseries available to school-age children—implicitly, during the holidays. That is catered for in our relief as it stands.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) left the House bemused as to how she saw her gigantic programme of improved provision being financed. She said that she had met a number of industrialists who thought that there should be a compulsory levy to finance it. That is another way of saying that they would not pay for it unless they were forced to do so. At least they recognise that it would have to be paid for—which, apparently, the hon. Lady did not. I agree, however, that the new clauses tabled by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed should be rejected, and I hope that the House will do so.

Mrs. Currie: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that child care vouchers are exempt from class 1 national insurance contributions? If the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) and her colleagues get into power, they would make them subject to national insurance contributions, which would cost everyone much more.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is correct. That is an added reason why it is inexplicable that the Liberal Democrats should propose increased tax relief for the one form of provision for child care which—not intentionally, but simply because of the nature of the collection and tax treatment of vouchers generally—already has a measure of relief from a fiscal imposition.

Mr. Beith: That is an odd argument for the Minister to deploy. No doubt, some day he will give us the benefit of his reasoning for the preservation of the separate category of national insurance and income tax. I suspect that, after he has left the Treasury, it will not be long—not because of his departure—before that curious feature of our tax system is removed and we get away from pretending that something that is not dealt with in Finance Bills and can be increased by statutory instrument is, in some way, not a tax. We know perfectly well that national insurance contributions represent a form of income tax.

We have been treated to one side of the argument that appears to be going on in the Government. It may be that the Minister is preserving an air of total innocence at the machinations that are occurring in his party at the moment, but he cannot be unaware that this is an issue of serious debate within his party—let alone more widely—and that the principle whereby employer-funded vouchers obtain tax relief has attracted wide support across the political spectrum. Although we have not tonight heard a voice from the Labour Benches in favour of that principle, some members of the parliamentary Labour party are more sympathetic to it than hon. Members who have spoken. Vouchers are one way to attract into child care provision funds from employers which are not taxed at the hand of the employee. That is a reasonably cost-effective way to encourage the provision of child care.

9.30 pm

I can understand the position of the purist, who says that there should be no tax allowances of any kind for this purpose, and that workplace nursery tax relief is equally inappropriate. I cannot, however, accept the Minister's curious distinction between what he regards as well-focused tax relief for workplace nurseries and the rest. Tax relief on workplace nurseries is not especially well focused—the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) knows that—and will go only to the small number of industries in which it is convenient to provide a workplace nursery, and in which employers have made that level of investment in child care.

The Minister might more honestly have said that such tax relief is relatively cheap because there are not many workplace nurseries and there are not going to be many more. He cannot honestly say that he has focused resources on the most effective and efficient way to support child care. The voucher system is a more attractive route.

I listened to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) with some care. She is clearly anxious for improvements to be made in child care, and has devoted a considerable amount of time and attention to the matter. At the end of her remarks I still could not reach a conclusion as to how she was going to achieve her objective. If, as she argues, the resources cannot be found for tax relief on vouchers paid for by employers for child care, how on earth does the Labour party believe that it can find the far greater resources needed to fund child care directly—or even half-fund it, on the basis of some sort of 50:50 partnership scheme with large numbers of employers? How could Labour hope to do that within anything like the time scale that we are talking about, when the pressure for women to return to work will be greatest?

It does not seem to me that the hon. Lady can envisage that the resources will become available—many times more resources than for the type of scheme that I am talking about—to effect the sort of Rolls-Royce improvements that she wants to bring about. Sometimes the best is the enemy of the good. We should all like to have perfect child care, ideal partnership arrangements and the best possible funding, but that will not be in place in time to meet the needs of many women who are now looking for child care or to meet the labour market needs that I mentioned.

Ms. Armstrong: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I am arguing that quality should not be reduced. We cannot win the argument for opening up opportunities for women at the expense of quality of opportunity for the child. In five or 10 years' time that

would cost us financially and in many other ways. I said that we wanted to increase the number of places, but not at the expense of quality.

Mr. Beith: In that case the hon. Lady should not be supporting tax relief for workplace nurseries, because that can encompass a wide range of quality.

Ms. Armstrong: Registration.

Mr. Beith: If she is saying that registration is the key, that is an element in my new clause. I have sought to ensure that only registered child care would qualify for tax relief. That is a limited kind of registration.

I am bound to conclude that the hon. Lady is arguing for something that cannot be achieved in the time scale of the problem that we are discussing, or in the time which matters to the large number of women who are now concerned with child care. Frankly, they will be looking forward to seeing their grandchildren by the time that we get the scheme that the hon. Lady is talking about.

Ms. Armstrong: We know how to do it, and we know that it is possible. I have studied the problem and discussed it at great length with people in the European child care network. Other European countries have done it, because they have had a framework and they have built on the commitment and the will that exists. I know that we can do it in this country. In Spain, 13 years ago they had nothing. Now 66 per cent. of their three and four-year-olds are in full-time education and care. If Spain can do it, we can do it, by galvanising all the available resources.

Mr. Beith: I still think that it is a case of "Jam tomorrow, the day after or possibly the day after that." I believe that more resources will be directed more quickly into child care by the introduction of a voucher scheme. The Minister cannot turn away from that for much longer. He will still be concerned with the issue in his new Department. This is the ideal opportunity. He can be demob happy as the outgoing Financial Secretary. All the Whips are away at a party—that is why the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) is sitting in the Whip's place on the Treasury Bench. As the right hon. Gentleman's appointment is now fully confirmed and there is no risk that it will be snatched from his grasp, what better chance to kick over the traces and to respond to a feeling that is present in his party, as well as in ours, and to open the way to a voucher system, in which the funds available from employers would be brought into child care without the intervention of the taxman at the point that the provision reaches the pay packet of the employee?

As the Minister has not shown any willingness to do that voluntarily, I propose to invite him—to drag him—into the Division Lobbies in support of the new clause.

Mr. Boateng *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has already spoken once. Does he have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I am sorry, but I must now put the Question.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 15, Noes 179.

Division No. 294] **[9.36 pm**

AYES

Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beith, A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Fearn, Ronald
Howells, Geraint
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Livsey, Richard
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alex Carlile and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Marlow, Tony
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham

Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Jerry Hayes.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 8

BUSINESS PROPERTY RELIEF 100 PER CENT.

'Section 104 of the Inheritance Act 1984 shall be amended by deleting the sub-paragraphs numbered (a) and (b) and by substituting therefor the words "by one hundred per cent."'.—*[Mr. William Powell.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 8 concerns the relief that I claim should be given against inheritance tax in respect of shares in long-term unquoted, usually family, businesses. I act as an adviser to the Unquoted Companies Group, and the debate is essentially about the taxation of the shares in unquoted companies. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members below the Gangway should either come into the Chamber or hold their conversations outside.

Mr. Powell: I pay tribute to the Government for the relief that they have given during the past decade to unquoted companies. There has been a significant reduction in the burden of taxation, especially as it applies to the bottom of the scale. However, when a company's assets are worth £250,000 or more, there is little reduction, if any, in its compulsory tax burden.

New clause 8 concerns the taxation of business assets. I do not propose to talk about agricultural assets, although I concede that the same principle of the new clause might be expected to apply. If the principle of the new clause is accepted, it will be necessary to extend it to agricultural assets.

Long-term, unquoted family businesses have an important part to play in the British economy. They already play a major role, and should be encouraged to continue to do so. Unquoted companies fall into two categories. One comprises unquoted companies whose prevailing ambition is to become quoted. I am talking not about those companies, or those that intend to move to a quotation on the stock exchange as soon as it is convenient and expedient to do so, but about companies which do not intend to do that. The present tax system encourages them to go to the market for a quotation rather than remain long-term family businesses.

Many such businesses have existed for generations. Hon. Members will be aware of family companies that have existed for six or more generations. All those companies face a threat because of the burden imposed by inheritance tax. It is a substantial burden for medium sized companies. The inheritance tax can usually only be paid out of the active assets of a particular company as the main assets of the taxpayer are the shares in that unquoted company. To meet the inheritance tax bill it is therefore necessary to sell those shares, and that usually means selling them to a quoted company. The larger the company, the more certain it is that it will be taken over by a quoted company. That is not necessarily of benefit to anyone.

Unquoted companies have a strong presence in our regions, but quoted companies have not and, unlike unquoted companies, many have metropolitan headquarters. Unquoted companies are not looking all the time for the latest valuation of their shares and their managers are managing not in the interests of that valuation, but in the long-term interests of that company.

There is substantial evidence to suggest that the inheritance tax acts as a deterrent to the growth of unquoted companies. I know of several companies that have deliberately restricted their activities because, were they to grow further, they would be unable to fund any potential inheritance tax bill without selling company shares. Those companies would pass out of family control into the quoted sector, usually to a rival, and, in all likelihood, would be closed in due course. That has happened over and over again in the past 20 years.

The Government have been extremely successful in stimulating new businesses—scheme after scheme has enabled new companies to develop. Those new family businesses, however, will last one generation only unless something can be done to mitigate the potential tax burden posed by the inheritance tax.

It is important to stress that long-term family businesses must select who is to take over within their group. It is possible to make a lifetime gift of assets and, if that has been in existence for seven years, those assets are exempt from the payment of tax. To allow a tax law that involves such a lottery to govern the management of a corporate business is extremely misguided. The suitable person to inherit the assets is not necessarily known until comparatively late in the life of the existing owner of the shares. He or she may die within the seven years and then the tax liability is due.

The disposal of a company is different from the disposal of a picture or other inheritance, and that is why it is wrong that the selection of a suitable heir should depend upon the whim of whether someone lives for seven years or more. That is not a suitable way to reach such decisions. I understand from discussions that we have had on the Finance Bill—parliamentary questions do not seem to have changed this—that, if the new clause were accepted, the annual cost would be about £20 million a year. I see that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary agrees. Therefore, it is not the case that huge sums of taxpayers' money would not accrue to the Exchequer if the new clause were passed. But, if it were passed, the prospects of more long-term family businesses growing to their full maturity

and yielding much greater sums than £20 million to the Exchequer, in corporation tax and so on, would be substantial.

We are in danger of seeing, yet again, the growth of companies, but of that danger being restricted because the companies are restricted to one generation. We should not allow that. That is why I say to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary that the time has come for the Government to look afresh at the matter and to bring forward proposals, if they do not like mine, to enable that threat to the existence of such companies to be removed.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) has not made a persuasive case. The Register of Members' Interests states that he is employed as an adviser to the Unquoted Companies Group, which I suppose includes companies that would benefit from the handout of £20 million—the figure that is universally accepted as the sum asked for in new clause 8. If the Treasury has £20 million to give away, is that the most appropriate way to do it? Are there not more deserving causes that should come first? That is a reasonable question for the House to ask and the answer from the Opposition is yes; I suspect that the Economic Secretary's answer would also be yes. I do not recommend the new clause to my hon. Friends.

The hon. Member for Corby mentioned the period of seven years but once, and it may not be precisely clear that that period is significant. Therefore, it may be helpful if I spell out exactly what his proposal would entail. At present, inheritance tax is not payable when a business is transferred, whether by way of a gift of business assets or shares in the company that owns the business, if the transfer survives seven years.

The new clause addresses the issue of the seven-year period because for transfers on death or where the transfer does not survive seven years, inheritance tax is chargeable at 40 per cent. on the value transferred, subject to relief under section 104 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984. That relief is a reduction in the value taxed at 50 per cent. or 30 per cent., depending on the amounts, thus reducing the effective rate of inheritance tax to 20 or 28 per cent. The amendment proposes to make that reduction 100 per cent. and so stop inheritance tax being charged on any transfer of businesses. That is an extensive and radical proposal, and certainly not one I could recommend to my hon. Friends.

The Economic Secretary has no doubt picked up a further point. The new clause talks about the "Inheritance Act 1984", but what is being addressed is the Inheritance Tax Act 1984, a different piece of legislation not specified in the new clause. Therefore, the new clause is technically defective, but that is not the reason to oppose it. We oppose it because it is wrong.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell). There is no question but that the Government have done quite a lot for unquoted companies. It was quite churlish of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) to refer to my hon. Friend's consultancy in such a sneering way.

Mr. Brown: The right hon. Gentleman accuses me of sneering. I was doing nothing of the sort. I referred to the consultancy simply to put it on record. If I had an interest, I would put it on record and I suggest that Conservative Members do the same. We have already had rows across the Floor of the House about this very matter. It is not a matter for sneering; it is a question of the accuracy of the record to ensure that people who read the record and follow our debates on television, on the radio and in newspapers know precisely the full extent of Members' interests.

10 pm

Sir William Clark: My hon. Friend the Member for Corby was talking about the entrepreneurial expertise that exists in Britain and the number of small businesses that have grown up over the years. The Morris motor company at Nuffield was built up into a tremendously large business. I am not so sure whether that would have happened had there been inheritance tax then. Obviously, under no circumstances could the new clause be accepted this year, but the Government have a good record in cancelling taxation that was introduced by Labour Governments, such as the selective employment tax and development land tax. We have done a tremendous amount to build up small businesses under the business expansion scheme and so on. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Corby that those running family businesses are afraid of expansion, because if the value of the business increased and someone died, it would attract inheritance tax. Whether it is discounted at 30 per cent. is immaterial, but it could lead to the curtailment of profit for some of those companies.

Although the cost of abolishing the tax is somewhere in the region of £20 million, I am convinced that if many of those companies were allowed to expand without the fear of inheritance tax hanging over them, the corporation tax take by the Inland Revenue would probably exceed £20 million.

Obviously, my hon. Friend's new clause cannot be accepted this year, but the Government should consider it sympathetically as in future we will have to do something about inheritance tax involving such companies and generally as it is acting against the production of wealth in Britain.

Mr. Ryder: At the beginning of this short debate there was a great deal of noise at the Bar of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) declared his interest as a representative of the Unquoted Companies Group, but it was difficult to hear him, because of the noise.

I pay tribute to the work that my hon. Friend does for the UCG. I recall a most useful meeting a few months ago with the UCG to discuss a range of issues. As my hon. Friend and the House know, we all want to encourage people of enterprise to set up businesses, but we have never accepted that, simply because the property of an estate is held in the form of business assets, it should escape tax altogether. That would be going to the other extreme.

There can be a particular problem involving tax on businesses. A taxable estate that includes business assets might not have sufficient liquid resources available to meet the tax. Special rules of business property relief and the similar ones to which my hon. Friend the Member for Corby alluded which apply to agricultural property recognise that. The purpose of business property relief is to ensure that if such circumstances were to arise, the tax bill could be paid without damaging the existence or development of that particular business. It is not intended to give a privileged exemption.

[Mr. Ryder]

I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Corby and my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) about the vital contribution that family businesses make to the economy. I am conscious of the need to prevent the tax from restricting their ability to survive and flourish, but the wider question is whether we are doing enough for businesses. When the relief was first introduced under capital transfer tax it was limited to interests in unincorporated businesses and controlling shareholdings and assets used in but held outside businesses. Since then, the relief has been improved more than once. In 1978, the rate was increased from 30 to 50 per cent. and a new lower rate of 20 per cent. was introduced for minority shareholdings in unquoted companies. In 1983, that was raised to 30 per cent., since when the relief has continued to apply at two rates. In 1987, the higher rate was extended to minority unquoted holdings of more than 25 per cent.

In addition to the improvements to business relief, since 1979 we have done much to improve the tax charge on the business sector more generally—that point was acknowledged by my hon. Friend the Member for Corby and my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South—by specific measures and more general reductions in the level of the charge. In particular, the abolition in 1986 of the lifetime charge on gifts between individuals and in 1987 on those into interest in possession trusts meant that owners of family businesses could hand over their businesses to the next generation without an immediate charge to inheritance tax. Where those owners survive seven years, there is no death charge on gifts.

That change has been generally welcomed by business men for the freedom and flexibility that it provides. The abolition of the lifetime charge reduced another tax constraint on wealth creation and encouraged owners of productive assets to pass them to younger hands rather than to hold on to them into old age. The Government's intention is to encourage that lifetime giving of business assets. The new clause would remove the incentive in the present system because it would give double the present relief for assets held until death.

In 1988, we replaced the four rates for inheritance tax with a single rate of 40 per cent. Therefore, where inheritance tax becomes payable on family businesses, the effective rate will never be more than 28 per cent., even for a tiny holding in an unquoted company. For most family businesses, the effective rate will not be higher than 20 per cent., and those effective rates are among the lowest of our trading partners.

It is important to maintain a balance between the tax burden on people whose possessions consist of business assets and those who have other property. As my hon. Friend the Member for Corby knows, these matters are kept under constant review. My right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South asked us to ensure that they are reviewed for next year's Finance Bill. I give them both an undertaking that we shall consider what they have said when we prepare next year's Bill.

Mr. William Powell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary for that undertaking and for the way in which he set out the substantial improvements that have been made in the taxation of assets in the past decade.

The short debate has been extremely useful. When the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) reads the record tomorrow, he will see that from the outset I declared my interest in this matter. The hon. Gentleman's speech will be widely scrutinised because the Labour party is trying to pretend that it has changed and that it is not the Labour party of high taxation and destruction of business that it used to be. Hundreds of thousands of unquoted family businesses will read his remarks and realise that little has changed. They will deplore the line that he chose to take in the debate.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Let me make two points. First, if I missed the declaration of interest by the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) at the beginning of his speech, I apologise to him. As was pointed out by the Economic Secretary, there was a lot of noise at the Bar of the House. I shall check *Hansard* tomorrow—as, no doubt, will the hon. Gentleman—but if I missed what he said I unreservedly apologise to him. My hon. Friends and I believe that it is right for matters to be spelt out and placed on the record in a way that did not always happen when the Bill was in Committee.

Secondly, if the hon. Member for Corby thinks that he can go around the country attacking the Labour party for opposing the concession that he seeks from the House, he will have to explain why the Government will not give him the concession either.

Mr. Powell: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's first point: interests should always be declared. It has always been—and will continue to be—my unvarying practice to declare my interest, and the record will show that I did so in my opening remarks. As for the attitude of the Labour party, the hon. Gentleman will have to stand by what he said, which will be greeted with dismay by the owners of unquoted family businesses who were hoping for a more enlightened attitude from the official Opposition.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) for his support. As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary said, matters must remain open, and he and Treasury Ministers must expect to receive continuing representations. Although the burden of taxation has been reduced, it still represents a long-term continuing threat to what is a necessary and important part of economic life in this country.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 13

AMATEUR SPORT (RELIEF)

'Notwithstanding the provisions of section 505 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988, a non-profit making body, club or institution which has as its principal purpose the promotion, encouragement or provision of facilities for amateur sport shall be eligible for relief under that section, and consequent classification as a recognised body for the purposes of Part I of that Act.'.—*[Mr. Menzies Campbell.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause is yet another attempt by hon. Members who have an interest in amateur sport to bring about a

recognition of amateur sport that would have the effect of admitting it to the kind of tax position that charitable activities now enjoy.

Two years ago, when an earlier Finance Bill was on Report, we had a most constructive and interesting debate in which a number of former Ministers for Sport took part. Considerable sympathy was evinced by Treasury Ministers towards the proposition then before the House. If my recollection is correct, an undertaking was given that it would be further considered. The First Scottish Standing Committee recently considered the matter, and I observe from the report of the Committee stage of the Finance Bill that it was ventilated there as well. However, in spite of those opportunities and promises of consideration and the sympathy given to the idea, so far it does not appear to have recommended itself to the Government. Certainly they have made no move to make it law.

I should declare an interest: I am a governor of the Scottish Sports Aid Foundation and a trustee of the Scottish Sports Aid Trust. If what the new clause proposes were to pass into law, I would derive no financial benefit, but my fellow trustees and I would be in a position to give additional assistance beyond that which we now can give to promising sportsmen and sportswomen in Scotland.

I move the clause with a sense of responsibility and, to some extent, privilege. If I, with others, were successful in persuading the Government to accept the clause, I would regard it as some recompense for the great contribution that sport has made to my life. It has been of great importance to me throughout my life: it has given me great pleasure and continues to do so, although these days it is the somewhat more passive pleasure of observing Mr. David Sole and his 14 Scottish companions winning the grand slam with a display of character and robustness that many people in Scotland felt was a proper reflection of the Scottish character. Mr. Sole and his friends were invited to a number of receptions, such as those at No. 10 Downing street and Edinburgh castle, and they were feted for their great achievement. However, I suspect that they would regard the passing into law of my proposal as a far greater recognition of their efforts than all the receptions and parties to which they were invited.

Many sports clubs, institutions and associations make a truly valuable contribution to the well-being of the community. They provide opportunities for the young, the middle-aged and the not-so-young to participate in sport, to remain healthy and to have a competitive interest. Nothing could be more in the interests of the community than that such clubs should continue. However, they are not yet eligible for the relief which recognition by the Revenue would afford them. For some such clubs the sums are extremely small in real terms, but in the budgets of the clubs and institutions they are sometimes of great significance.

I have concentrated on local sports clubs because they are the backbone of amateur sport in Britain. Following disputes in education, the need for local sports clubs has perhaps never been as acute as it is now. For reasons which we need not dwell upon, many schoolteachers now find themselves unable or unwilling to make the commitment and give the time that they previously felt able to give. Consequently, the responsibility for the introduction of young people to a whole range of sports which was previously in part shared by schools and teachers now rests to a far greater extent on the voluntary effort of local amateur sports clubs.

10.15 pm

Mr. Beith: I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will commend those schoolteachers who are still giving up their time voluntarily and beyond the call of duty to maintain school sports, not least those who assisted my son and his under-14 team to win today the county cricket championship for his age group.

Mr. Campbell: I have no doubt that that intervention will be reported in some local newspapers. I have the honour to be the honorary president of the Scottish Schools Athletics Association and know well the contribution that many schoolteachers continue to make to school sports. I fully recognise the force of my hon. Friend's intervention.

Many of the clubs that I have mentioned struggle to exist. Often they remain in existence only because of the efforts of two or three dedicated people who sometimes work more hours for nothing on behalf of their local club as treasurer, secretary or fixtures secretary than they work in their everyday jobs. The case for sport enjoying charitable status is overwhelming. The new clause seeks to recognise contribution and voluntary effort. It seeks to make that effort yet more effective and to remove from those clubs the responsibility of paying tax.

The voluntary work and effort that goes into these clubs helps to relieve the financial burden that might otherwise fall on local authorities. It would be right for the House to do more to help those who help themselves to run sporting organisations. If accepted, the clause would make a substantial contribution in that direction. The clause covers the whole of the United Kingdom and would be confined to clubs, bodies or institutions whose principal purpose was the encouragement of the provision of amateur sport. Therefore, it could not be abused.

The clause makes clear the terms on which a club or institution would be eligible for recognition. It would not follow automatically that it would be recognised. It does not make relief compulsory. The Revenue would have to be satisfied that the club or institution was entitled to the relief that it sought. The Revenue would have the right to determine whether the proposal was being abused.

Estimates of the cost of the measure vary from £10 million to as much as £50 million. The proper approach to the matter is to say that, whatever the amount, if such relief were to be granted, it would constitute a substantial investment in amateur sport. Whatever the amount of the investment, the dividends realised would be a most generous return and a recognition of the efforts of many voluntary unpaid officials. It would be an expression of the extent to which the importance of sport is acknowledged by the community.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am following closely the argument of the hon. and learned Gentleman and I am not unsympathetic to it. He will know that many sporting clubs—for example, cricket clubs—have social facilities, including bars, which generate a good income. Would there be a distinction between a genuine sporting club that did not have that source of income and the fairly well-placed clubs, financially, with social facilities, including bars, which do not really need the relief that the hon. and learned Gentleman is advocating?

Mr. Campbell: The principal purpose of the club under the new clause would have to be the "promotion" and

[Mr. Campbell]

"encouragement . . . of amateur sport". If there were any suggestion that that was not its principal purpose, the club would not be entitled to relief.

There is some uncertainty about the income that is derived from bars. There is the view that if the purchase of drink in a bar is confined to the members of the club, it cannot be said, under the mutual trading rules, that the members are making a profit out of themselves. The issue of whether clubs with bars would fall under the provisions which the clause embraces would depend on the extent to which the principal activity of the club was the provision of facilities for the "encouragement . . . of amateur sport" and whether the social facilities, including the bar facilities, were conducted for the benefit of members and not for another purpose. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will regard that as a sufficient answer to his question.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I take up the question of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and refer the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) to his remarks about David Sole, of the Scottish rugby team, and the position of amateur rugby clubs and many so-called amateur soccer sides. Does the hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that the new clause may fall foul of his strictures? It can be proved in so many instances in amateur sport, and especially in rugby, that players receive some form of payment. In Wales, in colloquial terms, there is boot money. Professional coaches have been appointed by so-called amateur rugby clubs. I am sympathetic to the aims of the hon. and learned Gentleman, but I feel that he could run into trouble by taking a broad brush to amateur sport and including rugby, which he and I and the rest of the House know is not an entirely amateur sport.

Mr. Campbell: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will carry his sympathy in a concrete fashion and will support me if there is a Division on the new clause.

To the best of my knowledge, Mr. David Sole and his colleagues are not professional. As I understand it, they are not in receipt of any funds for their international participation. I know of no rugby football club in Scotland, or anywhere else, that does not have a continuing problem of balancing the books at the end of any year. Had the hon. Gentleman paid his usual diligent attention to the proceedings of the First Scottish Standing Committee, he would be aware of the observations of a former Minister for Sport, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who has an intimate knowledge of rugby football, not least because he is a former president of the Scottish Rugby Union. The hon. Member for Dumfries explained just how considerable are the financial obligations of many clubs, especially rugby clubs.

The issues are well known to the House. For my purposes, they have been sufficiently well canvassed. I beg leave to have a certain amount of optimism that we shall receive something rather more than sympathy from those on the Treasury Bench and a signal that there is an appreciation of how important the issue is and how important it would be to many amateur sports clubs throughout the country if the new clause were agreed to.

Mr. John Carlisle: I hesitate to intervene, but I wish to take up the point that has just been made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). The answer that he gave me a few moments ago did not cover English and Welsh rugby. He paraded his clause as though it applied to the whole of the United Kingdom, as does the Finance Bill, but he concentrated on Scottish rugby. Both the hon. and learned Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) have consistently argued that it does not receive the type of payments that I described earlier. Therefore, his clause is flawed, because amateurs may not exist. If his clause were to be accepted by my hon. Friends and some Opposition Members, he would have to define who is an amateur. The majority of sports, especially those seen on television, receive substantial payments. They would therefore fall foul of his clause. On that point alone, the clause is flawed.

Mr. Campbell: Does the hon. Gentleman think that the British Olympic Association should have to pay tax?

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. and learned Gentleman sticks to the sport that he knows. However, he began his speech by saying that the new clause would encompass rugby. He referred to David Sole. The hon. and learned Gentleman has a distinguished track record. Therefore, he knows that what used to be known as the British Amateur Athletic Association receives substantial sums of money from sponsors. Individual athletes receive enormous prizes, some of which are money prizes. I hesitate to suggest that the hon. and learned Gentleman may be naive, but he is wrong to ask the House to accept that all amateur sport is truly amateur sport.

I sympathise broadly with the hon. and learned Gentleman's argument. His new clause may be aimed at the smaller clubs. They need some financial assistance from the Treasury and a more sympathetic ear. Whether that assistance will be provided by this Finance Bill or a future Finance Bill is another matter. Many thousands of men and women give their services voluntarily to sport and do their best to keep many clubs afloat. Many of them are in severe financial difficulties because of the old rating system, and even the new uniform business rate. The Government have offered some relief, but it has not been taken up by local authorities.

Sport is based on small clubs and to a certain extent on schools. It is tragic that many sports clubs have fallen by the wayside and are not attracting young participants because schools, for the reasons that the hon. and learned Gentleman described, are unable to provide the expert teaching and facilities that are needed. The hon. and learned Gentleman's ideas must be considered sympathetically. When we have been able to define who amateurs are, that sympathy may turn into assistance. However, the broad brush approach that he has adopted in the new clause will not attract much support on this side of the House.

10.30 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I will not pursue what I can describe only as the casuistry of the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) in trying to get bogged down in definitions of amateurism. Clearly, the spirit of the clause leaves it to the judgment of the Charity Commissioners in England, and, presumably, to the Lord Advocate in Scotland, to find out whether the club satisfies the criteria for advancing amateur sport. As the hon. Member for Luton, North knows, if the argument about which club or which members are amateur is to be pursued

before such a clause is passed, we will be arguing until doomsday, with the desirable side effect, in his opinion, of nothing ever happening.

In offering his sympathy for the new clause, the hon. Member dispenses a commodity which is remarkably cheap and which has been around for some time on this issue. The issue was debated on 5 July, in Committee on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. On that occasion, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, offered sympathy in abundance:

"I am not unsympathetic to the aims of the clause but I would prefer to bring the matter to the attention of Treasury Ministers and to discuss it with them."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 5 July 1990; c. 542.]

We know that some Treasury Ministers have been busy since, but I wonder whether the Under-Secretary of State has had time to discuss the matter with the Treasury Minister.

The Under-Secretary of State put the cost of the measure for the United Kingdom at £50 million. That is what it would cost the Inland Revenue if it were to be approved. He said that it is not section 505 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 which poses the obstruction to the extension of charitable status to sports clubs but the terms set out in the Pemsel case for the definition of charity. Those terms are the relief of poverty, the advancement of education, the advancement of religion or other purposes beneficial to the community. Those definitions are far from set in tablets of stone. They are capable of being amended to take account of changing social circumstances or of desirable social ends. There are manifest grounds for doing so in the present context.

There is another definition which we have to get round and which has to be cast aside in the argument: that is what has been termed the doctrine of "mere sport". That stems from the Nottage case in 1895, which is one of the benchmark cases in the definition of charities and the exclusion of sport. On that occasion, Lord Justice Lopes said:

"a gift, the object of which is the encouragement of a mere sport or game primarily calculated to amuse individuals apart from the community at large, cannot upon the authorities be held to be charitable, though such a sport or game is to some extent beneficial to the public . . . If we were to hold the gift before us to be charitable we should open a very wide door for it would then"—

horror of horrors—

"be difficult to say that gifts for promoting bicycling, cricket, football, lawn tennis, or any other outdoor game were not charitable for they promote the health and bodily well-being of the community."

I would say, "Well, exactly." Those are precisely the reasons why those activities should, in their amateur form, be eligible for charitable status. That may not have been obvious to Lord Justice Lopes in 1895, but to most people looking around society today it should be manifestly obvious.

It should also be obvious that the £50 million which the Exchequer might lose through this measure would not be a loss in a meaningful sense but an investment. Every £1 million spent on the promotion of amateur sport and encouraging young people to take up healthy pursuits or on equipment and facilities in which to pursue such activities is several pounds saved in terms of anti-social behaviour, vandalism and the other activities that young people will find to engage in if such provisions are not available to them.

Any society that invests in its young people would put much more money into sport and leisure activities than ours does. The Government pay lip service to sport to try to get political mileage out of it whenever the opportunity presents itself. This is an opportunity to put something into sport.

The "floodgates" about which Lord Justice Lopes was so concerned have already begun to let through a trickle via court judgments. There is an unexpected symbol of liberalism in this debate in the person of Lord Hailsham. In Inland Revenue Commissioners *v.* McMullen in 1981, he observed that the legal conception of charity and the educated man's ideas about education are not static but evolve with the changing ideas about social values. With one leap, casting aside the views of lower courts, Lord Hailsham and his colleagues were prepared to extend charitable status to the Football Association Youth Trust. It is interesting to note the grounds on which the decision was reached. A report of the case stated:

"The trust was one which was 'to organise or provide or assist in the organisation and provision of facilities which will enable and encourage pupils of schools and universities in any part of the United Kingdom to play association football or other games or sports' in such a way as ' to assist in ensuring that due attention is given to the development of such pupils as well to the development and occupation of their minds'."

That is exactly the purpose for which sports clubs, organisations and ruling bodies exist in—I stress—their amateur form. If the spirit of the McMullen case were extended to sport in general, it would meet the aims of the new clause. The Government should make that leap.

However, there was a caveat. Even in the McMullen case, sport was to be given that status not in its own right but as an adjunct to education. We can again see the elitism. According to the report:

"Lord Hailsham explained that he was not deciding even that a gift for physical education per se and not associated with persons of school age or just above would necessarily be a good charitable gift."

The McMullen case was tied specifically to the fact that this sport took place within the school or university context. That is illogical. We are talking about social need and about the social benefit that sport can provide. In many communities, by definition sport takes place at places other than schools and universities. The places that most need sports facilities and active sports clubs and voluntary organisations are unlikely to have universities sitting in the middle of them.

According to the McMullen judgment, the only place to which charitable status can be extended is within the context of schools and universities. That anomaly should be corrected. The fact that youngsters are out working from the age of 16, without access to higher or further education, should not be grounds for further discrimination against them, the clubs to which they belong and the pastimes that they wish to pursue.

There is an overwhelming case for extending the definition of charitable status to include sports clubs. As long ago as 1976, the Goodman report recommended that

"the encouragement of sport and recreation should be recognised as an independent charitable object provided the necessary elements of altruism and benefit to the community are present."

I stress the word "independent". In the past, sport has occasionally crept in for charitable purposes, as in the

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

McMullen case, as an adjunct to education, army efficiency, improving social welfare or even religion. In the McMullen case, the Charity Commissioners and the House of Lords recognised that healthy sport improves the conditions of life, and that was sufficient grounds to extend charitable status to it.

If the Minister recognises tonight that, alongside other definitions of charity, sport is wholly worthy of charitable status, it would do the Government credit, give some credibility to their posturing support of sport, cost them very little and be an excellent social investment for all of us.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): There is much to be said for the amendment. I do not merely say that because my best man, Adrian Metcalfe, was in the great Olympic team with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who moved the amendment, so we have a close link. The hon. and learned Gentleman has put his finger on a most important and fundamental need in our society—to encourage amateur sport more.

The current membership of the England Schools Football Association is much lower than it used to be. The number of participating schools in the London schools sport's organisations—I know them well, as I am president of two—has declined seriously over the past few years, which reflects the serious decline in sport in schools.

I am keen on the clause for this reason more than any other. In some areas, only one primary school in eight plays cricket, in others no soccer or other team games are played, often because no teachers are willing to take part in activities out of school. That follows recent industrial disputes in schools, and it is a sad outcome. It is also a result of the movement, especially by left-wing education authorities—*[Interruption.]* The Labour party must face up to this and not start barracking. Well, they can barrack if they like, but I shall say it.

The Inner London education authority, in its early days, did a great deal to establish sport—I worked with it throughout its existence, so I know it well—including competitive sport in schools. Then it went through a loony period, when it was dominated by the left wing of the Labour party and it opposed all competitive sport in schools. It set up a committee, headed by its own former senior physical education inspector, Professor Peter McIntosh as he became, which recommended that competitive sport be reintroduced to ILEA schools, but by then it was too late.

Gifted boys and girls played no sport in London schools for 10 or 15 years because of the way that the Labour party behaved. It is a great tragedy. I remember one superb cricketer at Dick Sheppard School—a West Indian boy of about 15. The only cricket he could play at that school was with a bit of stick in the playground and a painted wicket against the wall, because the school would not allow competitive sport.

Mr. Boateng *indicated assent.*

Mr. Greenway: I am glad to see that the hon. Member nods his head in agreement. It is absolutely true.

He could have played for England or the West Indies, whichever he qualified for. He was a fine boy, but he was denied cricket. If the new clause is successful, that would not happen again. I feel sure that he would be in Streatham cricket club or one of the many good clubs south of the river—there are many good clubs north of the river, too. Those clubs would be able to put more effort into encouraging youngsters into clubs and into their teams.

It is imperative to recognise that children are competitive and need competitive sport. These games always take place under the supervision of highly qualified referees, who can curb and control any displays of bad temper. If the English soccer team had been underpinned by the playing of soccer in every school, we, not West Germany, would have been world champions.

There is no sign that teachers will be paid to take schools out for sporting events. Some of us think that they never should be. Throughout my 23 years of teaching, I took out a team every week and regarded it as part of my professional duties—I loved doing it, too. But many teachers will not do that unless they are paid for it. Perhaps they should be—but I do not think that they will be. So we have to look to the clubs to produce our future cricketers, tennis players, soccer players and rugby players. They need the support that they would get from Government acceptance of the new clause.

10.45 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The new clause has a great deal of merit. I must declare an interest, in that from the age of 11 or 12 onwards I was a member of a Bradford league cricket club. I have continued to take an interest in cricket to this day. The great days of Yorkshire cricket came about because of the enormous strength of league cricket in that county, which provided a superb nursery for the Yorkshire cricketers who formed the backbone of all the good pre and post-war English sides.

Things have changed. I support some sort of tax concession for amateur clubs, whether they play cricket, soccer, or rugby league, a slowly growing sport in the north of England which should be encouraged. When I played for Saltaire in the Bradford league, the team was always handicapped because the beautiful ground in which the club played—Roberts park—was established by Sir Titus Salt, who owned the adjacent mill and the surrounding 800 or so houses. He was a strong temperance man, which meant that if the club had wished to do so it could not have sold alcohol to boost its proceeds in order to sustain the game of cricket.

Some clubs in the various leagues provide a bar and derive a great deal of revenue from it. It would, of course, be up to the Revenue to determine whether the resources of a club came mainly from its bar facilities or from the sporting element; if from the former, presumably clubs would fail to obtain tax concessions. That seems fair.

Many local authorities cannot afford to provide sporting facilities because their first priority must be to provide adequate wind and waterproof buildings—and textbooks and laboratory facilities to meet the needs of the national curriculum, for which they have a statutory obligation; so sporting facilities inevitably come lower down the list of priorities. Now more than ever there is a need for club facilities, because the schools are in some difficulty. My son, who, I need hardly add, went to a comprehensive school, wanted to play cricket at school throughout his time there, but he could not because the local authority could never produce the money necessary to lay on adequate drainage for the school playing fields.

Clubs are currently being subverted to a degree, because the Government tell them to go out into the private sector to obtain support. The tobacco companies, for example, are not averse to providing money in an ironic combination in which we all support the use and development of sporting facilities because that generates good health and good physique—and a number of other qualities—but that is often brought about because of the financial aid given by the very companies that want to sell cigarettes, which have precisely the reverse effect, and cause huge costs to the national health service.

If the provisions make amateur clubs more independent from the possibility of being subverted by dubious outside sponsorships, that is all to the good. If a club is promoting

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

either an amateur athletics team, which is to visit, say, a competition in London, it is tempting to receive £1,000 or £2,000 for support in the competition from a cigarette company, and it is hard to ignore such offers and to say, "We're going to stand on principle and won't accept the money." A tax concession will make the clubs that bit more independent, which is a very good thing.

In the past two or three years, when we have seen soaring house prices and the development of speculative building, sports grounds have come under increasing threat. Clubs often decide to sell all or part of a ground and to reduce their facilities because they have been tempted by the big money that has been made available from that source. That has now diminished to an extent, but it is an ever-present threat.

Saltaire, the club which I mentioned earlier, is under some threat—as is the park—from a possible trunk road development. The Government will not provide independent legal advice and representation for trunk road inquiries, but there is no reason why clubs should not have not financial comfort but some financial security that would enable them at least to meet such considerations with greater confidence than at the moment.

Most of the amateur clubs that I know are struggling, week in, week out to make ends meet and to meet the expenses of promoting the sport with which they are involved because they love it. That is the basic reason. They are committed to it and want to encourage youngsters to enjoy the pleasure, skill and exuberance that people find either in participating in or watching sport —of whatever sort, be it rugby league, rugby union, soccer, cricket or hockey.

The proposal has much merit and I shall be interested to hear whether the Government are to give it sympathetic consideration to the extent of accepting it. As has been said, sympathy is around in fairly large quantities in nearly every debate on tax matters and the House—and, more importantly, the sporting clubs outside—would welcome something more substantial. Provided there is the caveat of a definition that allows the Revenue to seek out the genuine cases, the new clause seems to have a good deal of merit.

Dr. Marek: I shall be brief but I hope that my brevity will not be taken as a sign of lack of interest. The new clause is important. Both Opposition and Conservative Members agree that something needs to be done to encourage more people to take part in sport and to give them the opportunity to do so. That could be done by giving local authorities more powers and the ability perhaps to undertake more sporting enterprises in their areas. It could also be done by bringing sport within the charity net. That is what the new clause seeks to do.

We on the Opposition Front Bench see difficulties with wording the new clause tightly enough to achieve the desired aims of the new clause and nothing more and to ensure that there are not too many loopholes. I shall be interested to hear what the Economic Secretary has to say, but I fear that the new clause drafted by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) needs to be much longer.

Charity law is in an unsatisfactory state. I know that the Government have proposed measures to reform it. Perhaps sport should be examined carefully as part of any reorganisation of charity law. Sport could perhaps be brought in under a reformed charity law which could require, for example, that accounts would be vetted by the Charity Commissioners. If accounts were not submitted or were not in order, a body would not be allowed to call itself a charity.

There are many difficulties in charity law. Clearly the law is not good enough at present. However, I do not wish to detract from the Opposition's general sympathy with the intentions behind the new clause. I said that I should be brief and I have been. I hope that the Economic Secretary will be able to give us some solace. If nothing can be done this time, perhaps the whole matter could be examined with a view to giving sport some encouragement in later Budgets.

Mr. Ryder: I shall follow the example of the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and be as brief as possible. Sport has always played a central part in my life, as it has in that of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). However, I have never participated in any sport with anything approaching his distinction.

As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, section 505 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 exempts from tax most sources of charity income, including investment income and trading income when the trade is exercised as a primary purpose of the charity or is carried out by beneficiaries of the charity. However, there is a further condition. The exemptions apply only if the income is used for charitable purposes.

As the hon. Member for Wrexham surmised, the new clause is seriously defective in the way in which it seeks to achieve what I assume to be its intention. It attempts to bring certain bodies involved in amateur sport into section 505 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 alongside charities. However, that would not be sufficient to secure tax exemption. To achieve that objective, the income of the amateur sporting bodies would have to be used for charitable purposes. It is a well-established principle, as several hon. Members have made clear, that sport and recreation as such are not charitable activities. Therefore, the new clause would have little or no effect as it is drafted.

The case for providing a tax exemption for sporting bodies of various types has been considered many times in the past, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East observed and the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) emphasised with generous use of examples from the past.

A new clause on associations engaged in encouraging the development of sport or in representational functions was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East mentioned it. That was two years ago during the Report stage of the Finance Bill. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) tabled a similar new clause in Committee.

The Government receive many requests for tax exemption from a variety of bodies, and I do not deny that amateur sporting clubs are a worthy cause, as are most of the organisations that make such a request. They can all plead that they are deserving causes in one way or another, but the tax system is not, and never has been, a good way of judging their merits.

One of the problems faced by those who propose exemptions is defining their targets. In the case of sporting bodies, it is particularly difficult to draw a suitable boundary. Where does sport end and other recreational and leisure activities begin?

11 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway: It sounds as though my hon. Friend the Minister may not deal with the important argument of where children are to go if they cannot receive sports coaching and teaching at school. Does he accept that children are in every sense amateurs and that they would be assisted by the clause, were he able to accept it?

Mr. Ryder: I listened carefully to my hon. Friend, but I am not sure of the relevance of his point to new clause 13.

Does the definition of sport extend, for example, to chess; bridge, in which the hon. Member for Wrexham excels; fox hunting; tiddlywinks, which is a sport in which my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) excels; or even to synchronised swimming? As a Treasury Minister, I feel unable to pass judgment or to draw the line—and the terms of the new clause provide no help in trying to ensure a clear dividing line between sport and recreational or leisure activities.

Mr. Wilson: Fortunately, to comply with the spirit if not the letter of the new clause, the Minister does not have to make any such judgment. It is only necessary to accept that the fourth condition, in pencil—that the activity should be to the benefit of the community—encompasses sport or leisure activities. That matter, as with the first three conditions, should be for the judgment of the bodies that control charities. There is no strict dividing line, but none is needed. An organisation's case would be judged, just as in the case of any organisation applying under the other three headings, on its merits. All that is needed is for the definition of activities of benefit to the community to be more generously interpreted, to allow at least sporting and leisure activities to be included.

Mr. Ryder: If I interpret accurately the remarks of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, who is a Labour Front-Bench spokesman, he is asking us to change charity law to embrace sport. I do not know whether his comments amount to a commitment by the Labour party to do any such thing.

Mr. Wilson: I speak as a member of the Labour Front Bench on Scottish matters, and I assure the Minister that in our deliberations on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill, which overhauls the law in respect of Scottish charities, my party supported the principle embraced by new clause 13, with the caveat that the cost implications should be identified before we could make any blanket commitment. It is important to obtain from the Minister tonight the same degree of commitment to the principle involved, rather than get bogged down in specifics.

Mr. Ryder: The definition of a charity has been established by case law in the courts, which has confirmed that sport is not a charity. The Government stick by the decisions made by the courts and we have no present intention of changing charity law in that respect.

The new clause would have no cost, but, because of the drafting defects I have described, the cost of exemption for bodies concerned with sport and recreation is difficult to estimate. It would depend on how the definitional problems I have described were resolved. If I were to take a broad definition of sport and recreational activities, the cost could easily be the £50 million a year mentioned by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East.

Amateur sporting clubs unquestionably provide a great deal of pleasure to people. However, I cannot recommend that my hon. Friends should accept the new clause.

Mr. Cryer: If the Minister rejects the new clause, is he prepared to introduce regulations on it? Given the massive amount of legislation already approved by the House, I am sure that the Treasury has powers of delegated legislation. It has never baulked at providing definitions when that has suited its purpose. I do not agree with the reasons that the Minister has given for not accepting the new clause, but surely he would be prepared to introduce a draft statutory instrument to encapsulate our ideas on definition. At least that would show that the Government have some sympathy with our argument.

Mr. Ryder: My answer is similar to that which I gave to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North—at present the Government do not have any plans to introduce a statutory instrument of the kind envisaged by the hon. Gentleman.

For the reasons I have given during the course of the debate, I ask my hon. Friends to reject the new clause should the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East press it to a Division.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: With the leave of the House I shall reply.

In the argot of the summer game, the Minister has played a straight bat. I would have taken his comments about what he described as serious defects in the new clause with a little more enthusiasm had he gone on to say how much he supported the principle and how soon the Government would introduce a clause, which met all his criticisms and which would achieve the result sought by the new clause.

The Government's reliance upon the law should be put in its proper context. The decision in Pemsel was taken in 1891 and I fancy that the notion of what is or is not the public interest for the benefit of the community has advanced since then. If there is concern about the demarcation between what might or might not fall on the side of charitable activity, the principle of the benefit of the community must be one that is open to interpretation, as is the argument on the promotion of education. I doubt whether amateur sport would create greater problems than the existing four categories recognised in the decision in Pemsel.

Whether the payment of rugby players would negate the effect of the clause is a matter of fact and circumstance in each case. If the principal activity of the club in question was to promote professional sport, clearly it would not be entitled to recognition. An obvious example of that argument—perhaps not so obvious to you, Madam Deputy Speaker—is the Greenock cricket club. It presently plays in the western union in Scotland and for this season it has engaged the services of Mr. Gordon Greenidge, a well-known West Indian cricketer. That club is an amateur club and Mr. Greenidge is being paid because the club has gone out of its way to raise funds for that purpose. The amateur purposes of the club are not in any way affected by Mr. Greenidge's employment. That is

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

a clear case where, although someone is employed on a professional basis, the club's primary purpose remains amateur. In each case, it will be a case of fact and degree, just as it must be a question of fact and degree in respect of any activity that falls within the four categories recognised as charitable purposes as a result of the decision in Pemsel in 1891.

It seems that the matter is of such importance that the House should have the chance to express its opinion, so I shall press it to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 26, Noes 145.

Division No. 295] **[11.09 pm**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cryer, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Nellist, Dave
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Primarolo, Dawn
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Livsey and
Mr. Ronnie Fearn.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 4

POOL BETTING DUTY

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 36, leave out '40' and insert '37'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this we may take Government amendment No. 1, and amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 38, leave out '28th May' and insert '5th April'.

Mr. Pendry: I am aware that amendment No. 4 will not strike much of a chord with the Government. However, their amendment deals with my proposal in amendment No. 5—apart from replacing "5th April" with "6th April" —and meets the points that I made and my hon. Friends raised in Committee on 28 June. We are grateful for that: it seems that at long last there are some genuine football buffs in the Treasury team.

I first raised the issue on the Floor of the House on 8 May. The Economic Secretary informed me then that he would enter into negotiations with the Football League and the pools promoters, and would make an announcement in the House shortly. He has now done precisely that. I am also grateful to him for giving me notice last Thursday of his intention to meet the points that I had put to him.

I welcome the Government's sensible move. It is imperative that our football clubs be given as much as possible of the £100 million that the Government propose to provide over the next five years up front, so that they can meet the tough timetable laid down by Lord Justice Taylor for them to adapt their grounds to comply with the recommendations in his report. For some clubs taking part in the UEFA high-risk matches, the deadline could be as close as 1993, and for all first and second division clubs it is August 1994.

Unfortunately, the Treasury's good sense has not been matched in the Home Department, which has been guilty of appalling complacency and incompetence in its failure to set up the Football Licensing Authority in time to meet its own deadline—a failure that was admitted today in a letter to me from the Minister of State, Home Office, Earl Ferrers. I hope that the Home Secretary will ensure—as a matter of the utmost urgency—that that vital body is set up without delay so that work can begin on ground improvements. Already, I fear, a whole year has been lost from the timetable.

We would be deluding ourselves—and every football supporter—if we believed that the Government's proposed reduction of the pool betting duty to 40 per cent. would be enough to address the financial problems that face our national game.

Mr. Beith: As the Minister for Sport is present, would it not help us to consider the pool betting aspect if he intervened at some point—perhaps in the hon. Gentleman's speech—to tell us what on earth is happening about the setting up of this body?

Mr. Pendry: Normally I would respond to such a question, but on this occasion I must come to the defence of the Minister for Sport. He has been stripped of most of his Football League responsibilities, which have been transferred to the Home Department. This time, at least, we can say that he is not responsible for the debacle. Nevertheless, I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

As we know, the Government have reduced the betting levy to its 1982 level. The Government inherited from the previous Labour Government the level at which they are now pitching the levy. That move flew in the face of the recommendations of the 1978 Rothschild Royal Commission on gambling which carried out an in-depth study of the game's finances and argued at that time that the 40 per cent. betting levy was too high and that it should be lowered to 37 per cent. My amendment seeks to implement that recommendation.

The Rothschild inquiry remains to this day the most systematic and thorough investigation into the finances of the game. Its recommendations have been strengthened by the Popplewell report on the Bradford disaster and Lord Justice Taylor's report on the Hillsborough disaster. If funds for football were important in 1978, they are vital now. However, the amendment is not just about funds for football. The House should consider the best way in which such funds should be administered. *[Interruption.]* Do I have the full support of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend seems to want to know what we were talking about. We were discussing sport and I suggested that, according to conversations taking place between the Minister for Sport, who was on his knees, and the new Secretary of State for Employment, who is sitting on the rebel Bench in the place normally occupied by the ex-Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has a three-year ban in Europe.

Mr. Pendry: I never doubted that my hon. Friend was following my speech and making pertinent comments across the Chamber.

We must act upon the royal commission's support for the establishment of a football levy board accountable to Parliament and with its chairman appointed by the Secretary of State. I readily accept that the Football Trust, which receives its funding from the pools promoters, has done much over the years to help the game, notably by its assistance in installing closed-circuit television at Football League grounds. That was a major factor in combating hooliganism. But surely no hon. Member thinks that that is the body to help bring about the necessary changes envisaged by Taylor and demanded by the Government.

A levy board is the answer. The idea of such a board did not begin with Rothschild because its roots are to be found in the Chester report of 1968, which envisaged the state of the national game and recommended that a statutory body be set up to channel the money raised from the reduction of the betting levy to the football authorities. Rothschild enthusiastically endorsed that recommendation, saying:

"There is no other way of achieving the objective of putting Association Football on a permanently sound footing."

Not surprisingly, that proposal received widespread support in the House and throughout the game. On 13 May 1985 my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) argued that such a move was essential. On 3 July 1985 my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) said that it was the only answer to the problem of financing football. Three weeks later my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said it was the only solution. If that was the case before the Taylor report recommended improvements to safety at our grounds, how much more essential is it now? Such reasoning prompted me to table the amendment.

In June 1986 I introduced a private Member's Bill which sought to establish a levy board. It received all-party backing and was supported not only by my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath, but by the hon. Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks), for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) and for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles). As recently as March 1987, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) told a meeting in Fulham that money must be channelled into the game and that a football levy board should be set up to do it.

As I have shown, such a board has all-party support and support within the game. On 30 January, when we debated Lord Justice Taylor's report, I said that my only criticism of Taylor was that his report did not fully consider the possible range of options for funding his recommendations. If he had gone into the matter in more depth, he would have found many supporters of my idea within football. I have the minutes of a meeting that I chaired in my capacity as chairman of the all-party football committee. Also involved were the Football Association, the Football League and the Professional Footballers Association. All concluded that a football levy board was the answer. I shall soon bring my remarks to an end, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I am aware of your perspicacity. I appreciate that you have allowed me to follow this line of argument for some time. I referred to the report of the Rothschild commission because I wished to connect the 37 per cent., for which I am asking, with a vehicle which I am sure the Government do not have in mind.

11.30 pm

By following the recommendations of the Rothschild commission, the Government would make available to football an extra £220 million over the next five years. That would be an addition of £120 million to the sum which is proposed. That may seem to be overly generous to some hon. Members, who may not be familiar with the latest estimates of the costs of implementing Lord Justice Taylor's proposals. I ask those hon. Members to reflect that, when the Government announced their decision to reduce the levy to 40 per cent., it was believed that the bill would be about £130 million. Since then, further research undertaken by the football authorities has revealed that to bring grounds up to the standards outlined in the full Taylor report four or five times that sum will be required.

There must be a transformation of the conditions that are offered to football supporters and not merely the meeting of minimum standards. Anything less would be to repeat the mistakes of the past, which were so heavily criticised by Lord Justice Taylor in his report. The condition that the Government should place on football for increasing revenue should be that it makes its grounds community grounds.

The House should be aware that the financial demands that are placed upon football do not stem solely from the demand for ground improvements. There is a crisis within the game that stems from the rocketing of the bills for the policing of matches in recent years. Charges for policing increased by 13 per cent. in 1987-88, and again by 23·2 per cent. in the season 1988-89, to stand at a record £4·1 million. However, arrests at or near grounds have declined quite markedly over the past three years.

On 19 June, I asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department to tell me the total charge that was levied on clubs for policing during the 1989-90 season. The Minister stated that such information was not collected centrally by the Government and that the Football Trust had not yet published a figure for that season. I can tell the Government and the trust that the total bill for the policing of league matches last season was £6,205,000. That figure was supplied to me by the Football League, and it is a staggering 50 per cent. increase on the previous record figure. That must call in question whether the funds that are made available to football by the Government are sufficient to meet the demands of Lord Justice Taylor. How can clubs make the necessary investment in ground improvements, given their limited resources that are already stretched to the limit, if they have to meet appalling bills for policing? More money is needed immediately, and the amendment would release that money.

I recognise that I shall not budge the Government. I suppose that my colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench would have heart attacks if I were to press the amendment to a Division and won the day. I am convinced, however, that next year one of my colleagues will be moving from the Treasury Front Bench an amendment similar to the one that I have moved and I am sure that it will pass into law. I shall not conclude without once more congratulating the Government on meeting amendment No. 5, which stands in my name, and in so doing meeting my wishes and those of my hon. Friends who argued so convincingly in favour of such a provision in Committee.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) put forward a convincing case for an amendment that would still leave the rate of pool betting duty significantly above that of corporation tax. He does not suggest a ludicrously low level of tax. The revenue forgone would be used for football improvements of the kind set out in the Taylor report. That seems to be eminently reasonable when one considers the task that faces football clubs, both large and small. Some of the larger clubs will face significant bills. That is without considering the plight of clubs such as Hibernian football club as it tries to pick up the pieces after Mr. Wallace Mercer's daring bid to have only one club in Edinburgh, or Berwick's struggle to finance the building of a new stand, having had to cancel all matches on windy days in case the stand blew down on spectators. It received that direction from the county council. That kind of problem may not yet be experienced by other football clubs.

Substantial costs are involved. They fall particularly heavily on those clubs that are not at the hardest commercial end of football—the ones that do not have the money to spend on players so as to attract the largest crowds. Few clubs are now able to do that. Therefore, I hope that the Government will consider sympathetically this attempt to extend the helpful proposals that they introduced in the Budget.

Dr. Marek: I do not believe that we shall divide the House on the amendments. I am pleased that the Economic Secretary, who I know takes a great interest in football, changed the date, after receiving representations from the Opposition. The Government amendment provides that the date 28 May should be deleted and that 6 April should be inserted in its place. I thank the Economic Secretary for the change. It will benefit football.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) made a pertinent point when he referred to football duty being 40 per cent. He proposes that it should be 37 per cent. The Government have increased taxation. As a percentage of gross domestic product, it is now about 38 per cent. In 1979 it was only about 34 per cent. A high taxation party is in office. Football pool duty was raised to 42·5 per cent. from 40 per cent. Therefore, I accept my hon. Friend's point that football pool duty is simply being reduced to what it was when the Government first took office in 1979. However, I am glad that it is being reduced. One wonders whether that reduction will be sufficient to enable football clubs to improve their grounds, but we are grateful for small mercies. I am glad that the Government have tabled the amendment, and I hope that it will be passed speedily into law.

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) has worked hard for sport for many years. I thank him for his kind and generous remarks about the Budget announcement about football and our subsequent decision on backdating, to which the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has just referred.

I promised in Committee that the Government would table an amendment to backdate the cut. Our amendment differs only slightly from amendment No. 5 and has exactly the same effect. It differs by only one day. Amendment No. 4 is the main Opposition amendment. It would reduce pool betting duty to 37 per cent. I am not persuaded by the hon. Gentleman's argument. I was aware that the Rothschild Royal Commission on gambling

recommended in 1977 a cut in pool betting duty from its then level of 40 per cent. to 37 per cent. Lord Justice Taylor, in his report on the Hillsborough disaster, considered Rothschild's proposal but, even so, the suggestion in his report was for a cut to 40 per cent., not 37 per cent. That is why we chose 40 per cent. in the Budget. It will release about £100 million over five years towards the cost of meeting the Taylor recommendations. It is a significant help to football grounds all over the country. I recognise that football will still have to find further money from its own resources, but it is right to strike a balance between self-help and the sort of help that the Government can provide with the assistance of the taxpayer.

In view of what I have said, I hope that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde will not press his amendments, particularly the last one to which I have alluded.

Mr. Pendry: I recognise that the Government are not enlightened enough as yet to meet the requirements of amendment No. 4. However, time will prove me right, and I believe that it will not be long before the House recognises the full weight of my argument. Nevertheless, I congratulate the Government on amendment No. 1. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 2, line 38, leave out '28th May' and insert '6th April'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Clause 11

BAD DEBTS

Mr. Chris Smith: I beg to move amendment No. 38, in page 7, line 9, leave out 'two years' and insert 'fifteen months'.

You will probably recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, that on 15 May we debated in Committee on the Floor of the House what was then clause 10 and is now clause 11. It relates to VAT relief for bad debts on VAT. Prior to the Budget, for the majority of traders, VAT had to be accounted for to Customs and Excise on the basis of VAT invoices issued, regardless of whether the money had been received. The VAT was paid to Customs and Excise even though the trader may not have received the VAT from the purchaser of the goods or services. That system caused particular problems if the debt was defaulted upon. Until the Budget, the trader could get the VAT back only if the debtor became formally insolvent. That meant going into bankruptcy or liquidation. If a debtor simply disappeared without going into formal liquidation, the debt could not be recovered from the debtor or from Customs and Excise.

The Government have introduced a welcome change in clause 11. We welcomed it when we debated the issue on 15 May. The Government are now proposing that if a trader has made provision for bad debt on VAT and the debt is not repaid after two years, the funds can be reclaimed from Customs and Excise. That is a step in the right direction.

On 15 May, we set out in detail why we felt that the two-year period was too long. If a formal bankruptcy occurred within nine to 12 months of the VAT being paid, the new rules would be less attractive to a trader than the old rules. We proposed two alternative and complementary mechanisms to sort out that problem. We proposed that the new and the previous systems should run in parallel, enabling a trader to receive relief on bad VAT debts by either of the two systems. The Government were not prepared to accept that.

11.45 pm

We also proposed a measure that would have reduced the waiting period for relief on bad debts from two years, which is the proposal in the Bill, to one year. That proposal was strongly supported by many small traders. On 15 May, the Economic Secretary, speaking from the Front Bench with all the authority of the Government, appeared to give our proposal a significant welcome. He said:

> "Our judgment was that two years is an appropriate period of time to elapse before a company decides that a debt cannot be recovered."

The hon. Gentleman went on:

> "I am aware of the strength of feeling expressed in the debate and by the many organisations that have made representations to the Treasury. For those reasons, I have concluded that there may be scope for further improvement in the scheme. We shall be examining that possibility between now and Report stage."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1990; Vol. 172, c. 814.]

That statement clearly showed that the Government were sympathetic to our proposal for a reduction, yet there is no Government amendment before us to give flesh to that commitment.

As a result, we have tabled this amendment, which would change the period from two years to 15 months. We are being more generous to Customs and Excise than we were in our original proposal. We believe that a 15-month period would be sensible and practical and would give better relief to businesses, especially small businesses, than the Government propose. It would be entirely within the spirit of the statements by the Economic Secretary on 15 May.

I hate to chide the Economic Secretary for a failure to live up to an indication that he gave in Committee, but we wish that the Government had been true to their word and had tabled an amendment such as amendment No. 38. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Beith: I support the case advanced by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) for a more generous recognition of the problems of business in dealing with bad debts. I, too, formed the impression that the Government had taken seriously the many representations about their proposed time scale. They seemed to recognise that this matter required another look, and I am disappointed that the look has not turned into an appropriate change in the Bill.

The hon. Member made clear at an earlier stage in the Bill what a serious problem this presented to the firm that he described as "Ryder associates"—or some such expression—if it had paid over a substantial sum in VAT to Customs and Excise at a time when an even more substantial sum remained outstanding from a company which had not paid it. He described how serious that would be, especially with present high interest rates, if the debt were spread over two years. I had hoped that the Government would recognise that this is a serious problem, and I look forward to the Minister having something to say on the subject tonight.

Mr. Ryder: In debate on what was then clause 10, in Committee of the whole House, I said that we would consider whether anything could be done to improve the

[Mr. Ryder]

Government's proposals on bad debt relief. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) were right to make their observations. I did so because of the view that some hon. Members expressed that our proposals did not go far enough.

Our proposals were a huge improvement for businesses, as is evidenced by the cost of £150 million a year that will result from the change. The decision was one of the most generous and well-received in my right hon. Friend's Budget. Any further change would be equally expensive.

Amendment No. 38, tabled by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, seeks to reduce the waiting period from two years to 15 months. In the past two months, we have given careful consideration to whether we could justify a further change, but we have come to the conclusion that we could not. Amendment No. 38 would cost about £120 million in this financial year. That is a large price to pay for the marginal improvement that it would make to the scheme. The only way that we could afford to make such a change would be to defer the start date of the scheme to 1 January 1990 instead of 1 April 1989, as announced by my right hon. Friend in his Budget.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Economic Secretary has estimated the cost of the change that we are proposing at £120 million. How can debts that are bad after 15 months, but are recovered within the subsequent nine months—that is, debts that are not bad at the end of two years—possibly amount to £120 million?

Mr. Ryder: Those figures were calculated by Customs and Excise. We gave a figure of £150 million as the estimated cost of the proposal that we announced at the time of the Budget. The figure of £120 million estimated for this financial year is a significant sum, especially when it is judged alongside the other measures that have been introduced in the Budget, and beside some measures suggested to us in amendments during the course of the Bill. It is a large price to pay for what I would describe as a marginal improvement.

If we were to accept the amendment, as I have described, it would ensure that the first claim was not made until 1 April 1991, as we had orginally planned. That would mean disappointing those who expected to be able to obtain relief in due course on debts that they incurred in the period between 1 April and 31 December 1989. That would also be too big a price for the majority of traders to have to bear to ease the position for a small minority. For that reason, and for the other reason that I gave earlier, we decided not to reduce the 24-month period on this occasion.

In view of the information that I have given the hon. Gentleman, I should be grateful if he saw fit to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Economic Secretary has said that he believes that the cost of such a change would be £120 million. I confess to considerable scepticism about how that figure was arrived at, but it is not for me to quarrel at this stage with the Treasury's figures. Perhaps it would be best to wait and see how the new system beds down—to retain a watching brief and possibly to return to this subject in a year's time.

I contest the view that our proposal represents purely a marginal improvement. That is not the view of business, which believes that it would be a great improvement.

We reserve the right to return to this issue. In the meantime, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 21

CARE FOR CHILDREN

Amendment proposed: No. 7, in page 11, line 20 leave out from '(1)' to end of line 25 and insert

'Where a benefit consists in the provision for the employee of care for a child, section 154 does not apply to the benefit to the extent that it is provided in qualifying circumstances.

(1A) For the purposes of subsection (1) above the benefit is provided in qualifying circumstances if—

(a) the child falls within subsection (1B) below.'.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider also Government amendments Nos. 8 and 9.

Mr. Boateng: We welcome the amendment, but we wish it was part of a cluster of amendments that would make the proposal more attractive and more in keeping with the needs of enterprises that are concerned to take up the option of providing these facilities for their workers. We are conscious of the fact that the most comprehensive survey available—of women who can use employer-provided creches—shows that fewer than 0·2 per cent. of them, or 198 of the 1·1 million people surveyed, could take advantage of provision of this sort.

The amendments will at least provide for the category of person with parental responsibility for a child or with a child or stepchild whom he or she maintains and who is resident with the employee. That category of parent, at least, will be able to take advantage of the child care and of the associated tax relief.

However, other categories are not so fortunate. In the hope that the Government will in due course produce measures to improve on this scheme, we draw to the attention of the House the circumstances of, for instance, Sainsbury, which is a progressive employer in the retail sector seeking to provide child care for its employees. It finds itself falling foul of the requirement that the employer and employee trying to benefit from this provision have to show that the employer is involved in the management of the relevant nurseries. Sainsbury and a number of other employers in the same position find that because of the way in which their business is conducted —Sainsbury has about 300 retail outlets—it is just not possible to provide the space at all their outlets in which to establish a creche or workplace nursery. Inevitably, such companies fall foul of this restrictive condition unless they are able so to organise their affairs—and, being primarily concerned with the provision of retail services, they are not —in such a way as also to free staff to take part in the management of day nurseries and creches. It simply is not practical.

Therefore, while welcoming the amendment, we are disappointed that it is so limited in its scope and in the relief that it brings to those who seek to expand their provision in this sector. We draw attention to that, but we shall not seek to divide the House on it.

12 midnight

Mr. Beith: The amendments slightly modify the Government's proposals, but not in any of the ways that employers would seek to make them effective, such as some of those already listed. The prospect of large numbers of employers having to be part of the management of a day nursery so that one trading estate can have a day nursery on it is daunting. The Government have opened up the extraordinary prospect that many of the firms that wish to co-operate in opening day nurseries may have to create a cumbersome management structure simply to satisfy the Government's conditions.

I am especially mystified about the precise impact of amendment No. 8. What is the intention behind paragraph (c)? As I understand it, (a) and (b) taken together mean that the child for whom the benefit is payable has to be one for whom the employee has parental responsibility and who is resident with the employee. However, there is an alternative condition in (c), which refers to a child whom the employee maintains at his expense. I am not sure that I understand what the Government are getting at, and it would be helpful if the Minister could tell us.

Do the Government mean that a divorced or separated woman who does not have custody of her children and whose children are living with her former husband nevertheless can obtain the relief and have the children sent to the workplace nursery at her workplace? If that is the purpose, why? If the objective of the relief is to direct it towards those women who make use of workplace nurseries to enable themselves to go to work and to enter the labour market, it does not seem to make a great deal of sense, and is a variant on what is already a narrow provision.

I should be grateful if the Government could explain precisely what they mean. Although I do not really expect them to provide us, again, with reasoning about why they have not made the whole provision a great deal wider, this aspect certainly puzzles me.

Mr. Lilley: This is a technical triplet of amendments to ensure that the definition of "a child" in the original clauses is appropriate.

Following publication of the Bill, it was put to us in representations that the definition in the Bill might in certain respects be too narrow and could preclude relief in certain unusual but entirely worthy circumstances. These include, for example, a relative looking after an orphaned child where there is no formal adoption or guardianship, a step parent who has not formally adopted a child, and prospective adoptive parents before final adoption. In these cases, if the child attended a workplace nursery, strictly no exemption would have arisen for the employee. We seek to put that right.

Mr. Beith: I fully understand that that is the effect of paragraphs (a) and (b) and it is most welcome, but can the Minister please explain the purpose of paragraph (c)?

Mr. Lilley: We are adding to "parental responsibility" a wider category to encompass any children resident with the employee and any child of the employee, including a stepchild, whom he or she maintains. I believe that that includes all the categories.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 8, in page 11, line 32 at end insert—

'(1B) The child falls within this subsection if—

(a) he is a child for whom the employee has parental responsibility,

(b) he is resident with the employee, or

(c) he is a child of the employee and maintained at his expense.'.

No. 9, in page 12 leave out lines 13 to 36 and insert—

'(5)In subsection 1(B)*(c)* above the reference to a child of the employee includes a reference to a stepchild of his.'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Amendment proposed: No. 6, in page 12, line 46 at end insert—

'(1A) In section 154(2) of the Taxes Act 1988 for the words "section 155" there shall be substituted the words "sections 155 and 155A".'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Boateng: We welcome the amendment. It follows a new course. It follows from amendment No. 40 which we tabled on the Floor of the House, when the matter last came before us. The Government accepted it in principle and we are glad to see that it has been worked through into the Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 25

DONATIONS TO CHARITY BY INDIVIDUALS

Amendment proposed: No. 10, in page 14, line 17 after 'payment', insert 'of a sum of money'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 14.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: We said in Committee that the word "payment" covered only a payment of money, yet as the Government have drafted the clause it could have a wider and, as it turned out in the course of the debate, unintended meaning. The amendments suggest that our worries were well founded. I can see that their purpose is to address our worries and to tidy up the Bill.

Mr. Ryder: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing our attention to the problem in Committee. As a result of his observations, we have made changes and I appreciate his help.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment proposed: No. 11, in page 14, line 23, after 'it', insert

"or, where the donor or a person connected with him does receive a benefit in consequence of making it, the relevant value in relation to the gift does not exceed two and a half per cent. of the amount of the gift and the amount to be taken into account for the purposes of this paragraph in relation to the gift does not exceed £250'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 12, 13 and 15.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The amendments derive from a suggestion that the Opposition made on the Floor of the House about training and enterprise councils. In Committee, again with regard to gift aid, we said that blanket anti-avoidance clauses which ruled out tax relief whenever the donor received any benefit, however small, were too wide and that a de minimis restriction should be introduced. At the time the Government rejected the idea, but they offered to reconsider. The amendments are a welcome result of that reconsideration.

Mr. Ryder: Again, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the assistance that he has provided. As a result of that assistance we have tabled the amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

[Mr. Ryder]

Amendment made: No. 12, in page 14, line 42, at end insert—

'(3A) For the purposes of subsections (2)(e) above and (3B) below, the relevant value in relation to a gift is—

(a) where there is one benefit received in consequence of making it which is received by the donor or a person connected with him, the value of that benefit;

(b) where there is more than one benefit received in consequence of making it which is received by the donor or a person connected with him, the aggregate value of all the benefits received in consequence of making it which are received by the donor or a person connected with him.

(3B) The amount to be taken into account for the purposes of subsection (2)(e) above in relation to a gift to a charity is an amount equal to the aggregate of—

(a) the relevant value in relation to the gift, and

(b) the relevant value in relation to each gift already made to the charity by the donor in the relevant year of assessment which is a qualifying donation for the purposes of this section.'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I beg to move amendment No. 41, in page 15, line 11, leave out

'shall be assessed and'

and insert

'in respect of so much of them as is equal to the payment and may be deducted in computing his total income the donor shall be'.

If the Government are grateful for our two small amendments to the gift aid clauses so far, I hope that they will be even more grateful for this amendment. We tackled the matter at some length in Committee so I shall not go over the issues again.

Amending the Bill along the lines that we suggest here could save Her Majesty's Government as much as £4 billion. We hold to the view that the Bill is unintentionally imperfectly drafted. We addressed that in Committee. We had a Division on the point. The Economic Secretary was somewhat hesitant to vote no. I hope that he has had time to reconsider and will accept this clarification of the intention of both the Opposition and the Government. Our aims are the same; we are arguing about the phraseology. I believe that we have it right in our amendment and that the Bill is still flawed.

Mr. Ryder: It is a pleasure to advise my hon. Friends to accept the Opposition's amendment. Again, I appreciate the assistance that the hon. Gentleman has given us, particularly in Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 13, in page 15, line 28, leave out 'subsection (2)' and insert 'subsections (2) and (3A)'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Clause 26

COMPANY DONATIONS TO CHARITY

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 15, line 46, at end insert—

'(1A) In subsection (1) after the word "payment" there shall be inserted the words "of a sum of money".'.

No. 15, in page 16, line 8, after 'it', insert

'and either the relevant value in relation to the payment exceeds two and a half per cent. of the amount given after deducting tax under section 339(3) or the amount to be taken into account for the purposes of this paragraph in relation to the payment exceeds £250.

(3BA) For the purposes of subsections (3B) above and (3BB) below, the relevant value in relation to a payment to a charity is—

(a) where there is one benefit received in consequence of making it which is received by the company or a connected person, the value of that benefit;

(b) where there is more than one benefit received in consequence of making it which is received by the company or a connected person, the aggregate value of all the benefits received in consequence of making it which are received by the company or a connected person.

(3BB) The amount to be taken into account for the purposes of subsection (3B)(b) above in relation to a payment to a charity is an amount equal to the aggregate of—

(a) the relevant value in relation to the payment, and

(b) the relevant value in relation to each payment already made to the charity by the company in the accounting period in which the payment is made which is a qualifying donation within the meaning of this section.'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Clause 28

Amendment proposed: No. 16, in page 18, line 18, leave out from 'shall' to end of line 19 and insert

'not be regarded as income for any income tax purpose'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 19, 21 and 22.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: These amendments were promised in Committee, when the parliamentary Labour party pointed out that the TESSA legislation as previously drafted probably meant that banks and building societies could not deduct the interest they paid on TESSAs, because such interest had to be disregarded

"for all purposes of the income tax."

We thought that that meant both as regards taxing it in the recipient's hands and allowing it as a deduction for the payers. The amendments alter that so that interest will be disregarded as income for the purposes of the Taxes Act 1988, which will allow it to be deducted for tax purposes by the payers.

Amendment No. 19 alters the old save-as-you-earn legislation. Although there is an interesting and esoteric point to make in that respect, I will not make it because the hour is late.

Sir William Clark: I am in a slight dilemma because the amendments concern savings. I really want to speak to schedule 5, in respect of Government amendment No. 29, but perhaps it will be for the convenience of the House if I make my points now.

The Government have encouraged savings, and one of the worrying aspects of schedule 5 is the implications that the Inland Revenue will have the power to make random tests of bank and building society accounts. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not quote MIRAS regulations at me, because they relate only to such interest in terms of loans, including relevant contractual deeds, and so on, and to persons holding such contracts or having the means of making such payments.

As to the receipt of interest from banks or building societies, now that the composite rate is being abolished and there are separate assessments for a husband and wife, I cannot comprehend why it is necessary for the Inland Revenue to have the power to undertake random tests of bank or building society accounts. If the Revenue has a suspicion that someone is not——

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would it not be appropriate for the right hon. Gentleman to declare one of his many and extensive interests?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that if the right hon. Gentleman has an interest to declare, he will declare it.

Sir William Clark: I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's point of order, because I have nothing to do with banks. I am a vice-president of the Building Societies Association, which is a non-commercial body, as are members of the hon. Gentleman's own party. My remarks refer to the right of the Inland Revenue to examine a person's account at random.

If the Revenue suspects that an individual is not making a proper return of his or her income, it has the right to obtain through the commissioners of income tax authority to examine any account. It is rather churlish of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) to accuse me of not disclosing an interest when the position that I hold is purely honorary. If the hon. Gentleman received such an honour, I would congratulate him.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to give a categorical assurance that if the Revenue wants to examine a bank or building society account, it must have justification for so doing—but not at random. Why should the Revenue investigate a joint bank account, for example, if there is no suspicion that the husband and wife concerned are guilty of tax evasion?

I hope that my hon. Friend can assure me that under section 482 random sampling will not take place and that the Revenue's powers will remain as they are, which means that it can only investigate where there is just cause and a reasonable chance that tax is being evaded. If we are not given that assurance, we are on a slippery slope, as the Inland Revenue acquire more and more powers. We would then have a big-brother state, which I want to avoid.

12.15 am

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) has sought my assurance that we shall not undertake fishing expeditions. There is no question of such expeditions taking place. The Revenue gave banking representatives that categorical assurance when they met on 3 July. I am more than happy to repeat and emphasise that undertaking.

Sir William Clark: I wonder whether my hon. Friend can confirm that that means that random sampling is out?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend referred to section 482(11)(aa) which ensures that the

"regulations may make provision for the inspection of books, documents and other records"

The terms of that provision are almost precisely the same as those that appear in the MIRAS legislation to which my hon. Friend also referred.

I understand that, in the consultations that have been taking place with the banking industry, it has emphasised that no responsibility can be placed on bank staff other than for the most minimal compliance. That means that the whole burden of compliance falls on the Revenue. It is therefore essential for audit purposes that Revenue officials have access to records and documents and are supplied with information that will enable them to identify account holders who receive interest without any tax deduction.

I assure my hon. Friend that there is no question of fishing expeditions. The Revenue gave banking representatives that categorical assurance when they met on 3 July, and I repeat it.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment proposed: No. 17, in page 20, line 10, at end insert—

'(2) The reference in section 326A to a deposit account shall be taken to include a reference to a share account with a building society, and accordingly that section, section 326B and subsection (1) above shall apply to such an account with the necessary modifications.".'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The amendment is not contentious. It ensures that building society accounts qualify as TESSAs provided that the rest of the criteria in section 326A are satisfied.

The amendment is evidence of sloppy drafting. Had the legal flaw not been spotted in time, most building society TESSAs would not, strictly speaking, have qualified as such. The Government were therefore right to correct that flaw.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 20, line 14, at end insert—

'(3) In section 149B of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979, for subsection (4) there shall be substituted—

"(4) Any bonus to which section 326 (certified contractual savings schemes) or 326A (tax-exempt special savings accounts) of the Taxes Act 1988 applies shall be disregarded for all purposes of the enactments relating to capital gains tax.".'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Clause 29

EXTENSION OF SAYE

Amendments made: No. 19, in page 20, line 20, at end insert—

'(aa) in that subsection, for the words "be disregarded" onwards there shall be substituted the words "not be regarded as income for any income tax purposes.";'.

No. 20, in page 20, leave out lines 33 to 37.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Clause 50

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES: APPLICATION OF ENACTMENTS

Amendment proposed: No. 23, in page 40, line 22, after 'section', insert

'may make different provision for different cases and'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Nicholas Brown: We accept that the amendment concerns a minor drafting point.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 51

AUTHORISED UNIT TRUSTS

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 44, line 27, at end add—

'Authorised unit trusts: unfranked income trusts

468.—(1) This section applies where:—

(a) as regards a distribution period ending after 31st December 1990 a dividend is treated by virtue of section 468(2) as paid to a unit holder (whether or not income is in fact paid to the unit holder), and

(b) all or part (in this section the "appropriate portion") of the dividend is paid from sources other than franked investment income, and

[Mr. John Watts]

(c) the dividend is treated as paid by the trustees of a unit trust scheme which is an authorised unit trust as respects the accounting period in which the distribution period falls, and

(d) arrangements with the Board as provided in section 468I are in force in respect of such unit trust scheme.

(2) Where this section applies, if the unit holder to whom the dividend is treated as paid is not resident in the United Kingdom for the whole of the year of assessment in which the dividend is treated as paid and is resident in a qualifying country, he shall be entitled, on the payment (or deemed payment) of the appropriate portion of the dividend, to payment by the trustees of such unit trust scheme of the tax credit (if any) to which an individual resident in the United Kingdom would have been entitled had he received such dividend, and no United Kingdom tax shall be payable in respect of such dividend or the amount of the tax credit so paid.

(3) For the purposes of sub-section (2) above, a person shall be treated as not resident in the United Kingdom and resident in a qualifying country for a year of assessment if this is proved on a claim in that behalf made to the Board.

(4) Where units are held under a trust and the person who is the beneficiary in possession under the trust is the sole beneficiary in possession and can, by means either of the revocation of the trust or the exercise of any power under the trust, call upon the trustees at any time to transfer the units to him absolutely free from the trust, that person shall, for the purposes of this section, be treated as the unit holder.

(5) The trustees shall certify in writing to the investor the appropriate portion of the dividend together with the amount of the tax credit referable thereto and to which a recipient is entitled to a payment as provided in this section.

(6) In this section "qualifying country" means any country which is at any time during such year of assessment a member state of the European Economic Community or any other country which is for the time being designated for the purposes of this section as a qualifying country by order made by the Board.

Authorised unit trusts: payment by trustees

4681

(1) The trustees of an authorised unit trust may enter into arrangements with the Board in respect of unit holders who would, if such arrangements were in force, be entitled to payment of the associated tax credit under section 468H.

(2) Under such arrangements where a dividend falling within section 468H is treated by virtue of section 468(2) as paid to unit holders in respect of whom the arrangements have been made:—

(a) the trustees may pay to such unit holders the amount of the associated tax credit in respect of the appropriate portion of the dividend (the "additional amount"); and

(b) all additional amounts so paid shall be set against advance corporation tax which the trustees are liable to pay for the return period in which the dividend was paid and shall discharge a corresponding amount of that liability.

(3) The Board shall not make arrangements under this section unless they are satisfied that the payment of the additional amounts shall not ensure to the benefit of persons other than those entitled thereto.

(4) The effective period of such arrangements shall begin with the date on which the arrangements are made, or such later or earlier date as may be specified in the arrangements, and shall end with the date on which either party receives notice in writing from the other terminating the arrangements, or such later date as may be specified in the notice.

(5) The trustees shall render the Board an account at such time, and containing such particulars relating to the dividend as the Board may require.".

The amendment has been suggested by the Unit Trust Association, and in case Opposition Front Bench spokesmen get excited, I have no pecuniary interest in any unit trust or any association for unit trusts, but I have an interest in the general welfare of the industry.

The purpose of the amendment is to improve the competitive position of the unit trust industry in the developing European market. At present, people living in most European countries will receive less income from a unit trust based in the United Kingdom than they could derive from a local fund. That is certainly true of gross receipts and, in some cases, of net receipts as well. That is because United Kingdom trusts are unique in paying corporation tax on their income. As far as I am aware, no European fund suffers from an equivalent tax impost.

Income funds are expected to be a centrepiece of the export ranges of the United Kingdom fund managers seeking to develop the market in Europe. They will be competitive only if they can at least match the income paid out by local funds. The amendment proposed by the Unit Trust Association allows United Kingdom unit trusts to pay out more income so that they can match the local funds. The additional pay-out is the same amount as United Kingdom taxpayers would receive as a tax credit. That removes the disadvantage that they suffer as a result of corporation tax.

The amendment involves no tax cost to the United Kingdom revenue, since, in effect, it will apply only to income on marginal businesses that would not otherwise be flowing through the United Kingdom, and there may be some small increase in United Kingdom tax revenue because, if the fund managers are successful, they will be paying corporation tax on the profits that they earn.

I raised this matter in Committee and I welcomed another concession that the Government had made to the unit trust industry. My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary agreed to look further at the proposals from the Unit Trust Association and, good as his word, as we would always expect of him, he wrote to me with his further thoughts. I thank him for that. He is certainly sympathetic to the desire of the unit trust industry to establish a bridgehead in Europe and to increase our invisible earnings through that mechanism.

My hon. Friend raised a number of points in his letter. He said that United Kingdom unit trusts benefit from favourable withholding tax rates on overseas dividends compared with Luxembourg funds that had no treaty benefits. I am told that Luxembourg is not considered the threat. The major competition in this market for United Kingdom managed funds of non-United Kingdom equities—American or Japanese securities—is expected to come more from France and Germany, which have tax treaty networks comparable with those that we enjoy.

My hon. Friend also objected that the proposed change is complicated and would be expensive to administer. The legislation involves only the new clause that has informed my amendment. Managers who are not involved in the export business do not need to change their procedures; others will merely need to identify overseas investors who qualify for a gross distribution, and include on the distribution voucher a note of the amount that represents a tax credit.

Any extra burden would fall principally on fund managers who chose to operate under such a scheme. Clearly, they think that it would be worth while. They should be given the fiscal opportunity to develop what they perceive to be a major opportunity to increase our invisible earnings. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend to look again at the matter. I ask him not necessarily to accept my amendment this evening, but at least to give me an undertaking that he will conduct further studies with his officials, perhaps with a view to making some change in next year's Finance Bill.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: There are a range of difficulties in getting British financial products wholly compatible with the practice that pertains in other European countries. It is particularly difficult to make them compatible with the systems used by our EC partners in time for 1992. The hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) seeks to address one of the issues involved. As I understand it, his amendment would stop the United Kingdom charging withholding tax, to the extent that the distribution was attributable to income that was taxable in the hands of the unit trust.

A balance must be achieved in deciding whether the yield to the United Kingdom Exchequer from unit trusts —despite what the hon. Gentleman said, I think that there would be some reduction in yield—would be offset by the advantages that would accrue to the United Kingdom by making unit trusts more attractive to investors from the Common Market. The Government must achieve that balance when deciding whether to accept the amendment.

It is difficult for the Opposition to make a judgment, because detailed advice from the Revenue is available to the Financial Secretary but not directly to us, although I am sure that he will explain to us in a few moments.

I am neutral on the amendment. I commend the hon. Member for Slough for at least trying to address one of the several complex and difficult issues that will have to be addressed before 1992. Delay hurts this country. They are not easy matters to solve, but the hon. Gentleman is right to attempt to do so, and we do not want to thwart him in that.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) is right to say that we discussed and corresponded on the amendment, which he asked me to reconsider. I have done so, and I will explain why I did not table a similar amendment at this stage.

The amendment is likely to affect only 5 per cent. of funds—95 per cent. of unit trusts are already in a beneficial position vis-a-vis their European counterparts—and only in some countries. In France and Holland, for example, the potential investor would be no better off than he is as a result of the change, because the foreign dividends would flow straight to foreign shareholders. If foreign tax authorities do not like dividends flowing straight to foreign shareholders, they may alter the tax treatment to offset it, and we would be back to where we started. There would always be some benefit for those promoting such funds, because there would be opportunities for tax evasion where money is paid gross rather than net, but we should not go out of our way to promote that.

In the light of my hon. Friend's comments, I shall leave a message that my successor—I can freely impose burdens on my successor that I might not place on myself—should reconsider the amendment, without commitment, before the next Budget.

Mr. Watts: I thank my right hon. Friend for that sympathetic response. I wish him well in his new responsibilities and beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 74

DEBTS OF OVERSEAS GOVERNMENTS ETC.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I beg to move amendment No. 42, in page 63, line 26, leave out

'subject to subsection (3) below'

and insert 'in certain circumstances".

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 43, in page 63, line 40, at end insert—

'(2A) Subject to subsection (3) below, the circumstances in which subsections (1) and (2) apply are where either—

(a) the loss results from a transaction with a connected party, or

(b) within a period of twelve months before and after the event giving rise to the loss the company enters into transactions in the same class of debt with the result that the total amount owed to the company by debtors of that class is no less at the end of that period than it was at the beginning;

and for the purpose of this subsection parties are connected and debts are of the same class if they meet the conditions laid down in regulations.

(2B) Regulations under subsection (2A) above shall be made by the Treasury but shall be subject to annulment by a resolution of the House of Commons.'.

Mr. Viggers: There is an important point of principle at stake and the amounts involved are large.

Clause 74 and the amendments deal with the treatment of sovereign debt and the rights of banks to write off bad debts against profits. I have always understood that it is an essential point of principle that taxation should be levied on income or profits, which should be properly assessed. It is the duty of directors and auditors to provide a true and fair view of a company's accounts so that taxation can be levied according to that true and fair view. According to those principles, it is critical that bad or irrecoverable debts are written down or written off and proper deductions allowed. Clause 74 breaches that principle. Sovereign debt write-offs are allowed only on a formula basis of 5 per cent a year of the original debt. Prudence may require a higher level of write-off: the directors and auditors may well decide that it is appropriate for larger deductions to be made from the company's accounts. The Bill as currently drafted, however, prevents tax relief in that year.

12.30 am

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for writing to me and spelling out the Government's view. I also listened to the arguments that were advanced in Committee. The Government have presented three arguments in favour of clause 74 in its original form. First, they seek to show that it will benefit everyone to introduce certainty and clarity. Secondly, they argue that, according to the Red Book, they will gain some £200 million in the current year as a result of their proposed change. I think that the second argument contradicts the first; while certainty and clarity may indeed be introduced, the banks will lose out to the tune of £200 million this year.

The third argument—it is to the credit of my right hon. Friend and his colleagues that they have not tried to make a great point of this—is that banks could engage in tax avoidance. My amendments take account of that possibility and provide for anti-avoidance, but only in cases in which banks have been responsible for avoidance by way of swaps with other banks or deals with connected persons.

In my view, the arguments against the clause as drafted are strong. First, it sets a precedent. In many instances, directors and auditors will seek to put forward their own views on the valuation of assets: it is fundamental that they should be allowed to do so, and that tax should be levied according to their valuation. In the case of, for example, the valuation of properties, stock, goodwill—my right hon. Friend and I both know a good deal about that—and unexplored oil acreage, it is necessary for directors and auditors to form a true and fair view. If their commercial judgment is to be segregated from taxation, I believe that that is a point of principle that the Government will live to regret.

The clause provides for the Treasury to produce regulations. Let me say in advance that I shall not seek to divide the House, but I hope that, when drafting the regulations, my right hon. Friend will take account of what I have said, and also of the cogent points made in Committee.

Sir William Clark: I support my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers). It is extraordinary that the Inland Revenue should take it on itself to decide whether a debt is good or bad: it has no experience whatever of the conditions of the person who owes the money, and no idea of the stability of the country involved —for most of the debts are overseas debts.

Surely, for the Revenue arbitrarily to limit bad-debt provision to 5 per cent.—or whatever formula it may come up with—is entirely contrary to all our tax experience. In the case of any company's accounts, the computation is put in by the accountants; the accounts have been audited, and the auditor's certificate has dealt with the bad-debt provision. If the directors and the company's financial section cannot satisfy the auditor that the bad-debt provision is too much or too little, it is a reflection on the certificate. Although the auditor has passed accounts saying that, say, 100 units is bad-debt provision, the Inland Revenue, with no experience of the local circumstances —mainly overseas—of the debt, may then arbitrarily decide that, in the computation of profits for that tax year, the only amount allowed is a percentage of the sovereign debt.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport has pointed out, there can be argument about the value of oil rights or goodwill. In the case of sovereign debts the bank knows how much has been loaned. The assessment of the bad debt provision for that loan is determined not only by the bank's board of directors but by its representative, the bank manager abroad. Between them they have to satisfy the auditor, and if he is satisfied that the bad debt provision is valid and reasonable, I cannot see why the Inland Revenue, which has no experience of the circumstances of the loan, should take it upon itself arbitrarily to say that the provision shall be only a certain amount. That is a violation of what has happened in the past about bad debt provision.

We all congratulate my right hon. Friend on his promotion to Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. If he is convinced by the argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport, he should persuade his successor to take action to remove this anomaly.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: It will be no comfort to the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) and the right hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) to learn that the arguments advanced by them were vigorously advanced at length by their hon. Friends in Committee. They were not warmly received by the Opposition or by the Government. I am as certain as one can be in such matters that the Secretary of State will not accept the amendments. It would be peculiar if he did because they are wrecking amendments. They are designed to emasculate new section 88C of clause 74 which deals with actual losses on the sale or write off of debts rather than the claiming of deductions for the provision which new section 88B covers.

Currently, such losses may be claimed only at 5 per cent. per year where the debt confirmed is a less-developed country debt that has already been provided against unless the debt is sold to the debtor nation, in which case the whole loss may be claimed. Amendments Nos. 42 and 43 would mean that the 5 per cent. restriction applied only in two narrowly defined cases; otherwise the whole loss would be claimable. I am sure from what the hon. Member for Gosport and the right hon. Member for Croydon, South have said that their intention is to restrict clause 74 as narrowly as possible. That is not in the spirit of what Ministers said in support of the clause, and it is certainly not the view of the Opposition. I am sorry that I cannot offer the hon. Gentleman any greater comfort. The hon. Member for Gosport said he did not intend to push the amendment to a Division. However, if we are asked to vote on it, I shall request my hon. Friends to vote against the amendment.

Mr. Lilley: I am tempted to urge my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) to push his amendment to a Division so that I may have the pleasure of joining the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) in the Lobby. I enjoy debating such matters with him, but we rarely vote on the same side. My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport and my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) advanced important issues which we considered at great length in Committee. I congratulate them on the pithiness of their contributions which were in contrast to those made in Committee. They made their case effectively.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport says that it is a matter of principle that tax should fall on profits properly assessed at the time that they are assessed. However, the tax system contains the well established precedent that tax may be phased differently from the way in which it appears in a company's accounts. Not least, capital allowances for tax purposes may differ from those taken in management and company accounts. I do not think that any great principle is involved on timing. We are altering only the time in which the banks pay their profits and not the measure of profits, except in the context of the point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark).

The essence of the matter is that sovereign debt is sui generis. It is different from the sort of debts that ordinary companies incur. A bad debt that is incurred by a company is normally fairly obvious because the debtor has ceased to exist, has disappeared, has been made bankrupt or has become insolvent. Countries rarely disappear and are rarely declared bankrupt.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Sometimes.

Mr. Lilley: That may happen sometimes, but only rarely. I think that in one instance the debts were carried with it, but I must be careful about what I say.

It is a matter of assessing whether a loan is likely to be repaid at the end of its life. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport, who wants profits and debts to be related to timing, is not suggesting that we wait until the end of the loan before we assess whether it is a bad debt and should be written off and given tax relief. Sometimes it is necessary to make an estimate beforehand. It has long been accepted that the Bank of England's matrix is an authoritative guide to the necessary provisions that will be acceptable for tax purposes under tax law. Quite commonly, banks have made provisions in excess of the bank's matrix, and there has been no suggestion that they are automatically eligible for tax. It is only the bank's matrix, which suggests the prudential level that is required, which has been taken as the amount to be written off for tax purposes. In this underlying legislation we are enshrining the matrix in law and removing uncertain elements. A range of parameters has been defined and we are taking mid point. We are removing one or two subjective criteria and leaving objective criteria, and providing certainty and objectivity without changing the principle. I hope that my hon. Friends will understand that I cannot recommend acceptance of the amendments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport said that an attempt has been made to cover tax avoidance. The attempt has not succeeded because debts sold out of the group by one company may well be replaced by debts bought from outside the group by another company in the same group, and that other company may be outside the United Kingdom. In practice, it will be impossible for us to police an international banking group to ensure that that does not happen. Consequently, the possibility of avoidance would be rife if the amendments were accepted. I urge the House to reject the amendments. I understand that it is unlikely that they will be divided upon.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 76

TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE COUNCILS AND LOCAL ENTERPRISE COMPANIES

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I beg to move amendment No. 39, in page 64, line 28, at end insert

'save that this subsection shall not operate to prevent subsection (1) above from applying where the aggregate values of any benefits which any persons mentioned above receive or are entitled to receive does not exceed two and a half per cent. of the amount of the contribution.'.

We discussed a similar issue to the one raised by the amendment during a debate on the Floor of the House on Tuesday 15 May, which ended with a Division. We have advanced similar arguments to the Government on gift aid, and they have reconsidered their position. When we discussed the matter on 15 May, the Financial Secretary said that he accepted that the amendments had been moved in a helpful spirit and that he accepted the spirit behind them. Even though he had no disagreement with them in principle or in substance, the Government believed that the amendments would prove onerous, so they were rejected.

We have returned to the point because the Government have had second thoughts about a similar issue, gift aid. If it is right to think again about the de minimis principle as it affects gifts aid, surely it is right to do so in respect of tax. I hope that the Government will have second thoughts about training and enterprise councils. The amendment is moved in a bipartisan spirit, and I hope that it will be accepted by the Government.

12.45 am

Mr. Ryder: As the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said, the amendment relates to a point that we discussed in Committee: that the relief for business contributions to training and enterprise councils and local enterprise councils will not apply if the contributor receives a benefit in connection with the making of the contribution.

The amendment is designed to provide that, if a company receives benefits connected with a particular contribution that do not exceed in aggregate value 2·5 per cent. of the amount of the contribution, they will not prevent the contribution from attracting relief. We have introduced a de minimis cut-off broadly of that kind in relation to the gift aid provisions to which the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East referred, but with a ceiling of £250. The amendment, however, has no ceiling. We did not believe that it was necessary to complicate this much more specific and limited provision by providing a similar cut-off. It is much more likely that the de minimis benefits will be received in connection with a donation to a charity rather than to a TEC—for example, free tickets to the opera in return for a donation to Covent Garden, or free attendance at charitable events.

Perhaps the most likely legitimate benefit that a company is likely to receive in return for a contribution to a TEC is some measure of free training for its work force. My right hon. Friend gave the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) an assurance both in our previous debate and subsequently by letter that the Inland Revenue will ignore benefits of that kind in individual cases. However, I recognise that the Opposition are concerned about the benefits rules in clause 76. I believe that their concern is misplaced, but I am ready to give the hon. Gentleman a firm undertaking that, if there is any suggestion that in practice the rules are inhibiting businesses from contributing to TECs and LECs, as we all want them to do, we shall return to the point.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: That is a very helpful assurance, which I welcome. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 89

INCOME TAX RETURNS

Amendment proposed: No. 24, in page 76, line 28, after 'statements', insert

', relating to information contained in the return,'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The amendment accepts, at least to a degree, the point that we and a number of Conservative Members raised in Committee. The inspectors' powers to demand any kind of accounts and statements to accompany tax returns were, we felt, rather wide. The amendment helpfully addresses that concern.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment proposed: No. 25, in page 76, line 40, at end insert—

'Trustee's return

8A.—(1) For the purpose of assessing a trustee of a settlement, and the settlors and beneficiaries, to income tax an inspector may by a notice given to the trustee require the trustee—

(a) to make and deliver to the inspector within the time limited by the notice a return containing such information as may be required in pursuance of the notice, and

(b) to deliver with the return such accounts and statements, relating to information contained in the return, as may be required in pursuance of the notice;

and a notice may be given to any one trustee or separate notices may be given to each trustee or to such trustees as the inspector thinks fit.

(2) Every return under this section shall include a declaration by the person making the return to the effect that the return is to the best of his knowledge correct and complete.

(3) A notice under this section may require different information, accounts and statements for different periods or in relation to different descriptions of source of income.

(4) Notices under this section may require different information, accounts and statements in relation to different descriptions of settlement.'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 26.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Both amendments are relatively minor. They relate to trustees' powers concerning special trust tax returns. Both are unexceptionable. The Opposition accept them.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 26, in page 77, line 40, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

'(2) In section 12 of that Act (information about chargeable gains)—

(a) in subsection (1) for the words "Section 8" there shall be substituted the words "Sections 8 and 8A" and for the words "it applies" there shall be substituted the words "they apply";

(b) in subsection (2) after the words "section 8" there shall be inserted the words "or section 8A";

(c) in subsection (4) the words "of income of a partnership" shall be omitted.

(2A) In section 93 of that Act (penalties) in subsection (1) for the words "9 of this Act (or either" there shall be substituted the words "8A or 9 of this Act (or any".

(2B) In section 95 of that Act (penalties) in subsection (1)(a) for the words "9 of this Act (or either" there shall be substituted the words "8A or 9 of this Act (or any".'.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Clause 90

CORPORATION TAX RETURNS

Amendment proposed: No. 27, in page 77, line 45, leave out from '(1)' to second 'section' in line 46.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendment No. 28.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: All the changes to the rules on tax returns for individuals or partnerships apply from April 1990. Those on corporate tax returns apply only from the date pay-and-file is introduced, which will probably be 1993. These amendments make one small part of those rules apply instead as from Royal Assent. We generally support the spirit of clause 90, so we do not find the matter contentious.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 28, in page 78, line 26, at end insert—

'(8) Subsection (4) above shall apply with respect to any notice served on or after the day of which this Act is passed.

(9) Subsections (2), (3) and (5) to (7) above shall apply with respect to any notice served after the day appointed for the purposes of section 82 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 1987.'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Clause 115

AMOUNT OF LEVY

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 44, in page 93, line 9, leave out '50' and insert '25'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 45, in clause 116, page 94, line 21, leave out 'three' and insert 'nine'.

Mr. Beith: We come to the port levy. Somehow the Government always contrive that the port levy shall be debated at the latest possible hour of the night, preferably with as few as possible of their hon. Friends present so that they cannot be made fully aware that it is not only a levy on ports but is a privatisation tax. It is a tax designed to recoup all the proceeds from the privatisation of ports to the central Exchequer. That process will probably discourage further port privatisations more or less totally. It is accompanied by a statement made in Committee by the Chief Secretary to the effect that any port that devises alternative arrangements for privatisation and brings them in a private Bill which would direct the proceeds towards the local community so that the Government did not get their 50 per cent. levy would face retrospective legislation to ensure that a 50 per cent. levy was secured. It is the first time I can remember hearing a Minister promise to introduce retrospective legislation on a certain matter. The Government are so determined to achieve their privatisation levy on the ports.

Part of the problem is that the tax is certain to be more than 50 per cent. in many cases. There are other responsibilities such as capital gains tax to be considered and the capital gains tax market values are applied to the 50 per cent. If a port were to decide, for example, to place its shares as a private business in the hands of local authorities, local businesses or its own employees, they would change hands at less than the rate that would prevail if they were on the open market without those conditions. However, the company would still be taxed as if it had made the disposals on a full market-value basis. That will mean that a responsible port authority, seeking to safeguard the future of the port in its area, could find itself taxed at 70, 80, 100 or even 110 per cent. on the proceeds of privatisation.

I must ask Conservative Members what is the point of the exercise if it is not to release the trapped resources of the ports and bring into the ports the new resources from shareholdings which come about as a result of privatisation. Why does the central Exchequer have to grab all that money?

Faced with those features, I have proposed two amendments. One reduces the levy to 25 per cent. nominally and, therefore, to 50 per cent. in practice, and the other deals with the specific issue of employee share ownership plans and the Government's stringent limitations on the opportunity for ports to make shares available to employees through employee share ownership schemes. It is extraordinary that the Government have taken this step. I do not see why the central Exchequer rather than local ports and local communities should be dipping so heavily into the proceeds. Many port authorities will come to the conclusion that privatisation is not for them. I say that as someone who is not, in general, opposed to all privatisations. There are many circumstances in which it might be an appropriate step to take. However, it would be appropriate only if the port authority can ensure that it remains under local management, and that its resources will not simply be transferred to the Exchequer. Faced with the arrangements that the Government have devised, many trust ports will say that they are far better off as they are.

The Government have permitted a 3 per cent. dispersal of shares to employee share ownership plans to attract tax relief—despite the endorsement by the former Financial Secretary, now Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, of the idea that 10 per cent. might be an appropriate ESOP holding in a company. In Committee of the whole House the right hon. Gentleman said:

> "10 per cent. strikes the right balance, representing as it does a stake large enough to ensure the employees a degree of involvement in the company's affairs, while not being so large as to make the new relief unattractive."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1990; Vol. 172, c. 960.]

If 10 per cent. is good for ESOPs in general, why is it not good for ESOPs in ports? Ten per cent. was turned down in a Division in Committee, so I have put a slightly more modest proposal before the House tonight and suggest that we accept 9 per cent. Surely that would be acceptable to the Government.

The Government seem determined to restrict to the absolute minimum the opportunities that they will afford for ESOPs to get some tax relief from this port levy. I wonder whether Conservative Members who are interested in and have shown strong support for ESOPs, such as the right hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), are happy with this arrangement. It is profoundly unsatisfactory.

At no stage have the Government made a convincing case for the central Exchequer making such huge claims on these revenues. They sought at one stage to argue that the Government had invested in trust ports in the past, and therefore were entitled to get their money back. Any scheme that got the Government their money back would return only a tiny fraction of the amount of revenue about which the Government are talking. I, therefore, invite the Government and the House to lower the nominal rate of levy so that it is not so huge a deterrent on the placing of shares with the local community and to raise the limit under which employee share ownership schemes can gain tax relief from this huge impost.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) suggests that this is a privatisation tax, but he seems to forget that normally when the Government sell a company they keep 100 per cent. of the revenue. The states owns——

Mr. Beith *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I shall give way if the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue this arcane distinction between the state and the Government.

Mr. Beith: It is not an arcane distinction. It is beyond dispute that the state does not own the ports. They are trust ports. If the state owned them, they would not be the subject of private Bills, such as the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill and the Clyde Port Authority Bill, and the Minister knows that full well.

Mr. Lilley: On the contrary, the courts have ruled that trusts of this kind are owned by the state, as distinct from the Government. When the Government sell a company, they keep 100 per cent. of the revenue. The hon. Gentleman may argue that this is not a privatisation, but he cannot argue that there is anything abnormal about keeping the proceeds of a sale. In this case, we felt that it was right to have less than 100 per cent. of the funds going to the Government in order to give some incentive for the trusts to go private and to let them use some of the funds for the development of the port operations. Fifty per cent. seemed a good compromise, being half way between zero and 100 per cent.

Although we may be reasonably sure that this levy will not discourage future privatisations by trusts, the main reason for privatisation is that the forming of private company status will free the trusts from the inhibitions, which they previously suffered under their existing status, from developing their activities beyond those of the ports and making full use of the assets that they possess.

The companies are free to give more than 3 per cent. of shares to their employees if they wish, but only 3 per cent. will escape levy. Any higher proportion would have to come out of company funds, which is not unreasonable. There is nothing in this which is comparable with the 10 per cent. limit for ESOPs. Three per cent. would be a higher proportion going to employees than in any previous issue for which I have records—I think that the highest figure has been 2·4 per cent. So the 3 per cent. figure is not artificially low and I urge the House to reject both the amendments.

Mr. Beith The Government have just demonstrated how lacking in radicalism they are. They are content with a 2·4 per cent. proportion going to ESOPs rather than opening the way to a much larger share, and yet again they have failed to make out a case for that. The pretence is being made that the Government own the ports. That is clearly not the case, as they have been invested in, supported and managed by the local communities. The fact that a court had to find some definition of their ownership other than the Government is ample demonstration that they are not in the hands of the Government. The Government have no right to lay claim to resources which ought to be left in the ports. Therefore, I ask the House to resist the Government by at least reducing the level of the tax to be imposed.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 8, Noes 88.

Division No. 296] **[1.00 am**

AYES

Beith, A. J.	Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Wallace, James
Kennedy, Charles	
Kirkwood, Archy	**Tellers for the Ayes:**
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*	**Mr. Simon Hughes and**
Skinner, Dennis	**Mr. Matthew Taylor.**

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Hind, Kenneth
Amess, David	Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Amos, Alan	Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Irvine, Michael
Arnold, Sir Thomas	Jack, Michael
Ashby, David	Janman, Tim
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Knapman, Roger
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Boswell, Tim	Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Bowis, John	Lightbown, David
Burns, Simon	Lilley, Peter
Butcher, John	Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Moss, Malcolm
Carrington, Matthew	Neale, Gerrard
Chapman, Sydney	Neubert, Michael
Chope, Christopher	Nicholls, Patrick
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Norris, Steve
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*	Paice, James
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Cran, James	Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Rowe, Andrew
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*	Ryder, Richard
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Day, Stephen	Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Dover, Den	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Dunn, Bob	Squire, Robin
Durant, Tony	Stern, Michael
Fallon, Michael	Stevens, Lewis
Favell, Tony	Summerson, Hugo
Fenner, Dame Peggy	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Fishburn, John Dudley	Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Forth, Eric	Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Freeman, Roger	Twinn, Dr Ian
French, Douglas	Viggers, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Gill, Christopher	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Goodlad, Alastair	Watts, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*	Widdecombe, Ann
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*	Wood, Timothy
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*	Yeo, Tim
Hampson, Dr Keith	
Harris, David	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Hayward, Robert	**Mr. Irvine Patnick and**
Heathcoat-Amory, David	**Mr. Tom Sackville.**

Question accordingly negatived.

Schedule 5

Building Societies and Deposit-Takers

Amendment made: No. 21, in page 124, line 45 leave out from beginning to 'shall' in line 46 and insert 'Subsection (3) (a) above'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Amendment proposed: No. 29, in page 128, line 12 , at end insert—

'Transitional provision

16.—(1) In its application to the year 1991-92, section 477A of the Taxes Act 1988 shall have effect with the following modifications.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) may also require any building society to account for and pay, on transitional sums, an amount representing income tax calculated in part at the basic rate for the year 1990-91 and in part at the reduced rate determined for that year under section 483(1)(a) of the Taxes Act 1988.

(3) In sub-paragraph (2) above the reference to transitional sums is to such sums paid or credited after 28th February 1991 and before 6th April 1991 as may be determined in accordance with the regulations.

(4) In subsection (3)(a) for the words from "actual" to the end of the paragraph there shall be substituted the words "appropriate amount".

(5) The following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (3)—

"(3A) In subsection (3)(a) above the reference to the appropriate amount is to the actual amount paid or credited in the accounting period of any such dividends or interest together with—

(a) in the case of dividends or interest paid or credited in the year 1990-91, any amount accounted for and paid by the society in respect thereof as representing income tax, and

(b) in the case of dividends or interest paid or credited in the year 1991-92, any amount of income tax accounted for and paid by the society in respect thereof.".'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Schedule 5 effectively abolishes the composite rate tax scheme and introduces the new scheme, involving deduction of basic rate income tax. It is likely that the old rules covered the transitional period straddling the changeover date of 6 April 1991. However, the Government seem to have had second thoughts on this point, and the amendments are designed to facilitate those second thoughts. It is an unexceptional point and is acceptable to the Opposition.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 6

Life Assurance: Apportionment of Income etc.

Amendments made: No. 30, in page 129, line 18, after 'agency' insert 'outside the United Kingdom'.

No. 31, in page 133, line 29, after 'if', insert '—

(a) each of the'.

No. 32, in page 133, line 31, leave out 'the reference' and insert—

'(b) in subsection (5)—

(i) a reference to overseas life assurance business were included after each of the references to pension business in paragraph (a)(ii), and

(ii) each of the references in paragraph (b)'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Schedule 8

Insurance Companies: Holders of Unit Trusts etc.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We now come to amendment No. 40, to be moved formally. I call Mr. Nick Brown.

Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I hear hon. Members shout, "Aye," I am happy to take that as the consensus view rather than launching into my half-hour oration.

Nevertheless, I beg to move amendment No. 40, in page 147, line 18, at end add—

'(4) Relief under this paragraph shall be calculated in such a manner as is just and reasonable notwithstanding anything in section 35 Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 (part disposals).'.

Clause 46 provides for an annual deemed disposal of holdings of unit trusts and relevant interests—I am sure that this is going to keep the attention of the whole House—in offshore funds held by an insurance company as part of its long-term business fund. There are transitional provisions in schedule 8(2) to provide relief for assets held on two back liabilities in respect of policies issued before 1 April 1990.

These provisions were foreshadowed in the December 1989 Inland Revenue press release, which stated in respect of assets relating to pre-1 April 1990 policies:

"These assets will not be chargeable under the new rules for so long as the corresponding liabilities are outstanding."

There is a problem with the existing part disposal rule for capital gains tax calculations, which means that the value of the relief is eroded much more quickly than the liabilities run off. During discussions with the Inland Revenue, a solution to this problem was suggested, but the Financial Secretary stated in Committee that the legislation required to deal with that calculation in detail would be very complex and lengthy and that he was not persuaded that the introduction of such legislation would be appropriate.

The Association of British Insurers suggested to us and, it appears, to other members of the Committee the simple amendment now before the House. It requires little space in the Bill. Effectively, it empowers the Inland Revenue to ignore the effect of section 35 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979, when applying the rule in schedule 8, if the Revenue accepts that it would be just and reasonable to do so. Everyone from the ABI who approached us seems to think that that would meet the point. We are persuaded that it would do so. I hope that the Government will reconsider and accept our modest, constructive amendment.

Sir William Clark: From the outset I should state that I am a consultant to Commercial Union Assurance. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on reading out the brief, of which I have a copy, with such panache. He put the point that was made by the ABI, as he rightly said.

There is no question but that the Government are sympathetic to what the insurance industry seeks to do. The only thing that holds them back is the complexity of any legislation. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will give the House an assurance that the Government will reconsider. There appears to be an anomaly, and if it proves to be one that affects the insurance industry, I hope that remedial action will be taken.

Mr. Lilley: Our problem is that dealing with the underlying problem would require complex further legislation. An amendment which simply refers to calculations proceeding in a just and reasonable manner does not provide the required level of certainty or the sound basis on which the law should be framed. Different companies may have different ideas of what is just and reasonable. That lack of precision could give rise to disputes that would have to be resolved before the appeal commissioners or in the courts.

However, I recognise the industry's worries. While it is not possible to introduce detailed legislation in this year's Bill, I can say without commitment that we shall consider returning to the problem next year. By "we", I mean my hapless successor.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I am sure that it will not be a hapless successor.

It is not often that the right hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) and I have similar speeches to make and similar briefs to read in the House. That is a welcome event. I hope that it is the beginning of a new consensus between us. Nevertheless, I suspect that probably I have not incited sufficient rebellious spirit on the Conservative Benches—although I can see that I have made a start. I would waste the time of the House by putting the matter to the test of a Division. I know that the Financial Secretary's not hapless successor will want time to reconsider the points raised. He may even arrive at a different conclusion. To facilitate that, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave withdrawn.

Schedule 18

Definition of "Local Authority"

Mr. Nicholas Brown *rose*——

Amendment made: No. 33, in page 180, line 9, leave out paragraph 3 and insert—

'3. In section 149B of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 the following subsections shall be substituted for subsection (3)—

"(3) A local authority, a local authority association and a health service body shall be exempt from capital gains tax.(3A) In subsection (3) above—

(a) "local authority association" has the meaning given by section 519 of the Taxes Act 1988, and

(b) "health service body" has the meaning given by section 519A of that Act.".'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Schedule 19

Repeals

Amendments made: No. 34, in page 182, leave out lines 34 to 37.

No. 35, in page 184, line 4, at end insert—

'1990 c. 19.	The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.	Section 61(2).'.

No. 36, in page 184, line 7, leave out from 'repeals' to 'section' in line 8 and insert

'of section 52 of the Finance Act 1974 and'.

No. 22, in page 184, line 19, leave out 'sections 476,' and insert

'section 476 (apart from the repeal in subsection (4) of the words from the beginning to "affecting" and the words "and that paragraph") and sections'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Nicholas Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You put Government amendment Nos. 33, 34 and 36 to the House, overlooking the fact that the Opposition Front Bench spokesman was rising to speak. It was difficult for you to overlook it——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Those amendments have already been debated. They were disposed of earlier.

Further consideration adjourned—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Bill (as amended in Committee and in the Standing Committee), to be further considered this day.

Care of Cathedrals

1.19 am

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): I beg to move,

That the Care of Cathedrals Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

This Measure, and a second Measure still on its way to Parliament—the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure—but to which the General Synod gave final approval last week, represent the fulfilment, essentially, of a commitment made by the Synod to the Government in July 1984. The terms of that commitment were that the Church of England would implement voluntarily the proposals of the Faculty Jurisdiction Commission contained in its report published likewise in July 1984, provided that all churches in use, including cathedrals, were allowed to remain exempt from listed building controls; and that the state aid scheme launched in 1977 for churches in use, but as yet not for cathedrals, should be made permanent.

In October 1986, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Lord Skelmersdale, announced the Government's acceptance of those two conditions. As a result, from early 1987 onwards a drafting committee chaired by Dr. Eric Kemp, Bishop of Chichester, has been continuously engaged on the task of preparing the promised legislation of which this Measure is the first instalment.

In deciding to give priority to the care of cathedrals, the Bishop of Chichester and his colleagues took account of the fact that cathedral buildings, despite their immense historical and architectural importance, are at present outside the scope both of the Church of England's own faculty jurisdiction and of the state's system of listed building control. It seemed only logical to plug that gap before improving and extending the faculty jurisdiction that already controls repairs and alterations to churches other than cathedrals.

Before outlining the provisions of the Measure, I draw the attention of the House to clause 1 in particular. It lays down explicitly the important principle that the functions of care and conservation which the measure confers on certain bodies—whether new or existing bodies—must be exercised with

"due regard to the fact that the cathedral church is the seat of the bishop and a centre of worship and mission."

While to many people that may seem a statement of the obvious, there are still some conservationists who need to be reminded that even the most important of our ancient churches have rightly and necessarily been altered and adapted to reflect changes in patterns of worship as one century has succeeded another.

A balance must always be struck between, on the one hand, the role of the cathedral as

"a spiritual powerhouse for the whole diocese",

as the Bishop of Chichester described it, and, on the other hand, the temporal needs of the building as a part of our nation's architectural, archaeological and artistic heritage. Members of the General Synod, and not least the deans and provosts among them, set great store by the inclusion of clause 1 in the Measure. It will ensure that those who administer it have clear guidance, to the effect that their duty is to attempt to reconcile the potential tension between spiritual concerns and heritage concerns, and not to pursue the one objective to the exclusion of the other.

I turn to the control mechanisms that the Measure will introduce. Whereas in the past the administrative body of a cathedral enjoyed sole authority in the last resort to alter the interior of the building or to dispose of or acquire moveable contents, it will in future be required to secure the approval of a local statutory committee for every proposed change of significance short of certain really major changes—about which, more anon. There is to be one such committee for each cathedral, known as its fabric advisory committee. As schedule 2, which provides for its membership, shows, it will not include the dean or provost or any residentiary canon of that cathedral as voting members. Rather it is intended that this committee should be an independent group with relevant expertise and a particular interest in the cathedral concerned.

The authorisation of the more important changes, including the disposal by sale or otherwise of outstanding moveables, will be reserved for a new statutory body at the centre to be called the Cathedrals Fabric Commission. This body will replace the present Cathedrals Advisory Commission which is constituted, like the other non-statutory boards of the General Synod, under the synod's standing orders.

In many respects the new commission will inherit and continue the useful advisory functions of the one it succeeds, but it will have in addition a statutory power of control which will enable it to prevent action by a cathedral's administrative body without the commission's consent. This "new-look" commission will also be able to resolve disagreements between an administrative body and the local fabric advisory committee. Great care has been taken to involve as wide a range of expertise as possible in the composition of this very important commission. That composition is set out in schedule 1 to the Measure.

There is also a provision in the Measure allowing an appeal by an administrative body against a refusal by the Cathedrals Fabric Commission to give approval to any particular proposal. An appeal by an administrative body at that level of jurisdiction is to take the form of a request for a commission of review. This would be an ad hoc three-member body which can fairly be described as the long-stop feature of the system, unlikely to be needed except on rare occasions. One member, probably the chairman, would be the Dean of the Arches or another lawyer appointed by him, the second a dean, provost or residentiary canon of another cathedral appointed by the two archbishops, and the third a nominee of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

For a fuller treatment of the origins and content of the Measure, I refer hon. Members to the customary appendix to the ecclesiastical committee's report, which contains the report of the General Synod's legislative committee. In particular, I should underline the fact that, as can be seen from paragraph 12 of the latter report, not one single contrary vote was recorded in the final approval vote on the Measure in November 1989.

Like the Bishop of Chichester in another place, I should like to put on record, on behalf of the Measure's drafting committee, our warm gratitude to all the present and past Ministers responsible for heritage matters, and to all those officials in the Department of the Environment who have advised them, for their unstinting help in the preparation of this intrinsically sensitive area of church legislation.

Let me say a word in this context about enforcement. Earlier this year, after consultation with the present Minister, the draft Care of Churches Measure, the one following this Measure, and still en route to us, was amended in the General Synod to include the enforcement provisions now contained in clause 12 of that Measure which were also acceptable to the Department of the Environment. It was too late, however, at that stage to amend the present Measure, and, in any event, there were then as yet no agreed proposals for an enforcement procedure appropriate to the special needs of cathedrals.

To sum up, the present position as to enforcement is that the General Synod is already committed to an adequate enforcement procedure for cathedrals, if necessary by legislation. But the acid test is that this Measure should work. All of us in the Church of England are determined that it should, but we are equally clear that if experience gained after a reasonable trial shows it is not working, further action must be taken. Meanwhile, plans are laid to introduce the rules required under the present Measure for the approval of the new synod in November of this year. Once those are in force, the stage will be set for the archbishops to bring the main provisions of the Measure into operation shortly after.

The Measure is undoubtedly a landmark in the lengthy process in which the Bishop of Chichester, his Faculty Jurisdiction Commission of the early 1980s and latterly his drafting group appointed in 1987 have each played a vital part. May I add my personal thanks to them for their achievements. I hope that the House will now help to crown them by endorsing this Measure, which seeks to give greater protection to some of the finest historical buildings that we as a nation possess.

1.29 am

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): The Opposition welcome the Measure that is before us at this very late hour. There is no doubt that our 42 mainland cathedrals of the Church of England form, in the words of English Heritage,

"the largest coherent and artistically splendid group of listed buildings in England, as well as being of enormous archaeological importance. They are also the home of some of England's greatest works of art from the post Roman period onwards."

I am sure that many hon. Members and others concerned about the subject will fully agree with the view expressed by English Heritage.

We welcome the fact that for the first time occasionally controversial decisions that would affect the buildings and contents of our Church of England cathedrals will now become subject to a procedure that will give a measure of public involvement in, and even control over, those wonderful listed buildings.

We also recognise the enormous amount of hard work that has gone into the formulation of the measure. It seems remarkable that we have ended up with a proposal that is, as we have just heard, so acceptable to so many people, given that the first draft suggested that the Measure would not see the light of day.

We believe that the local fabric advisory committee and the central Cathedrals Fabric Commission will definitely be of great benefit to the church administrative organisations responsible for the conservation and maintenance of cathedrals. We have no doubt that their membership, so carefully chosen, and the individuals who will be appointed to serve on them, will bring enormous expertise and specialist knowledge to our cathedrals. That is particularly important and something from which our cathedrals will greatly benefit.

I am sure that such wide knowledge of everything—architecture, archaeology, art, church music, stained glass, and historic manuscripts—will be invaluable to cathedral authorities charged with the task of balancing the cathedral as a place of worship against the concept of the cathedral as a vital part of our national heritage. That balance reminds me of the one that must be kept between nature conservation and access to the countryside. Drawing and maintaining that balance is an important part of conservation.

It is important to view the Measure alongside other developments that are relevant to our cathedrals, some of which the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) touched on. Positive action to implement the Faculty Jurisdiction Commission's 1984 report has been much too slow in coming forward. Today's Measure brings the standard of controls over listed Anglican churches more closely into line with those for secular buildings. However, that is only one of several measures needed relating to cathedrals and their conservation.

I understand from a debate in another place that proposals on the restriction of the ecclesiastical exemption of listed building control following the consultation paper last year are imminent. In the debate on 28 June in the other place, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Lord Hesketh, stated:

"Tonight is not the right occasion on which to go into the details of our thinking on this issue"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 28 June 1990; Vol. 520, c. 1797.]

I wish that there was a Minister present who could tell us what progress has been made on that. I would welcome comments from the right hon. Member for Selby, if not from the Minister, on the issue so that we may have some indication of the Government's timetable and the Synod's timetable for the implementation of the Measure proposing reductions in the scope of ecclesiastical exemption. I should be interested to know whether that proposal, whatever stage it has reached, is on the interiors as well as the exteriors of buildings. I am sure that that is an important issue.

I join English Heritage in calling for speedy implementation to reduce exemptions. I should like to take the opportunity to ask for assurances that there are proposals for comparable controls for non-Anglican churches, chapels and other places of worship. Although a Minister is not present, it is important to draw attention to the fact that the buildings of other religious denominations are an equally important part of our national heritage.

The lack of enforcement provisions in the measure must be remedied at the earliest opportunity. I noted carefully the comments of the right hon. Member for Selby and of the Bishop of Chichester that enforcement provisions for both the Care of Cathedrals Measure and the Care of Churches Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure were withdrawn at the request of the Government. We must not delay tonight's Measure, but I wish to emphasise that an adequate enforcement procedure, properly resourced, is the highest priority.

There is growing concern that the architectural heritage embodied in our churches and cathedrals is not receiving adequate funding for its care and upkeep. Statutory controls for the care of cathedrals are welcome because

[Ms. Joan Walley]

they bring more accountability to the standards and mechanisms for church controls. Government and the churches must closely define the matters in which the latter retain freedom of action for building adaptations and change of use, while releasing more state funding subject to the expansion of an educational and interpretive role by the churches. That is an important point to make.

Nobody knows how much maintenance and repair work is needed to keep our cathedrals in good order. To keep them more than wind and watertight, and so that they can weather the years ahead, a full audit of outstanding repairs is long overdue, and we must bear in mind the need to take account of the effects of acid rain.

Is it not time that the Government and the Synod, with the assistance of English Heritage, assessed the state of the fabric and condition of our cathdrals and their contents? Is not it time that we took account of the dual role played by our cathedrals? Virtually each of our cathedrals, as well as being a place of worship, has become a centre for tourism, but some more than others. We should recognise the contribution made by the Salisburys, Wellses, Chesters, Herefords and other better-known cathedrals —or perhaps those with the greatest treasures that people, particularly tourists, wish to see—and by tourism to local economies. That can be a great economic bonus to local areas as well as bringing extra worshippers to cathedrals.

We must take account of the effects of wear and tear on the fabric of buildings and the financial implications of that. The comparison that comes to mind are the tiles in Central Lobby. I cannot help but notice that those tiles, knowing that they were manufactured in my constituency, are inevitably worn out by the hundreds and thousands of people who pass over them. We should provide the extra facilities that are both necessary and desirable for the constant stream of visitors to our cathedrals, bearing in mind the balance to which I referred earlier.

We recognise that any increased expenditure on our priceless cathedrals must go hand in hand with priority treatment for the recruitment and training of skilled craftsmen and craftswomen. We cannot begin to deal with the fabric of our cathedral buildings without taking account of the need to ensure that we have properly trained and qualified people to do the job.

Historic buildings, ancient monuments and our national heritage have all suffered from public spending cuts. We recognise—as did the Select Committee on the Environment in its final report of February 1987—the need to improve the protection given to monuments, buildings and sites of archaeological importance, which, of course, includes cathedrals. Meanwhile, this Measure, although small in relation to that need, will play a large part in safeguarding the cathedrals that are so vital to our national heritage. It has our full support, if not—dare I say it?—our blessing.

1.40 am

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) on the clear and detailed way in which he set out the Measure. It is extraordinarily nice to debate a Church of England Measure with which I can wholeheartedly agree: I seem to have been short of those of late, and it is a great pleasure to speak on one that I have pressed for—albeit only in spirit; the Synod pressed for it in actuality.

It does not seem nearly two years since I stood here in high dudgeon, demanding that the Measure be presented to prevent the unfortunate experience suffered by Hereford a while ago. The nub of the matter for me, and, I think for Hereford—apart from the broad aspects mentioned by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley)—is the question of the disposal of articles of value and historical interest. I am delighted that that has been brought into line with the provisions for parish churches, which have existed for some time.

The House will be aware of the trauma involving Mappa Mundi which was sprung on this place in November 1988, on the verge of the 700th anniversary of the drawing up of Mappa Mundi by a canon—admittedly from Lincoln. The artefact itself had hung, modestly undisturbed, in Hereford cathedral for 700 years less a month; it was unfortunate that it should find itself in the limelight as a result of the decision by the dean and chapter to use it to restore the cathedral's financial fortunes.

All hon. Members were seized with a sense of outrage that such an artefact should be hawked around to potential buyers—and, indeed, should evaporate, in conditions of great secrecy, in the direction of a London firm of auctioneers. Altogether it was an unfortunate experience, and it is pleasing to know that it will probably not recur. I have great sympathy for the cause of the dean and chapter who sought to address through this valuable artefact the question of repair and maintenance and the funding of future maintenance and other matters pertaining to the cathedral.

Hereford cathedral has tremendous problems. It is not lavishly endowed with past generosity, but lives from hand to mouth. It was understandable that the dean and chapter should have decided in extremis that the prize was worth the outrage. I am glad that outrage won and that the prize was put back on the shelf. The outcome was intriguing. I subscribe to the cock-up theory rather than to the conspiracy theory about the way in which activity was started. I think that it was felt that the row would last a few days and when the dust settled the artefact would be sold and a nice £4 million or £5 million would be gained which would be sufficient to deal with most of the problems and endow a fund for appropriate maintenance.

As so often happens in cock-ups, things went wildly wrong. On the conspiracy side, there is no way in the world that we could have promoted the Mappa Mundi to the rank of a world renowned artefact, which it now is, if we had not gone through the curious exercise which took so long and which cost so much. The naughty side of me asks whether there was an intrigue which promoted the artefact. I have discarded that theory, but it is a nice little thought. However, it is now well known throughout the world that Hereford cathedral has the earliest known full map of the world.

I am delighted to have the Mappa Mundi back in Hereford. It is on display now and I invite hon. Members to come and see it and get to know it. I have been enjoying it for 40 years and I thoroughly enjoy taking guests to see it, especially those from America because the Mappa Mundi has a space where America might be—because it had not been discovered when the map was drawn. That keeps everything in perspective.

Its display presents a challenge and I look forward to the display and exhibition which is being worked on. The new building will exhibit great architectural sensitivity and delicacy and, in conjuncton with the display in the chained library, should provide an attraction that will keep Hereford on the map, if I may use such a phrase. It will develop the important relationship between the cathedral and the community.

We must take into account the matters mentioned by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North so that cathedrals can withstand the wear and tear of visitors. The building will need to be designed so that people are taken from some parts of the cathedral into the specially prepared display area to enjoy the exhibit in all the magnificence that has been brought out by modern technology. That will discharge the function in clause 1 of the Measure, which is to recognise that the cathedral is the seat of the bishop and of worship. The legislative committee's report forms one of the documents in the debate. Paragraph 10 of part 1 on page 4 states:

"Nevertheless, the General Synod is preparing to bring forward specific provisions early in the lifetime of the next Synod, addressed directly to the further protection of cathedrals."

If my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby is fortunate enough to catch your eye towards the end of the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that he will explain what that means. Does it involve enforcement, as the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North has asked, or further dimensions of the cathedral protection requirements that are not covered by the Measure before us, comprehensive as it seems? I hope that the House will continue to give the Measure a fair wind.

1.50 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Measures that are expected to be non-controversial that emanate from the Synod come on at about this time of night. It is a pity that we cannot give them slightly better billing. An earlier time was found when a previous Measure ran into difficulty in the middle of the night. It was thought safer to reintroduce it earlier in the day. I wish that we could have been given a better slot this evening, even though the troops were not to be called in to reverse the result of an earlier rebellion.

I welcome the Measure and feel an affinity with it. I was a cathedral chorister for the first part of my life. I attended a secondary school in another cathedral city and then moved to a further cathedral city with my family on leaving school. I now represent not one but two cathedrals. It is not surprising that I have an especial interest in cathedrals. I am happy to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) because, like him, I have shared the joys of the history and treasures of Hereford cathedral over many years. I have enjoyed them personally and with others before they became so well publicised. I have shared the outrage and concern that we should suddenly find that we had lost, or thought that we had, the greatest treasure that the cathedral had of a moveable sort.

The Measure is directed at that issue and would prevent the future folly of the sale of such an important treasure as the Mappa Mundi. It would prevent the Mappa Mundi from suddenly being taken away and placed in a sale without proper control by authority delegated through the different hierarchy that the Measure provides. That is only for the good.

It was argued that the Mappa Mundi was a treasure of Hereford, and indeed it was. It was also a treasure of us all. It was part of our national heritage. It is important, as the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) said, that our heritage is preserved for us all to enjoy, and at the most appropriate places.

The Measure would set up a decent substitute system for dealing with planning issues that affect the English cathedrals. It has taken a long time to get to this place. The process has been under way for more than eight years, or for nearly a decade. I do not complain about detailed consideration and I do not seek to devalue the work of the Bishop of Chichester and his committee, and of many others, but the complaint has been made that Measures that affect the Church often progress extremely slowly from the realisation of the need for them until they are approved by Parliament. That does not do the Church or Parliament, for as long as this place has responsibility, much good.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: In this instance, Parliament has not hung around for long. The relevant date is 30 April, and that was not so long ago.

Mr. Hughes: I do not suggest that on this occasion Parliament caused the delay. The process, from its conception to its conclusion through Synod and Parliament collectively, will have taken about eight years. That is a very long time. Had we been quicker, we should have avoided some of the problems to which reference has been made in the debate. Therefore, I share the hope of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) that the remaining part of this jigsaw, enforcement control, will come to Parliament soon. It should not be delayed. It is part of a package deal—that planning provision should be made and that enforcement should be provided for in a different Measure. The state aid provision is part of the agreement that was set out by the Under-Secretary of State in 1986.

It is accepted that the state must make provision for cathedral treasures. They are part of our heritage. That must be implemented soon. State aid is already provided for churches. Since the cathedral authorities desired to retain their autonomy, state aid has come later for them, but I hope that it will not be long before that part of the jigsaw is also in place. The cathedrals have to pay a price for that aid. They have to sacrifice their autonomy. However, it is a reasonable price. The structure that has been worked out is reasonable.

I share the view that we must not be partisan. There are parts of our Christian heritage and of our wider religious heritage that are not part of the Church of England. I hope that the same generosity will be extended to those parts of our Christian and religious heritage that fall within the jurisdiction of other churches and faiths. There are free church chapels that need support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) specifically asked me to mention the position of the cathedrals of the Church in Wales. I know them all well. There are only six. Four of them are in rural parts of Wales. Substantial sums of money need to be spent upon them. Their repair bills amount to about £2 million. They are located in areas where it is difficult to raise money.

[Mr. Hughes]

They, like the cathedrals in England, do not qualify for grants from Cadw, the Welsh equivalent of English Heritage.

I have read in the Measure that cathedrals of the Church in Wales can apply under section 11 for advice from the commission. That is to be welcomed. I do not know, however, whether it is envisaged that they will also be able to receive funds when the Measure for state aid for cathedrals comes into force. I should be grateful if the right hon. Member for Selby could answer that question.

A linked question relates to section 11(2)(b). I see that provision is made for a second category of cathedral, to be the subject of an application for advice from the commission. It is said to be

"a cathedral church other than a cathedral church of the Church of England or the Church in Wales."

I presume that that means, for example, a Greek Orthodox cathedral or the cathedral of another denomination. I am glad about that. I hope that the commission will deal positively with any request and will not seek to make a substantial profit out of it.

The Measure provides that expenses should be reimbursed. That is reasonable. It should also be reasonable that the commission should not seek to profit from the desire of cathedrals of other denominations to benefit from the commission's expertise.

I welcome the provision in section 12 that there should be consultation before the appointment of a cathedral architect. In particular, I welcome the provision that the cathedrals shall have the duty to appoint an archaeological consultant. My cathedral in Southwark—a very old one—is in the middle of an area that is so rich in archaeological remains that we hardly dare disturb anything. If we do, we chance upon another major archaeological find. Such finds are welcome. We found the original Roman road from London to Dover during the last couple of weeks. We find Shakespearean theatres at the rate of about one a year. All that is welcome, and it is important that the cathedral has someone to give advice on archaeological heritage, particularly as the Government have not yet agreed to the designation of further areas of archaeological importance.

It is good that clause 13 provides for the compilation and maintenance of an inventory of objects in cathedrals. That is a right and proper list that should be available. There should be two categories, particularly noting those of outstanding archaeological, architectral, artistic or historic interest. It is good that section 14 provides that records should be kept and reports made on a regular basis on the state of the fabric of our cathedrals.

I apologise if the right hon. Member for Selby thinks that I should know the answer to this question, but there is the provision for opt-out from the structure by some of our cathedrals. That is for cathedrals that are also parish churches. I understand that and do not oppose it. I would be interested to know—it is important to put it on record—how many cathedrals might be part of that provision which would take them out of the jurisdiction to which the Measure applies—the heritage of our cathedrals. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman can give me a simple and factual answer.

I hope that this unanimous recommendation of the Church—that is the unusual feature of the report from the Synod to us—will soon be in force and that we will have taken a clear, if slow, step towards the better guardianship of some of the jewels of our English heritage. The Measure is most welcome.

2.2 am

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): I must pay a warm and generous tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) for the manner in which he introduced the Measure to the House. I have three reasons for wishing to participate in the debate. First, I have had the privilege, the challenge and the pleasure of serving for the past 11 years on the Ecclesiastical Committee of the House. Like the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I think that it is tremendous to see the fruits of our labour.

Secondly, I am unique in that the constituency which I am honoured to serve is divided in diocesan terms between Lichfield and Worcester. In that connection it was tremendous to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) give a graphic account of the events leading to the safety and secure retention of the Mappa Mundi.

The crypt of the cathedral church of Christ and St. Mary was built in 1092 and the tower was completed in 1374. It is because of the events of 1374 that we have this measure before us to ensure that we retain our inheritance, our heritage and, as has been said several times, our stewardship of the cathedrals. The cathedral church of St. Mary and St. Chad in Lichfield was finally completed in 1195. Both those cathedrals have suffered great decay in the fabric of the buildings. I am honoured to be part of a team raising £10 million for the restoration of Worcester cathedral. Recently, nearly £1 million was raised for the restoration of the cathedral church of St. Mary and St. Chad.

Thirdly, tonight is a special night in the history of the cathedrals. We are doing something that should have been done centuries ago—securing the fabric of our cathedrals. I welcome the creation of a Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England. Section 11 refers to "advice", but it is good to read on. It is almost like a biblical story—the more one reads, the better it becomes. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey delightfully outlined to the House, we find that clause 12 refers to "duty". That appeals to me because of the inventory that will be taken and because a cathedral architect will be appointed, under the Cathedrals Measure 1963. Hon. Members are united on the issue of the appointment of an archaeological consultant. I suspect that the consultant appointed at Southwark will work much harder than the Worcester consultant.

The Houses of Bishops, Clergy and Laity passed this Measure in the General Synod without a vote against. Tonight of all nights we can rejoice at the acceptance of the Measure. We are fulfilling our stewardship as parliamentarians, our duties as Christians and our responsibilities as citizens by protecting the cathedrals and giving them the expertise of the fabric advisory committees.

This action has been taken by the Church—dare I say it—to put its house in order and to safeguard its future. The Measure will be welcomed the length and breadth of Christendom, and I wish it Godspeed.

2.7 am

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am delighted to join the late night line-up discussing our great cathedrals. I have no history of choir singing in such great buildings. All I can offer is the fact that when I was first married, I lived within the precincts of one and was woken every Sunday by the mellow but thundering bell of the cathedral at Peterborough. On the basis of that little bit of history, I join this debate to welcome the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). Like my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), this is the first time I have had the pleasure of supporting a Measure from the Church of England. I do so warmly.

This is a good, useful Measure. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) said, we are contributing to the preservation of our heritage and to passing it on to the next generation. This is all part of Church and Parliament coming together to achieve that end, and that is a good idea.

I shall not detain the House for long. I merely wish to ask my right hon. Friend one or two questions as much for my own clarification and education as anything.

Within the precincts of Peterborough cathedral is a rather fine bishop's palace. I want to know the extent to which bishop's palaces are incorporated in the Measure. Such palaces are often within cathedral precincts, but not always. There may be occasions when palaces outside need to be incorporated in the Measure.

Again for information, can my hon. Friend tell me whether we are considering cathedrals only, or does the Measure include some of the great abbey churches—such as Westminster just across the road—or are they subject to different legislation?

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) mentioned cathedrals that are also parish churches. I know of one in Portsmouth. I suspect that very often they are more recent churches which do not have the same problems of antiquity that affect most cathedrals, but I should be grateful for a word or two on the reasons why cathedrals which are also parish churches are exempted from the Measure in such a way.

Another cathedral that I know a little of—not so much a church as a chapel—is Christ Church of Oxford. I know that that is specifically exempted from the Measure. What is the reasoning behind that, and what protection is given to that building? Perhaps special statutes govern the buildings of the university of Oxford which cover it adequately, but we should be told in this debate.

Will cathedrals that may be approved in future—either parish churches or new buildings—automatically come within the terms of the Measure?

Clause 15 refers to any

"building or monuments within the precinct".

I know of many cathedrals where the wall of the precinct is one of the features that one would wish to protect and preserve. Will ancient walls surrounding cathedrals be incorporated?

My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford has great experience of recent events in Hereford and has wisely gone into the question of the treasures of our cathedrals. I hope that the Measure will not deter cathedrals from lending treasures. It is important that they continue to lend them out on exhibition and that they tour the country, as it is good for people in the rest of the country and good for the cathedral to have such treasures more widely viewed.

To refer back to a question and answer that I had from my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby earlier today, I express the hope that the security of cathedrals is being taken into account in such Measures. We have had unfortunate experiences with damage caused by break-ins and of items being stolen. This is a chance for the Church to put its house in order—locked-up order if necessary—as regards its treasures and assets.

In all our discussions, now and in future, we must bear in mind the fact that cathedrals are not static items of architecture. They have evolved over the centuries. I know of no great historic cathedral church which does not contain a multiplicity of ages of architecture and design. That is part of the great glory of our cathedrals.

I hope that we shall do everything that we can to protect and preserve the ancient and the good in our cathedrals, but that we will not stifle good additional modern designs which can enhance their lives.

I join all other hon. Members who have welcomed the Measure.

2.14 am

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Matthew chapter 6, verses 19 and 20.

2.15 am

Mr. Alison: With the leave of the House, I shall answer some of the questions that have been asked.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) asked why the Measure had been so long delayed. The 1984 report of the Faculty Jurisdiction Commission was conditionally endorsed by the General Synod in July 1984—the condition being that the Government would respond in certain respects. There was then a long lapse of two and a half years before the Government reached their conclusion that it was reasonable to accept the General Synod's outline proposals and conditions. This they did in October 1986.

The first version of the Measure was then introduced into the General Synod in February 1988, but consideration was adjourned following criticism by, among others, deans and provosts. As there are quite a number of deans and provosts, that took a great deal of sorting out. So this Measure was not introduced to the General Synod until November 1988 and it was finally approved a year later. So although the wheels have ground slowly I hope that they have ground exceedingly small and effectively—although there has been an extensive delay.

Under the final clause in the Measure, implementation is likely to be in March next year.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North asked about the possibility of other churches being included. I cannot speak with authority about the position of other denominations since I represent the Church Commissioners for the Church of England, so I can speak only for the Church. I can refer only to clause 11, with which the hon. Lady will be familiar, which is about advice being provided on a purely voluntary basis for other churches. I am not competent to answer on the fate of the architectural merits of churches outside the Church of England.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) is almost as well known—at least in the west of England—as the Mappa Mundi for the doughty battle that he fought for that priceless treasure in Hereford

[Mr. Alison]

cathedral. He asked a question about paragraph 10 in the explanatory memorandum, which speaks of bringing forward further

"specific provisions early in the lifetime of the next Synod, addressed directly to the further protection of cathedrals."

That refers to further enforcement provisions. Originally the idea had been to introduce a special Measure separate from the church and cathedral Measures, which would incorporate enforcement provisions for both categories of church building. However, it was not found possible to produce a satisfactory formula for enforcement. It was therefore decided that the cathedrals Measure should be allowed to go ahead on its own, without enforcement, precisely to help with crises such as that surrounding the Mappa Mundi. Meanwhile, a formula has been found for the churches Measure, which will presently come before the House.

I can assure the hon. Members for Stoke-on-Trent, North and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford, that the General Synod is committed to providing an adequate enforcement procedure and has begun work on it. The General Synod has already had one meeting with its legal advisers followed by a helpful interview with the relevant Minister.

The General Synod—or its officials—have roughed out a scheme which was considered by the drafting committee at the end of June. I am confident that the authorities will be able to produce a short Measure for the newly elected General Synod, which comes into being at the end of the year, and that shortly after that, the appropriate enforcement provision for this Measure will come along as a sort of "after burner", so to speak, and will reinforce it and add what is necessary to it. The words in paragraph 10, to which my hon. Friend referred, relate specifically to that.

Apart from his query about enforcement, with which I hope that I have just dealt, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey also referred to clause 11. I am afraid that all that can be said is that advice will be available both for the Church in Wales and to churches of other denominations if they desire it. Obviously, no attempts will be made to exploit the expertise of the Church of England at their expense; costs will simply be covered. There is no question of any money being available, because the Measure has nothing to do with money. Unlike parish churches, there is no money available for cathedrals although we hope that, in the future, Government money may be available for cathedrals. The extent to which it will then be made available to cathedrals of other denominations is a matter about which I am not competent to advise the House. At present, there is no money in the kitty to help cathedrals, either in the Church of England, or anywhere else. We hope that there will be in the future.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was right in his surmise that other cathedrals are eligible in the narrow sense that I have suggested, such as Greek Orthodox cathedrals, but not in the sense of money being available for them.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the potential of so-called parish church cathedrals to "opt-out". There are eight such parish church cathedrals in the province of Canterbury and a further six in the province of York. I am advised that none has any intention of seeking or applying for what the hon. Gentleman described as the "opting-out" facility.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) on his speech. The House knows that my hon. Friend has not been very well. It is marvellous to see him back, looking in robust health. The fact that he has stayed up until nearly half-past two in the morning to add his blessing for and endorsement of this Measure is a credit to the Measure as well as to my hon. Friend. We are pleased that he is here with us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) asked one or two questions that I shall try to answer. I am afraid that palaces do not necessarily fall within the scope of the Measure. My hon. Friend put his finger on the point that it all depends on whether the palace is within the precincts. Not many palaces manage to tuck themselves into the precincts of any of our great cathedrals, but if there are any, they will fall within the ambit of the Measure because the precincts are the determining characteristic of the Measure.

Mr. Bowis: The palace at Peterborough is definitely within the precincts.

Mr. Alison: Unless I am given contrary advice by my advisers, I suspect that this is an uncertain area, but the fact of being within the precincts is likely prima facie to mean that the palace would have to be considered carefully, in that context.

My hon. Friend also asked about the walls within the precinct. As he will see if he reads the small print, the technical answer is that the Measure requires the administrative authorities to draw up a full, comprehensive and careful delineation of the precincts and to map them fully so that there is a definitive indication of the freehold territory occupied. Any administrative body that has any sense will make quite certain that the outside of the walls represents the outer limit of the precinct—not the inside of the wall—so that the wall falls within the precinct.

My hon. Friend asked about buildings such as Westminster abbey. Only buildings which are specifically cathedrals, as defined in the interpretation clause 20, come within the scope of the measure. From that my hon. Friend will see that the definition

"any cathedral church in the provinces of Canterbury and York,"

excludes places such as Westminster abbey, which are not cathedrals. They do not have a dean and chapter in the same sense. The cathedral church of Christ Church in Oxford, to which my hon. Friend referred, is included because it is what is technically known as "a royal peculiar". It has its own mysterious jurisdiction and arrangements. For that precise reason it is excluded.

My hon. Friend referred to the possibility that certain notable parish churches come within the scope of the Measure. They already come within the scope of the Faculty Jurisdiction Measure. They have their own governing rules and regulations. Therefore, there is no need to include them in the scope of the Measure.

I have answered most of the queries that have been raised by my hon. Friends and by Opposition Members during this short debate. Perhaps it would be appropriate to mention that the Care of Cathedrals Measure represents one could almost say the final swansong, if it is appropriate to link swans with cathedrals, of the recently knighted Sir Derek Pattinson, who was for many years and

will be until Wednesday the Secretary-General of the General Synod of the Church of England. As it happens, Sir Derek is not far removed from us now. We all wish him a happy retirement and congratulate him on the success of his efforts to bring the Measure before the House tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Care of Cathedrals Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Milk and Milk Products

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committee on European Community documents),

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4799/90 and 5598/90, relating to health rules for the production and marketing of milk and milk products; and supports the Government's aim of ensuring that any Council Regulations resulting from these proposals provide an effective and efficient system of hygiene controls throughout the Community without placing unnecessary burdens on small businesses.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Meat Health Standards

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committee on European Community documents),

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4780/90, relating to health rules for poultrymeat, 4596/90, relating to health rules for fresh meat, 4781/90, relating to health rules for meat products, 4863/90, relating to health rules for minced meat and certain other meat preparations, and 4782/90, relating to the conditions for granting derogations from specific Community health rules on the production and marketing of products of animal origin; and supports the Government's aim of ensuring that any measures resulting from these proposals contribute to effective harmonisation and efficient hygiene controls throughout the Community.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Cadmium

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committee on European documents),

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10270/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of the Environment on 8th June 1990, relating to cadmium and its compounds; recognises that the measure is generally in line with the European Community's agreed action programme on cadmium; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that European Community action in this area continues to take full account of United Kingdom interests. —*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Sewage Pollution (Cornwall)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

2.27 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I recently conducted a tour of primary schools in my constituency. One of the matters that the young people always raise with me is their concern about the environment—about beaches, waterways, CFCs or any other environmental issue that one might care to mention. That is a remarkable tribute to their awareness and, I hope, a sign of the way in which things will move in the future. It is appropriate to mention those children at the beginning of this short debate.

The other matter that is constantly raised on my visits is the workings of Parliament and the peculiarity of a place that debates subjects so late. When I ask them when they think that we finish, they suggest 5 or 6 o'clock in the afternoon. They go on to suggest 8 or 9 o'clock and are surprised when I say that it might not be until half-past 10. They are even more surprised when I suggest that debates continue even later than that into the early hours of the morning.

It is a record for me to start an Adjournment debate at 2.30 am—I do not know about the Minister. I am grateful to him for staying on to take part in the debate at this hour. When children in my constituency raise environmental issues I shall be able to tell them not only that we debate until the early hours but that I debated precisely the matters that they raised with me.

I requested this Adjournment debate tonight because of my anxieties about the pollution around the coasts of Cornwall. Our county is known worldwide for the beauty of our scenery and the quality of our unique environment. All of that is under threat in several ways. Indeed, all too often the reality is already far from ideal. The water is far from wholesome or pure. Tonight I wish to raise one of the most pressing of those anxieties. It comes as a shock and a surprise to those who encounter it. I refer to the problem of raw, untreated sewage around the Cornwall coast.

In terms of designated bathing beaches, the situation is not as bad as it was. In 1989, 12 out of 70 designated beaches failed EC bathing water standards, but, sad to say, that tells only a small part of the story. More revealing is the fact that surfers around Cornwall recently formed their own campaign for action, Surfers Against Sewage, backed by local doctors, because of their experience of ill-health arising from people spending long periods in polluted water.

The raw sewage that surfers, among others, encounter is the consequence of a system that which is not of the 20th century and which is no longer able to cope even if it did once. The concern felt among surfers is reflected by widespread public anxiety. Throughout the summer months in particular, I receive numerous letters from residents of and visitors to Cornwall giving horrific accounts of sewage strewn across the beaches and in the water, and who unwittingly allowed their children to play in water that was indescribably polluted.

The most immediate concern is to safeguard public health and to alleviate the anxiety that pollution causes, but in a county in which about 15 per cent. of the work force is in the tourist industry, pollution has the potential for making a catastrophic impact on the livelihoods of a large number of local people. I hope that the Minister will

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

respond mainly to the genuine environmental concerns of my constituents, though the issue also has economic implications.

Over the past 10 to 15 years, pollution has grown worse, not least because of population increases that have outstripped the public health infrastructure, compounded by the effects of increased affluence. They include the widespread ownership of dishwashers and washing machines that add to discharges. Sewerage built for the last century is still expected to cope with the demands of the next, even though it already collapses all too often.

The repercussions of pollution go wider than just the sea. Some towns desperate to provide new housing for young people, and to encourage the construction of factories and workshops that will provide jobs, are forbidden to allow such development because the sewerage system would be unable to cope. One example of that is to be found in the Falmouth-Penryn area, just down the road from my constituency. We are told that South West Water cannot afford to act, and it has imposed an embargo on any form of development, even though it is socially desirable for the community.

We ought to be aiming at the best in terms of sewage treatment, not the minimum that we think we can get away with. There are three types of treatments to be considered. Fine screening, or primary treatment, removes the visual evidence of sewage by reducing its size, but has no effect on the material itself, the bacteria it contains, or the contamination of which it is capable. Too often, not even fine screening is available, so the visual evidence of pollution is plainly there to see. However, just screening out the visual impact of pollution is not enough. In some cases it can give the public a false sense of security, as they cannot see for themselves that a problem exists.

Secondary treatment does not kill all bacteria such as hepatitis and salmonella. The most thorough method, tertiary treatment, is the only one to remove all contamination. The resulting sludge residue is inert in terms of harmful bacteria and, if recycled, it can be used on the land or as fuel.

Primary treatment might represent a big step forward to many Cornish beaches, but is not the way ahead. With increased sewage being pumped into the sea, that treatment is not the answer in the 20th century and it is certainly not a building block for the 21st. It disguises the problem and does nothing to solve it.

I hope that the Minister will elaborate upon what the Secretary of State meant when he said that all sewage should be treated in the future. Does he mean the secondary treatment, about which South West Water has recently talked, or tertiary treatment? Is he proposing a solution to the problem, or is he merely offering a step towards that long-term solution?

I am concerned that current plans fall far short of a final solution to the problem. The biggest current project in Cornwall is the Gwithian outfall and it is a good example of how the proposals for dealing with the sewage are not adequate to deal with the mounting problem.

The Secretary of State has required the provision of primary treatment that reduces the solids in the effluent to no more than 150 mg per litre. The treatment process—sedimentation tanks—would cause 60 per cent. of the sewage to be deposited and the remaining 40 per cent. would still go out through the Gwithian outfall. That process might meet the Secretary of State's requirement, but it means that 10 per cent. of the original bacterial content would still be discharged into the sea. It represents an inadequate level of treatment.

If the tides of the sea bring effluent on to the beaches—there are good reasons to think that that may happen—the risk of contaminated beaches remains. If Camborne, Redruth and Portreath are eventually connected to the system, 40 per cent. of the double total flow would bring the total amount of faecal solids discharged close to what the original scheme—that at Penwith, which offered no treatment—would have discharged. Therefore, we would be back to the situation that the Secretary of State now judges to be inadequate.

All the reports by South West Water's consultants, John Taylor and Sons, on the 1986-87 work were, after some pressure, made available for the public. The original scheme for a single outfall on the north coast was based on the fact that Mounts bay is unsuitable for the discharge of raw sewage. When the St. Ives bay sewage action committee asked the director of engineering services for the newly privatised South West Water whether there had been a further study of the possibility of having separate works for the north and south coasts, given that raw sewage will not be discharged, he said that the consultants—now called Acer John Taylor—had reviewed the matter and still recommended the Gwithian scheme.

When that committee asked for the latest reports, on the basis that it had seen the previous reports, it was told that that was no longer possible now that the water company is privatised because of commercial confidentiality. That was confirmed by the managing director of South West Water at a meeting on 28 June.

I do not want to concentrate on Gwithian and the outfall proposed there, but we seem to be ending up with a system that the Secretary of State has, in effect, said is inadequate, despite a multi-million pound investment. That must raise concern about the general provision for tackling the sewage problem in the county. Surely it is deplorable that, as a result of privatisation, public access to information is reduced, which limits our capacity to comment upon such issues. That hardly demonstrates the responsiveness to the consumer in which privatisation was supposed to result.

When sewerage schemes are proposed, I hope that it is accepted that they are matters of public interest and that the basis on which those schemes are introduced should be subject to public scrutiny. Such schemes should not be regarded as matters to be covered by commercial confidentiality. If schemes are regarded as such, something in the system has gone wrong.

Just before the North sea conference, the Secretary of State said that, from 1998, no more untreated sewage or sewage sludge would be pumped into the sea. South West Water faces a massive task in Cornwall if it is to meet the Government's requirements. There are currently 58 raw sewage outfalls in Cornwall, 26 to sea, 32 to estuaries. As I go around my constituency, from Gorran Haven, Carlyon bay, Mevagissey, Truro, Perranporth and St. Agnes, the list of complaints about sewage pollution in the water is almost endless. If we are to tackle that problem and reduce it to the levels I mentioned earlier, it will take enormous sums of money.

South West Water says that it has a £435 million investment programme over 10 years in bringing bathing

waters up to EC standards. The north coast of Cornwall, from Gwithian to Portreath, currently has 2 million gallons of raw sewage a day discharged on to the shoreline in an area popular with tourists. That means that beaches such as Portreath, Porthtowan and Chapel Porth are often filthy. I understand that a child recently stood on a syringe needle on Perranporth beach. Yet South West Water, through the Gwithian outfall, plans to add 20 million gallons more effluent per day. That must have continuing serious implications for health, fishing and tourism. There must be serious doubts about whether the South West Water programme comes anywhere near meeting the need to clear that up over a reasonable period.

Groups such as the South West Environmental Protection Agency call for all children who swim in the sea to be vaccinated against hepatitis B and say that signs should go up on beaches warning people that the beaches are contaminated.

If we apply the Department of the Environment edict that all significant discharges of sewage should receive treatment to Cornwall, we begin to see that there is an immensely expensive and practical task to be taken on. If, as I believe, "significant" is defined by the Department of the Environment as being a discharge of more than 1,500 cu m of sewage in 24 hours, official figures for Portreath outfall alone show that it discharges 4,000 cu m every 24 hours, and the North Cliffs outfall discharges 4,280 cu m. A cubic metre is equal to 220 gallons. Both those outfalls discharge sewage that is totally raw and not even screened. There are many similar examples around the coast. However, South West Water is apparently unable to improve either of them in the next decade, despite the significant levels of sewage discharge there, and promises, before privatisation, that action would be taken—promises which it appears to have partly reneged on.

South West Water is now telling Kerrier district council that it will have to contribute, through the poll tax, to the provision of basic screening at the Portreath outfall. It seems remarkable that something that we were originally told, pre-privatisation, would be effected now apparently hinges on the poll tax payer being prepared to contribute towards the cost of a privatised company.

About 1·5 million people live in the South West Water district, and at times up to 500,000 tourists supplement that number. It is unreasonable to expect local people to pay for the infrastructure to support a heavy influx of tourists. It illustrates that it is a problem for the nation and not just for individual local communities, particularly those in one of the poorest parts of England and an area of many beautiful small towns and villages.

The problem with such small towns and villages is that a low density population with a huge coastline means that the cost per person of sorting out the sewage problem is greater than almost anywhere else. It is unrealistic to expect the individual consumer, through the water rate, to pay for that problem to be sorted out.

The reason for the problem is that successive Governments, Conservative and Labour, failed to invest properly in the water industry and proper sewage systems before privatisation. I accept that it is an horrendous problem for the present Government or privatised companies to tackle, but Ministers should take the opportunity to crack it now, meet the environmental demands of the century as we approach the next, and be prepared to invest.

My firm view is that the appalling under-investment in our sewerage system over the years means that Government, not just private company, investment is needed now. Without that, the Secretary of State's statement or promise will seem just hollow rhetoric. The urgency of the problem requires an immediate response. The Government estimate that it will cost £1·5 billion to end the pumping of untreated sewage into the sea, but I fear that that is a gross underestimate. I suspect that that will be the cost of primary treatment, and I hope that the Minister will clarify that point. I understand that the cost of the full treatment that I advocate could be four or five times as much. Will the Government contribute anything to that, and what treatment is the Secretary of State promising for sewage outfalls?

Moreover, why does there seem to be such a difference in the figures that are being published compared with those prior to privatisation? It seems that people were sold a false prospectus, even allowing for the fact that the EC is upgrading the requirements that it will place on the Government.

To show how powerful that problem is, South West Water has been unable to provide me with a figure for the cost of introducing secondary or tertiary treatment for sewage outfalls in Cornwall. It says that the implications of the Secretary of State's announcement are still being assessed, but will the Minister clarify that? By how much, and when, does he foresee charges rising to tackle these problems? Massive investment is needed. For such a policy to be introduced on the back of water ratepayers, pensioners and others who are struggling to pay their bills is unacceptable and the Government must seek an alternative route.

South West Water recently announced profits up from £38 million to £45 million for the 12 months to 31 March. Those profits are all very well for shareholders, but they achieve nothing for anyone in the south-west unless they are spent on cleaning up the beaches. In part, South West Water says that it will reinvest that money, but in part it will be shareholders' reward for buying shares. The hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale), who is a loyal member of the Government and who voted for water privatisation, reacted by saying that those profits needed to be spent on water improvement in the region.

Proper treatment of sewage cannot be left any longer. The problem around Cornwall, for geographic and historic reasons, is exceptional and should be tackled. I fear that the cost of that will be high, but I hope that the Minister will elaborate on it. Given all the sources of finance available to the Government, they must make available the money to meet those costs.

2.47 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): This is the latest hour at which I have taken part in an Adjournment debate, but nevertheless I am pleased to do so because the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) has chosen his subject well. It gives me an opportunity to put on record the Government's concern to improve the quality of our coastal waters and the treatment of our waste water generally.

The hon. Member spoke mainly of Cornwall, the subject of his debate, but I shall spend one or two minutes on more general matters and remind the House of this

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

country's good record. A high percentage of our households—some 96 per cent.—are connected to sewage systems. This bears comparison with any country in Europe. A study in 1987 showed that 95 per cent. of river length in this country was of good or fair quality, compared with 75 per cent. in the European Community generally. No other member state bettered our position.

I agree with the hon. Member that the problem lies with the discharges of untreated sewage into coastal waters. Successive Governments received environmental advice that that was, in many cases, the best environmental option. That advice was tendered by the Jeger report of 1959, and endorsed in 1984 by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution.

It is commonly recognised that some environmental cost is associated with any type of sewage treatment and disposal. Not everyone wants sewage treatment works near where they live, and considerable planning problems are involved in the establishment of sewage treatment. Moreover, treatment results in sewage sludge, which must be disposed of—by spreading on land, by incineration or by landfilling. Each of those options produces its own environmental problems.

The Government accept that it is now time to take a further big step forward, and to improve our standards of sewage disposal. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 5 March that in future all substantial discharges of sewage would be treated: most would receive secondary treatment, but primary treatment would be more appropriate for coastal discharges where there would be no adverse effect on the environment. I remind the hon. Gentleman that even secondary treatment does not remove all the bacteria and viruses in sewage.

Since that announcement, we have moved quickly to implement the new policy, and the National Rivers Authority is now applying it to all new applications for sewage discharge consents. It will indeed be an expensive undertaking, and complex engineering and planning issues lie ahead; but we are consulting actively with the sewerage undertakers and the various regulatory bodies to put our ambitious programme in train.

We estimate that the cost of improving our bathing waters and treating all coastal sewage discharges will be around £3 billion, and a fair share of that will be spent in Cornwall. I have a list of some 10 long sea outfalls that were planned for Cornwall by South West Water; the total expenditure amounts to nearly £50 million. All of them will now receive a form of treatment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The nature of the county means an almost inevitable series of discharges. People are afraid that we shall receive only primary treatment—that there will be screening, but that nothing will really be done to treat the problem. The fear is that, because of the county's geography, we shall end up with a second-rate sewerage system.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is no hard and fast rule relating to the distinction between primary and secondary treatment. Secondary treatment will be carried out where it is required for the environment, and the type of the receiving water will also be taken into account. The hon. Gentleman is wrong, however, to suggest that primary treatment is simply a screening exercise; it settles out and removes a high percentage of the solid matter which then forms sewage sludge and needs to be disposed of separately. The water fraction is then discharged into the sea by means of an outfall.

Secondary treatment removes some of the bacteria and viruses, which remain behind in the sewage sludge. I repeat, however, that neither form of treatment renders the sewage sterile, unless a process of disinfection is undertaken; that has its own drawbacks for the environment, especially the marine life in the receiving water.

I was stressing that South West Water has its share of this ambitious national investment programme. Over the next 10 years it expects to spend about £240 million on improvements to sewage treatment works. That is in addition to about £300 million on the sewerage network. I think that the hon. Gentleman would agree that over past decades Governments of all parties have paid too little attention to problems of the sort that he has presented to the House. The structure that we have set up separates the regulator from the operator and places the operator in the private sector with access to private capital. That structure and administrative system will give effect to the improvements that we know are necessary.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister says that we are taking a big step in the context of what is required for sewerage outfall systems. He says that that involves considerable extra investment. Do the Government intend to contribute to that investment or will it be wholly funded by increases in charges to the consumer in areas such as that covered by South West Water?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The weakness in past systems was that such investment programmes relied on the Treasury for money. When the last Labour Government encountered financial problems, the first cut that they made was investment in sewage treatment. It is much better for private companies to raise money from charges to customers. The Government apply that system generally, and Cornwall will be no exception. The advantage of that system is that it establishes a clear link between the customer who wants higher water standards and payment for those standards. A further advantage is that companies are able to raise all the necessary finance on the capital markets. The limiting factor——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at three minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 17 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER

The Vice-Chamberlain of the Household reported Her Majesty's Answer to a loyal and dutiful address as follows:

I thank you most sincerely for your loyal and dutiful address on the occasion of the 90th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. I am deeply moved by this expression of your great pleasure on this joyful occasion and I welcome your intention to send a message to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother offering your cordial congratulations and expressing your warmest desire for her long continuing good health and happiness.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

RIVER TEES BARRAGE AND CROSSING BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

HASMONEAN HIGH SCHOOL BILL *[Lords]*

Read the Third time, and passed.

SOUTHAMPTON RAPID TRANSIT BILL [LORDS]

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph (b) of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words 'under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)' were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.— *[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

NATO Summit

1. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence implications of decisions taken at the NATO summit on 5 and 6 July.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): The purpose of the London summit was to preserve the fundamentals of NATO while adapting the alliance to the new circumstances in Europe and to reassure the Soviet Union that a NATO including a united Germany represented no threat to them. The agreement between Chancellor Kohl and President Gorbachev yesterday confirms this success of the London summit.

Mr. McKay: Two lines of NATO's press release state "that there are now circumstances in which nuclear retaliation in response to military action might be discounted." What is the difference between the new policy and the old policy of flexible response?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the declaration makes a number of references to nuclear weapons. It states that none of the NATO weapons will be used except in self-defence and that we seek the lowest and most stable level of nuclear forces needed to secure the prevention of war. Nuclear weapons will have an essential role in the overall strategy to prevent war in the way in which the hon. Gentleman described. NATO added that the weapons will be "truly weapons of last resort." That is a clearer definition of the nuclear strategy and emphasises the point that many Opposition Members still do not appreciate—that nuclear weapons are not for fighting a war, they are to prevent war.

Mr. Cormack: During this period of uncertainty for those in our armed forces, will my right hon. Friend do everything possible to stress the nation's sense of gratitude and obligation to them for what they have done and for their contribution to the peace that we are now seeing in prospect? Will he also do everything possible to reassure them that this House will not forget them in their difficulties in the future?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I shall certainly seek to do that. My hon. Friend has made an important point. I know that he did not mean this, and I do not say this, as some form of valedictory address. Although the position in central Europe has changed, our situation in needing to ensure a certain basic level of defences against the eventualities that we hope would not arise, but which could arise, mean that our defences will

have a continuing and important role and will offer a continuing and important career for those who give their lives and service to them.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: If nuclear weapons are weapons of last resort and not for fighting wars, is not the Government's inclination to deploy the tactical air-to-surface missile on behalf of the United States a decision that should be scrapped immediately? Does not it also bring into considerable doubt the need for tactical air-to-surface missiles to be deployed by the NATO alliance?

Mr. King: After the manifest success of the NATO summit, I am surprised that the hon. and learned Gentleman should seek to challenge head-on one of the statements of NATO policy, which is that

"the Alliance must maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces based in Europe and kept up to date where necessary."

He does so at the very moment when we are celebrating the success of the NATO strategy and on the day after one of the objectives of NATO strategy for 40 years—to seek a united Germany within NATO has been achieved. I am surprised that the hon. and learned Gentleman should query the unanimous agreement on that strategy.

Mr. David Martin: Will my right hon. Friend continue to make clear the necessity for strong defence in the future not only for short-term foreseeable events but for long-term unforeseeable ones? Does he agree that it would be criminal folly to reduce our defences, including nuclear weapons, to a level lower than any eventuality, however unforeseeable, might demand?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know that in saying that, he also recognises that circumstances are changing and that one of the most important aspects is that NATO must adapt. One of the greatest strengths of recent events and one of the values of NATO that was shown yesterday is that after the NATO summit, after the NATO declaration and after the visit of the secretary general to Moscow, President Gorbachev felt confident enough to move because he knew that he was dealing with an alliance which had the strength to deliver.

Mr. Rogers: In view of the Secretary of State's description of the talks as unanimous and successful, does he intend to make a full statement to the House on the implications of the unanimous decisions made and of "Options for Change", or shall we have to wait for a statement to be made during the recess?

Mr. King: No. The House is well aware of the outcome of the NATO summit and the Leader of the Opposition has already made certain comments in the House about it. Indeed, I noticed that in New York the Leader of the Opposition, referring to the changes and the positive outcome of the NATO summit, said that it was a good time to be alive. I am not sure whether that spirit has spread to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

Defence Commitments (Europe)

2. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made in his Department's review of Britain's defence commitments in Europe.

Mr. Tom King: We are considering options for change in the scale and deployment of our armed forces and their supporting structures in the light of the changing international circumstances.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend agree that despite Mr. Gorbachev's good intentions—and there is no reason to doubt them—*The Times* was correct to draw attention today to the uncertain nature of Soviet politics and on another occasion to the fluid situation in eastern Europe? Against that background, does he agree that any defence cuts should be gradual and should take into account long-term rather than short-term political developments?

Mr. King: I certainly agree with the importance of recognising that while much has changed, some elements endure. Our responsibilities in other parts of the world, whether in the Falklands, Belize, Cyprus or Northern Ireland, have not changed in any way. We must continue to recognise those elements and the need to maintain our defences. The one element that I would add to what my hon. Friend said is that it is also important that we work in close partnership with the NATO alliance and consult it about any changes that we might have in mind.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State confirm that changing circumstances require changing strategies, particularly in relation to nuclear weapons? If it is now NATO strategy that nuclear weapons should be weapons of last resort, why is it necessary for at least three countries in the alliance to possess them? Why should we not be content—if we can be content at all with nuclear weapons—with one nation, the United States, having sole possession of strategic nuclear weapons?

Mr. King: In the end a Government must take responsibility for the defence of their country. We believe that nuclear weapons have been for this country, as they have for others, the ultimate instrument of war prevention. We believe that nuclear weapons have saved millions and millions of lives. That is the key reason why Europe has just enjoyed the longest period of peace this century. It is against that background that we believe it is sensible to maintain a nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend constantly remind the House that whereas the time sequence for developing new nuclear weapons and keeping current nuclear weapons effective is very long, the time sequence in which international political relationships can change is almost immediate? Therefore we must never bring about a situation whereby the Russian military deposing Mr. Gorbachev could leave us defenceless, effectively, against that changed situation.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for emphasising the need for a certain prudence. No one could have observed the events of the past year without recognising the truth of what he has said. The headlong process of change that has taken place in recent months could alter. Today's announcement, encouraging as it is, might easily have gone the other way and then there could have been a great deal of tension in Europe. If the Soviet military establishment had finally decided that it could not accept a united Germany in NATO, we would face a different situation. The very fact that we believed that in

the end the Soviet Union would recognise the rights of the German people to self-determination and to choose to which alliance they belonged is extremely important.

Nuclear Tests

3. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what nuclear tests have been carried out by NATO countries and France in the current year; and for what purpose.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): The last United Kingdom nuclear test was in December 1989. Such tests are required to maintain the effectiveness of our nuclear weapons capability.

The French authorities have announced four and the United States three nuclear tests so far in 1990.

Mr. Caborn: I thank the Minister for that reply. Were those tests carried out in conjunction with tactical air-to-surface missiles? If so, does the Minister condone that, given that the threat has now been considerably reduced, if not removed? Will he also inform the House whether the Government intend to start progress towards a comprehensive worldwide nuclear test ban? That would be a significant step in enhancing the agreement reached yesterday and the decision would be received throughout the world as a progressive move towards further stabilisation.

Mr. Hamilton: The Government regard it as essential that we continue to test nuclear weapons so long as we remain a nuclear state, as we intend to do for the foreseeable future. That stand is unlike that of the Opposition, who have made it clear that they see no role for nuclear weapons and will negotiate them away as soon as they ever get into power. In those circumstances, we intend to continue to test nuclear weapons. We do not, of course, go into detail about the form that those tests take.

The Government have made it clear that we do not support the idea of a comprehensive test ban because we regard the testing of nuclear weapons as essential for the future development of our nuclear programme.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Can my hon. Friend confirm that in recent years the Soviet air force has modernised its nuclear air capability and that it would be extremely foolish for us to deny ourselves similar opportunities other than as part of some international agreement?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, that must be right. The Soviet Union will continue to be a highly nuclear-capable country for the foreseeable future. In those circumstances, it would be madness if we did not maintain our capability as well.

Weapons Development and Deployment

4. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his United States counterpart to discuss weapons development and deployment.

Mr. Tom King: I last met Mr. Cheney at the NATO nuclear planning group and the defence planning committee meetings in May. We discussed a wide range of current defence issues.

Mr. Fields: Although I might argue from a socialist perspective that imperialist, capitalist treaties and pacts are worthless pieces of paper, can the Secretary of State tell the House whether the Government are serious about the non-proliferation treaty, or does he support the statement made by his hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement who described it as a "worthless piece of paper" on 18 June in the House? Is not that a further example of the Thatcher-Ridley tendency of chauvinistic dislike and hatred for foreigners and all things foreign?

Mr. King: I am not sure what that contribution will do for the cause of the Leader of the Opposition in trying to persuade people in Washington that the Labour party is a very different animal now from that which some of its previous critics may have suggested. The hon. Gentleman's contribution said it all.

Mr. Roger King: Does my right hon. Friend agree that technology in the United States, particularly in military aircraft, has reached an all-time high with the stealth characteristics of those aircraft? Would it be possible for European aviation manufacturers to feature much of that stealth technology in the next generation of European fighter aircraft, and thus benefit from American research?

Mr. King: We seek to co-operate wherever possible in the European programme group on research and development in various collaborative projects and, where applicable, with the United States. Obviously, some of the skills of the United States are of great interest to us.

Mr. Boyes: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that American ships will be carrying stocks of nerve gas, in the form of 100,000 artillery projectiles, from Nordenham in Germany through the English channel? The projected time for the movement is mid to late September when there are frequently severe gales in the English channel. When precisely will the movement take place, and what contingency plans does the right hon. Gentleman intend to make in case of a serious accident? The British public have a right to know, or do the Government simply not care?

Mr. King: I will see what information I can give the hon. Gentleman about that.

Mr. Latham: Regarding contact with United States counterparts on weapons development and deployment, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is excellent that Sir Peter Levene has managed to copy the American system of labelling spares' costs, resulting in a substantial reduction in costs to public funds?

Mr. King: Many of the innovations that Sir Peter Levene has brought to the public procurement process have been of tremendous benefit, and there is no question —this should unite the House, whatever levels of defence expenditure one may approve—but that whatever money is spent should be spent to the best effect.

Germany

5. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had about the future defence role of Germany.

Mr. Tom King: In recent months I have had discussions on defence aspects of German unification with Dr. Stoltenberg, with other Defence Ministers in NATO, and with Marshal Yazov. The British Government have consistently supported the right of a united Germany to be

a full member of the NATO alliance, and we are delighted that Chancellor Kohl and President Gorbachev have now reached agreement on this crucial point.

Ms. Quin: Which Tory view is likely to prevail in future consideration of these matters? Will it be the views of the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and, presumably, the Prime Minister, or will it be wiser and more moderate counsels? Since the Soviet Union, despite its historic experience, has been able to change its stance towards the defence role of Germany, is not there a danger that only the United Kingdom will be negative and backward-looking?

Mr. King: The Foreign Secretary has made it clear that friendship and partnership are at the heart of British foreign policy and I can tell the House that friendship and partnership with Germany are also at the heart of our defence policy. That could never have been more obvious than during the past more than 40 years when 60,000 to 70,000 British troops and their families have been stationed in Germany. I am deeply grateful for the friendship and warmth of reception that they have had in Germany and for the close collaboration that has existed between us. That has perhaps never been more true than now when, under the vicious terrorist threat that they face, the outstanding co-operation of the German police and security forces has been beyond praise.

Mrs. Currie: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in this extraordinary week, in which President Gorbachev has withdrawn his objections to a united Germany joining NATO, the truth of the matter is that they could not beat us and therefore they are joining us? Does not it follow, therefore, that a united Germany should not be a weak member of NATO, but a strong one capable of playing a full part in the future?

Mr. King: There is absolutely no question but that my hon. Friend is right. Germany is an essential member of NATO. The Soviet Union has properly recognised, as we hoped that it would, that in the final analysis it is a matter for the democratic decision of the German people which alliance they join. Hon. Members will have noticed the phrase used by Chancellor Kohl and President Gorbachev, that their agreement yesterday recognised the
"full and unrestricted sovereignty of a united Germany."
That has to be right.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Secretary of State agree that yesterday's momentous decision, which we all welcome, has come about because of the persistence and patience of the Federal Republic of Germany and its allies in seeking to do deals with the Soviet Union? The outcome of the negotiations would not have been possible without the long-standing co-operation to which the Secretary of State alluded in respect of Britain and the federal republic. In those circumstances, is not it the more surprising that one of the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues tried to upset the apple cart with his ill-tempered outburst last week? Will the right hon. Gentleman reassure the House that there is now no one in the Tory Cabinet prepared to talk in terms of German revanchism in the way that his former colleague was prepared to do?

Hon. Members: What about the Prime Minister?

Mr. King: There is not much point in covering ground that has already been covered. I have made absolutely clear the importance of our alliance with Germany. The hon. Gentleman will know that I have consistently made clear, on behalf of the Government, the belief that a united Germany should be in NATO and the hope that the people of a united Germany would so choose. It is Chancellor Kohl's clear belief that that is what they will choose after the German elections.

County Regiments

6. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that under any Army reorganisation those county regiments with affiliated Territorial Army battalions bearing the same name will be retained.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not yet possible to comment on the future of particular regiments or their organisation.

Mr. Speller: Does my hon. Friend agree that while military mergers are nothing new, it must be logical to encourage those regiments with centuries of local recruiting tradition to continue that tradition? Examples include the 11th Foot, the North Devonshire regiment, now the Devonshire and Dorset regiment, where the local groundswell of support is such that recruiting will continue even in times when it is more difficult than in other parts of the world.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. Clearly, the ability of any regiment to recruit—and the ability of the Devon and Dorsets to get the support that they enjoy in their part of the country—will be taken into account in any reorganisation that we consider.

Mr. Thorne: In considering that matter, will my hon. Friend ensure that he does not overlook the claims of the Household Division or the Gurkhas? This year the brigade of Gurkhas celebrated 175 years of service to the British Crown and in the last war they raised 250,000 troops. If we overlooked them, I am sure that the British public would never forgive us.

Mr. Hamilton: I am well aware of the concern and respect that hon. Members have for the Gurkhas and the Household Division. We shall take that into account when we reconsider the shape that the Army should take in the future.

Mobile Forces

7. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what emphasis his Department places on mobile forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As last week's summit declaration made clear, NATO forces will in future need to be highly mobile and versatile. We are currently examining options for change in our force structures to reflect new circumstances.

Mr. Nicholson: With reference to mobile forces, is my hon. Friend aware that I strongly support the point made a moment ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) about the role of the Gurkhas? Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to say something about developments in NATO's strategy in view of the exciting and reassuring developments in eastern Europe, and about the possibility of a NATO role out of area?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, indeed. One of the advantages of the versatility and mobility alluded to is that they will enable the forces to be dual-hatted and play a role out of area as well as a reinforcement role in NATO.

Mr. Graham: The Minister mentioned versatility and mobility, but was it in order for a Royal Navy helicopter to be deployed at a Tory party event in my constituency, since, as has been admitted by the local Tory party, it was a fund-raising event for the Tories? Is that the new role for our military helicopters—to be used to prop up the Tories' fund-raising effort to try to win the next general election?

Mr. Hamilton *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the question was about mobile forces.

Mr. Hamilton: In as much as the supplementary question refers to mobility, I have answered the hon. Gentleman's question. As he well knows, that occasion was not laid on solely for the benefit of the Tory party. Serious sums of money were raised for other charities—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House must listen to the Minister's reply.

Mr. Hamilton: Serious sums of money were raised for other charities, but if it had been known that it was a Tory event, the contribution from the Royal Navy would not have been made.

Mr. Conway: When my hon. Friend has recovered from that formidable onslaught, will he give his attention to the role of the Territorial Army in the mobile forces and say whether in the light of developments, he believes that in future reservists and Territorial Army personnel will be able to play an even larger part in our mobile and specialist forces?

Mr. Hamilton: The Territorials and the reserves will certainly have an important role in terms of reinforcement of our role in NATO. We are considering that carefully under "Options for Change".

Low Flying

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the policy of his Department with regard to low-level military flying over the Isle of Man.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Michael Neubert): Much of the Isle of Man falls within controlled airspace associated with Ronaldsway airport. Military aircraft do not generally carry out flying training at low level over the remainder of the island, although the RAF makes extensive use of the air weapons range off Jurby Head.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful for that answer, but does the Minister accept that if having civilian air traffic over Ronaldsway airport is good cause for not having low-level military flying, that must also be a relevant consideration in low-level flying over my islands constituency, where the two important airports, at Kirkwall and Sumburgh, deal with not only a large amount of civilian inter-island traffic but with helicopter traffic from the North sea oil platforms? If this has been a relevant consideration in not allowing low flying over the Isle of Man, will the hon. Gentleman reconsider the decision to increase low-level flying over Orkney and Shetland in recent years?

Mr. Neubert: Ronaldsway airport was a factor in the consideration but it was not, as the hon. Gentleman seeks to suggest, the only one. He knows that each case is considered on its merits. I am sure that the people of Orkney and Shetland want to make their contribution to the defence of these islands. The Isle of Man does so by contributing the range for low-level flying, and other ranges—for example, RAF Tain—are equal contributors. The hon. Gentleman might have a word about that with his hon. Friend President Kennedy.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that in the Isle of Man or anywhere else in the United Kingdom, low-flying sorties, if they are to mean anything, have to be about 300 miles long so that pilots and navigators can undertake the necessary training to be able to operate in wartime conditions wherever they occur?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend understands these matters much better than does the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). It is true that the average sortie takes at least 300 to 500 miles, and it must encompass that distance to be worthwhile practice. It is our intention, through the United Kingdom low-flying system, to spread low-flying training as fairly and evenly as possible. Avoiding one area puts an unnecessary burden on other areas. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down; a lot of background conversation is going on.

NATO Summit

9. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence implications of decisions taken at the NATO summit on 5 and 6 July.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay).

Mr. Mullin: Now that it is alleged that our nuclear weapons are for use only as a last resort, are there any plans for doing away with our short-range nuclear weapons—I am talking about artillery and Lance—or am I being naive?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman would have done better to read the London declaration before he came to the House because it contains a specific proposal on nuclear artillery.

Mr. Wilkinson: Now that the NATO alliance has unambiguously extended the hand of friendship to the Warsaw pact and the Soviet Union, which leads it, will my right hon. Friend, in concert with the Foreign Secretary, see whether pressure can now be put on the Soviet Union to withdraw its remaining troops from Poland?

Mr. King: Certainly we wish to see the withdrawal of Soviet forces as soon as possible. My hon. Friend will know that Chancellor Kohl accepted that it will probably be three to four years before those troops can be withdrawn from East Germany. One should not underestimate the sheer logistical problems of withdrawal

of the numbers involved, but we want it to happen as soon as possible. We should welcome the real progress that has been made.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Were the decisions taken at the NATO summit consistent with the decision taken yesterday in Moscow? If so, do the Government support the restriction on the size of German forces following a united Germany?

Mr. King: Not only were they consistent, but the very tone of the London summit was intended to make clear to the Soviet Union that a united Germany in NATO presented no threat to the Soviet Union. The success of that summit is borne out by yesterday's events, which have given President Gorbachev the confidence to proceed as he has, some might say courageously, to accept against the background of his domestic position the important step forward of a united Germany in NATO. The German proposals for the Bundeswehr and the Volksarmee were well anticipated and we have taken note of them.

Sir Bernard Braine: À propos my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), does he agree that the real test of Soviet sincerity about the new relationship with the west would be its withdrawal from a country that suffered grievously from both Germans and Russians during the war and that has suffered grievously since? The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland would be a great step forward.

Mr. King: I understand my right hon. Friend's feelings and wish to see that withdrawal as soon as possible. We must recognise the most remarkable landmark that emerged yesterday. A few months ago, no one would have thought it possible for the Soviet Union to accept a united Germany in NATO. Three months ago it was almost unthinkable in Moscow and it has now been confirmed. We should welcome that.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Secretary of State confirm that a statement about the Government's reaction to the NATO summit will be made before the House rises for the summer recess? Will the document "Options for Change" be available for debate, or will it simply be published before the end of the Session?

Mr. King: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister commented on reaction to the summit in her statement to the House following the G7 summit at Houston. I cannot comment further today on a separate statement about "Options for Change".

Mr. Sayeed: If at the London summit the Government had made an immediate announcement to cut defence spendng by over a quarter, what would have been the effect?

Mr. King: That is a rather subtle question of which I would have liked more notice. The London summit showed the importance of the members of the NATO alliance working together. As I said, one factor that must have been important to President Gorbachev was that he was dealing with a united alliance and knew from talking to Chancellor Kohl that the Chancellor's views were consistent with those of the whole of the NATO alliance.

Conventional Forces in Europe

10. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decisions he has made about the role of the Army following a possible conventional forces in Europe agreement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No decisions have yet been taken regarding the future role of the Army, although we are examining the options for change in the light of changing international circumstances.

Mr. Eastham: In view of the dramatic discussions between East and West Germany and the ultimate withdrawal of Russian troops, does the Minister recognise that there is no longer any justification for the retention of 55,000 British troops in Germany? Can he assure us that the Government will not try to introduce some strategy under which those 55,000 troops will be deployed somewhere else in the world, in a continuation of the imperialism that we used to experience 100 years ago?

Mr. Hamilton: "Options for Change" recognises the dramatic alterations in the scene in Europe generally and especially in east-west relations. It will therefore deal with the size of the Rhine Army.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend accept that whatever agreement may be reached on conventional forces, the Territorial Army must always be maintained as a back-up to the regular forces? Will he congratulate those who serve in the Territorial Army in my area on the opening last Thursday of the Alexandra barracks by Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra? They will provide magnificent training opportunities for the Territorial Army of the future.

Mr. Hamilton: I am glad to hear what great support is being given to the Territorial Army in my hon. Friend's area. It is an invaluable and essential part of our commitment to reinforce NATO at a time of conflict.

Arms Conversion Agency

11. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received any representations to set up an arms conversion agency.

12. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received any representations to set up an arms conversion agency.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): This question appears to have been widely syndicated on the Opposition Benches. It is found in three of the top dozen questions. Let us hope that hon. Members have adequately memorised their supplementaries.

The answer is that I have received various representations.

Mr. Henderson: Has the Minister had the temerity to contact the Department of Trade and Industry on the possibility of an arms conversion agency? If so, can he tell us about the nature of those talks and specifically whether he has received reports from the DTI on how manufacturing industry can obtain its share of the peace dividend?

Mr. Clark: That question has been asked no fewer than seven times, and answered by three Ministers, during the

past six months. The question does not alter and nor does the answer. British industry is responsible for determining its product ranges, not the Government.

Mr. Fatchett: Does not the Minister's answer show clearly that the Government feel that they have no responsibility to the companies and workers which have supplied the British forces over the years? Is not the Minister happily washing his hands of companies such as Vickers in Leeds? Is not it time that the Government accepted some responsibility for those who have supplied Britain so well for so long?

Mr. Clark: I thought that the hon. Gentleman spoke from the Opposition Front Bench on some subject or other, and I had hoped that he would produce some enlightenment on the subject. All that he has done is produce the standard socialist formula—convene a committee of friends, throw some public money at the subject and then claim that something is being done about it. In fact, we have no details about the project. We do not know how it is to be constituted, whether it is to be funded from taxation revenue, or whether—as I understand it—it is to be funded by a surcharge on those in arms production. There are no details: it is simply a down-memory lane formula of socialism.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is essential that we retain a military complex in our industry that is capable of turning out the necessary minimum weapons to guarantee our security? Is not military aviation such as that at British Aerospace at Walton essential to continue the defence of this country?

Mr. Clark: Of course, there are certain key capabilities that we shall retain at all times. We shall always continue to need a strong and vigorous defence sector in our manufacturing industry.

Mr. Viggers: Has my hon. Friend had the opportunity to read some of the articles commemorating Adam Smith? Did they refresh his natural inclination that if market forces do anything, it is crucial that the Government should not become involved in the issue? The very last thing that we should have is an arms conversion agency.

Mr. Clark: I entirely agree with the latter part of my hon. Friend's proposition, but I am not sure whether all Adam Smith's precepts are entirely applicable to the defence industries.

"Options for Change"

13. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the findings of the "Options for Change" inquiry.

Mr. Tom King: I appreciate the keen interest, particularly in the armed services themselves, in the progress of our work which is proceeding against the background of the changing international situation and similar studies among our allies. I advised the House on 18 June of the essential elements in our study of "Options for Change". I am not yet in a position to go further.

Mr. Duffy: Before publishing those findings, will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will have given due weight to a service dividend as well as a peace dividend?

Mr. King: Yes, Sir. I have not used the word "findings" because we hope to come forward with proposals. I hope that there will be an opportunity for wider consultation. Obviously this is an important time for the armed services. We must take account of the interests of the armed services and all those who serve in them as well as those involved in defence generally.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What does my right hon. Friend think of the morality of those who want to spend the peace dividend but refuse the investment in nuclear weapons which makes that dividend possible?

Mr. King: I do not know whether my hon. Friend was referring to the Opposition. At this very moment, the Leader of the Opposition is trying to persuade people in Washington that the unilateralist views shared by many Opposition Members do not really exist.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mrs. Ewing: Is the Prime Minister aware that when I read the memorandum from the Chequers seminar and saw the words "angst", "aggressiveness", "assertiveness" and "bullying"—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Lady proceed with her question please? *[Interruption.]* Order. These pauses take a lot of time.

Mrs. Ewing: —I believed that the Prime Minister was painting a self-portrait. Does she realise that, through her failure to sack the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and her association with that memorandum and the attack on the German people, she is now tarred with the Ridley brush and is no more fit to lead than he was?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. At one time, I am accused of being isolated and of not consulting anyone; at another time, I am accused of having consultations with those who have something interesting to say. People must make up their minds which they are criticising. The hon. Lady could have read the constructive result in a speech at the Koenigswinter conference some five days later. That constructive speech concerned all our relationships in the Community, particularly with Chancellor Kohl, who shows much more understanding of these matters than does the hon. Lady.

Mr. Wiggin: Given the now general acquiescence about the reunification of Germany, does my right hon. Friend agree that the first act of a newly reunified Germany should be the signing of a full and unqualified peace treaty with the former allies? Will she take steps to ensure that that happens?

The Prime Minister: After unification, I think that Germany and Poland will wish to sign a treaty confirming Poland's existing borders. That will be one of the most

important international measures. I do not think that a unified Germany would wish to have a full peace treaty, for obvious reasons. We might have arrangements that lead to a peace settlement.

Mr. Hattersley: Is the Prime Minister aware that four of the six academic experts who attended her Chequers seminar on Germany have said that Mr. Charles Powell's minute of that meeting gave a slanted—that is, anti-German—account of the discussion? Does the Prime Minister agree?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hattersley: The whole House, and people in many places and chanceries throughout the world, will be astonished that the Prime Minister has not taken this opportunity to repudiate the more offensive sections of the minute. Four of the experts at the seminar say that the minute was slanted against the Federal German Republic. Everyone in the world now believes that the Prime Minister's private secretary was reflecting not so much the opinions of the experts as the prejudices of the Prime Minister. Why does not she take this opportunity to refute them?

The Prime Minister: I am amazed that the deputy leader of the Labour party chooses his opportunity to question me to use it—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: —chooses to use his opportunity for questioning to attack a civil servant who cannot reply and who has served all Governments with equal integrity. His conclusion on that meeting was highly constructive, as was the meeting itself. There used to be more honour in the House than that.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister's reputation is far too tarnished for her to maintain this haughty stand any longer. Does not she understand that there is a problem with Anglo-German relations and that that problem is the Prime Minister? What we want—and, I believe, what the majority of people want—is an honest statement of the Prime Minister's opinion. Has she the courage to make such a statement to the House and to face cross-examination?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will read the many speeches and consider the many actions in which we have been staunch allies of Germany in NATO and in which the Germans have been staunch allies of ours in NATO and in the EEC. Germany joined us in stationing cruise and Pershing at a critical time. We could not say that the Opposition supported that.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that every other Government in the world regularly make assessments of the British character and of Britain's performance, and that they all admire and respect her quality of leadership much more than they respect the inane posturing of the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: Had this country followed the policies of the Leader of the Opposition on defence, we should never have seen the remarkable changes that we are seeing now.

Q2. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: As the Prime Minister chose in the exchange of resignation letters to refer to

"the policies we both believe in so deeply",

does not she owe it to the House and the country—she was the person who mentioned the word "honour"—to say whether she repudiates the view that her former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry expressed in his resignation letter which was that the proposal by the European Commission for economic and monetary union in the Community would be a disaster? Does she repudiate him, or does she agree with him that it would be a disaster?

The Prime Minister: The policies on which the former Secretary of State and I agree are the policies that have transformed Britain from the state in which Labour left it and which it would recreate. The hon. Gentleman cannot have listened to what I said last week—that my right hon. Friend's views were not those of the British Government. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would have known that.

On the resignation letter, my right hon. Friend condemned the move to a single currency. Does Labour now support that?

Mr. Paice: Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the policies that she has just mentioned which have brought eight years of successive economic growth, improvements in productivity and record levels of employment? Is not it her determination to pursue those policies which will ensure that the British economy is the best counter-balance to any other economy in Europe?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. Our policies have been very successful. We now have the fastest growth in manufacturing productivity in the G7. In the 1960s and 1970s we had the lowest growth in productivity in the G7. We now have the second largest growth of output in the EEC. In the 1960s and 1970s we had the lowest growth of output in the EEC. We now have the second fastest growth in business investment after Japan. I am delighted to have a chance to say how bad it was in Labour times and how good it is now.

Q3. **Mr. Carr:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Carr: Given the announcement last Friday that the retail prices index has now reached 9·8 per cent., the continuing balance of payments deficit running at over £1 billion a month and the continuation of interest rates at 15 per cent., causing record numbers of bankruptcies, does the Prime Minister agree that the economy is in a mess and that the responsibility for it lies squarely with her and her Government?

The Prime Minister: I am amazed that the hon. Gentleman calls it a mess. We have the highest-ever standard of living, more people in work than ever and the highest standard of investment. In fact, 28 of the 50 top performing European companies are British.

Mrs. Currie: May I say to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the first opportunity that the hon. Lady has had to put a question and I ask her to do it.

Mrs. Currie: May I say that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is looking jolly nice today? Does she agree that is is a time of great celebration? As she has observed, it is the end of the cold war. Does she also agree that while we celebrate we should not be complacent about the peace?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend and return her compliment. I said in November 1988 that we had reached the end of the cold war provided that Mr. Gorbachev went on as he has done. That was when I first said it, but others have come rather later.

Q4. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Garrett: Does the hon. Lady recognise that there are not only splits in her party, but different views in ours? Does she also recognise that they are legitimate differences? Stripped of the hysteria and counter-charges of the past few days, we have to think as a nation about the balance of power, especially in a free, open and democratic Europe. My generation—there are many hon. Members of my generation—should consider the part we played to return the balance of power. Our parents and grandparents did the same. The last three centuries have taught us lessons. Those who did not experience the 1939-45 war or the post-war period should read the history of Europe over the past three centuries. Some of the pro-Europeans should also re-read their history.

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Gentleman for those words which I think he has truly spoken. I point out that I said——

Mr. Skinner: He should have been at the seminar. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am anxious to call as many hon. Members as possible.

The Prime Minister: May I point out—because I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree—that when I said in November 1988,

"The cold war is already at an end",

I went on with the words that were very much in keeping with his sentiments:

"Now, that does not mean to say a strong defence is at an end—far from it."

I think that the hon. Gentleman would firmly agree with that: we always have to keep up a strong defence to safeguard peace.

I note what the hon. Gentleman said about learning from history. I was interested to see what Chancellor Kohl said at a press conference today. He said that he understood the concern—especially on the part of the British—whose entire national existence had been at stake in the fight against Hitler. He went on to say that he had not taken my right hon. Friend's comments amiss

"The man has been punished enough."

I think that the hon. Gentleman, Chancellor Kohl and I would very much agree on the wisdom of learning from history.

Prescribed Drugs (Compensation)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide statutory rights to compensation to sufferers from serious side effects from prescribed drugs; and for connected purposes.

Alongside, and complementary to, the great advances in medical science—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would those hon. Members who do not propose to remain in the Chamber please leave quietly?

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Alongside, and complementary to, the great advances in medical science and surgery that have taken place in the past 50 years has been the introduction of new drugs which, in their efficiency and effectiveness, have helped to banish so many of the illnesses that were common when I was a boy. Diphtheria, measles, scarlet fever and even tuberculosis, which were once the scourges of our nation's health, are now of little consequence. I name those diseases; I could easily name a dozen others that have ceased to be serious and epidemic illnesses—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise to the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), but I cannot hear a word that he is saying. This motion is very important.

Mr. Speaker: I quite agree that it is important. I have already appealed to hon. Members to leave quietly, and I appeal to those hon. Members remaining in the Chamber to listen to what the hon. Gentleman has to say.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: As it notches up its successes, the pharmaceutical industry has moved on to tackle new challenges and, as I speak, the Committee on Safety of Medicines—the watchdog body that decides when a drug has progressed sufficiently through its clinical trials to be licensed—is considering between 10 and 20 new drugs for which the manufacturers are seeking a licence. A licence is sometimes thought to mean that all the known side effects of the drug have been established. That is not so. As Professor Bill Asscher, the chairman of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, said recently in a "World at One" news programme:

"The policy has always been to advise Ministers to license drugs early so that the Committee can study them after they are being used by proper post-marketing surveillance."

He pointed out that a licence means that, in clinical trials, a drug has been found to be effective, safe and of quality. But he added:

"You don't know until you've used a drug in a very large number of people precisely what problems there might be."

Professor Asscher then explained that his committee relied on a voluntary reporting scheme whereby GPs fill in yellow cards commenting on any unexpected side effects that they notice when using a new drug. The monitoring scheme produced 20,000 reports last year, and is continually being assessed by the committee. The scheme depends on the diligence of the GPs, and makes one realise that the fact that a drug has been licensed in no way guarantees that it will not create harmful side effects. If it does, what recourse to compensation is open to the victim? In theory, the Consumer Protection (Registration of Professional Chemists) Act 1988 could be called in aid, as it imposes a liability on manufacturers of defective products without the need to prove negligence. However, I am told that the cost of a complex drug claim would be prohibitive for a family not on legal aid. That must be wrong.

A drug is a product. An analogy could be drawn between a new drug and a new car: both will have been rigorously tested by their manufacturers before going on sale. In the case of the new car, it will have been driven for thousands of miles before appearing in the showroom. However, if, after it is available to the public, it begins to show unsuspected faults, the manufacturer will recall the model and have the defects put right.

At that point my analogy breaks down. It is possible to recall a car and put it right, but what about someone who has been severely damaged by the side effects of a drug? I mean lasting damage, not just a massive skin-peeling rash like the one that I developed after being given a particular medicine in hospital but of which there is now no trace. I am referring to serious, drug-induced side effects. Thalidomide is the classic example, but it is not an isolated case; other examples are Opren the arthritis drug, Myodil, the heart drug Pexid and the steroid Prednisolone. People who were given high dosages of steroids in the 1960s now have bodies cruelly deformed by their side effects. They will carry those abnormalities to the grave.

The latest addition to the list of drugs giving serious cause for worry is another heart drug called Corwin. It was licensed in May 1988; by 1989, the monitoring system used by the Committee on Safety of Medicines had shown that the drug could cause deterioration in patients with severe heart failure. Other information from the yellow-card "adverse drug reaction" monitoring scheme indicated that it was sometimes being used inappropriately in such patients. In January this year, the Committee on Safety of Medicines made recommendations severely restricting the use of Corwin. It is continuing to monitor the situation.

The exact number of people suffering from severe drug-induced side effects is not easy to establish. Professor Asscher is reported to have stated that 7 per cent. of all admissions to hospital are due to the serious side effects of modern medicines. By anyone's standards, it is a matter for concern. Yet our pharmaceutical industry seems indifferent to the question of compensation, refusing to admit liability and effectively challenging the victims to sue if they can afford it—of course most of them cannot. Just occasionally, one of the drug companies seems willing to accept its responsibility: in the 1970s, ICI set up a £10 million voluntary compensation scheme for victims of its heart drug Eraldin.

Then there is Danny Heffernan, now 23 years old and only 4 ft 4 in tall. He discovered that his stunted growth was caused by very high dosages of steroids. After an 11-year battle he persuaded Glaxo, the makers of the drug that had affected him, to offer an out-of-court settlement.

I do not believe that the present situation is good enough, especially as we now know that licensing by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in no way certifies that a drug is free of side effects. To that extent, I believe that Parliament should insist that our pharmaceutical companies set up a compensation fund. I suggest that they should be required by law to do so.

I believe that we should use the West German example for the sort of law that I have in mind. The West German drug law of 1976 has a section that reads:

"If as a result of the administration of a drug intended for human use which was distributed to the consumer within the purview of the law . . . a person is killed or the body or the

health of a person is considerably injured the pharmaceutical entrepreneur who placed the drug on the market within the purview of this law shall be obliged to compensate for the harm caused to the injured party."

The Germans have that law. The Swedes and the Finns have comprehensive pharmaceutical injury insurance schemes, designed to compensate for injuries caused by drugs. Drug importers and manufacturers share the cost of funding the scheme. I can see no reason why we should not follow those examples. I hope that the House will give me leave to bring in my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Sir Michael McNair-Wilson, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Spencer Batiste, Mr. Churchill, Mr. James Kilfedder, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mr. Michael Morris and Mr. Nigel Spearing.

PRESCRIBED DRUGS (COMPENSATION)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson accordingly presented a Bill to provide statutory rights to compensation to sufferers from serious side effects from prescribed drugs; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 July and to be printed. [Bill 187.]

BILL PRESENTED

DECLARATION OF WAR AND COMMITMENT OF TROOPS ABROAD (CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS)

Mr. Harry Cohen, supported by Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Andrew Bennett, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Ron Leighton, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Chris Mullin, Mr. Peter L. Pike, Ms. Dawn Primarolo and Ms. Clare Short, presented a Bill to ensure that war cannot be declared or troops committed or kept abroad by Her Majesty's Government without the approval of the House of Commons: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 20 July and to be printed. [Bill 186.]

Points of Order

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In recent times, some hon. Members have raised points of order about those being called at Prime Minister's Question Time, and we have rightly been told that we did not have questions on the Order Paper. I have noticed in recent weeks that hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, who have been called at Prime Minister's Question Time did not have questions on the Order Paper. Today, two of the three hon. Members whom you called from the Conservative Benches—I am not questioning your selection—simply did not have questions on the Order Paper. I am beginning to wonder what the trouble is in going into the Table Office to table questions to the Prime Minister and to try to catch your eye——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to understand what the hon. Member means. Surely he is not suggesting that I should not go across the Chamber to get a proper balance, because that is exactly what I did today. I am anxious to ensure that those who have nil scores and who had not put a question to the Prime Minister were able to do so. Today I did just that. All hon. Members who were called at Prime Minister's Question Time had a nil score, and that was their first opportunity to ask a question.

Mr. Ewing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. That is precisely the dilemma. When hon. Members have previously raised this point of order, we have been told by you that we had not tabled questions to the Prime Minister. I would certainly object if you did not preserve a balance between both sides of the House. However, has your advice on previous days now been changed, and do we no longer require to table questions to the Prime Minister in order to catch your eye? Until recent weeks, my understanding has been that we should have questions down to the Prime Minister to try to catch your eye.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know from where the hon. Gentleman got that idea. I hope that the whole House will agree that I should seek to strike a fair balance. The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) has, during this Session, put three questions to the Prime Minister, and he asked question No. 2 today. For supplementaries, I seek to give an opportunity to those who have not put a question, and that is exactly what I have done today. I hope that that is of some comfort to the hon. Member.

Mr Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members understand that, unlike the Pope, you are infallible in the Chamber. However, you have just said that you call hon. Members who have a nil score. The whole House knows that you keep an accurate record, but from when was the nil score dated? That is an important point. If we are to have nil scores, what about a penalty shoot-out?

Mr. Speaker: The House would do best to leave these difficult decisions to the Chair—*[Interruption.]* I am not prepared to have my arm jogged by hon. Members who seek to ask questions. However, if an hon. Member has a legitimate constituency interest in a departmental question, that is a different matter. I cannot accept bids for Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, let me deal with this first. The hon. Gentleman who raised the point of order has already had an opportunity to put a question to the Prime Minister. I do not exactly know when——

Mr. Tony Banks Exactly.

Mr. Speaker: Well, it does not state the date on my list. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) has also put a question to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Faulds: As a nil scorer, Sir, may I await your future pleasure?

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) is yes!

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have every respect for the views of Back Benchers, as I am one myself, but while in no way wishing to question your judgment, perhaps you will bear in mind that it often appears to Conservative Members that too many opportunities are given to the Opposition Front Bench, and especially to the Leader of the Opposition, to ask two or three questions, at rather great length.

Mr. Speaker: That is perennial. Some Leaders of the Opposition have not risen as many as three times, but that has become a practice in recent years. The more times that Front-Bench spokesmen rise, the less time there is for Back Benchers. That should be borne in mind.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, just a minute. I understand that the Opposition Treasury team is anxious to proceed with the Finance Bill.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Skinner: I think that you have a point about the Opposition Front Bench and you must take that into account, Mr. Speaker, but you said that if an hon. Member raised a constituency matter, he or she would be in with a fair chance. I reckon that, on that basis, if any hon. Member mentions the National Union of Mineworkers, and I am the only sponsored NUM Member standing, I must have a chance. That is roughly what you are saying.

May I have an assurance that the deputy Prime Minister registers only half a score, which means that an hon. Member would get another chance if the right hon. and learned Gentleman answered for the Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Of all hon. Members, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is certainly not deprived in any way—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—and the reason why he is regularly called—*[Interruption.]*—I must say this in defence of the hon. Gentleman—is that he is always here.

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

As amended (in the Committee and in Standing Committee), further considered.

New clause 2

CAPITAL ALLOWANCE: MANUFACTURING INCENTIVES

'1. This section shall have effect only in relation to trading companies whose activities consist wholly or mainly—

(a) in the subjection of goods to a process so as to produce finished or partly finished manufactured goods for sale on a retail or wholesale basis and

(b) of activities falling within such classes, groups or activities set out in the Standard Industrial Classification issued by the Central Statistical Office as may be prescribed by way of regulations made under this subsection.

2. This section shall have effect only in relation to accounting periods which end after 31st July 1990 and begin before 1st August 1991.

3. Where this section applies, subsection 24(2)(a)(i) of the Capital Allowances Act 1990 shall have effect as if for 25 per cent. in that subsection there were substituted the percentage specified in subsection (4) below, and subsection 3(2) of that Act shall have effect as if for one twenty-fifth in that subsection there were substituted the percentage specified in subsection (5) below.

4. The percentage specified in this subsection is

$$\frac{A \times 25 + B \times 40}{A + B}$$

where A represents the total number of days in the accounting period which either fall before 1st August 1990 or fall after 31st July 1991, and B represents the number of days in the accounting period which fall within the period starting on 1st August 1990 and ending on 31st July 1990.

5. The percentage specified in this subsection is

$$\frac{A \times 4 + B \times 10}{A + B}$$

where A and B have the meanings assigned to them in subsection (4) above.'.—*[Mrs. Beckett.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.50 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

On Sunday in a television interview, the Foreign Secretary, when discussing some matters of some difficulty and delicacy, was drawn almost in passing into observations on the differences between the economies of our European partners and our own. He referred especially to the German economy, saying that it has, indeed, become more successful than our own by

"doing the things and taking the steps we failed to do."

We know—this has become more apparent in recent days—that we have a divided Government. Perhaps among all the different causes for dissent, the greatest rift is opening up between those who, like the Foreign Secretary and occasionally the Lord President, not only recognise but admit the difficulties of our economy, and those who, like the Treasury Front-Bench team, still assert, in the teeth of all the evidence, that we have had an economic miracle and that our present problems, which even those right hon. and hon. Members cannot completely ignore, are temporary and will be short lived.

I recognise that it is a bit of a cheek for the Lord President to take the high-minded tone as he was presiding over our economy when much of the damage was done, but we must at least give the right hon. and learned Gentleman some credit for admitting his error now.

In contrast, today's Treasury Ministers still seem determined—no doubt, for short-term political gain—to undermine their own and their country's long-term interests by encouraging misplaced optimism. It undermines their own interests because the more they seek to convince people that the difficulties are temporary, the less likely people are to pay attention to their exhortations to cease borrowing and to save. That would all be less important, although worrying, but for the fact that the Government's refusal to acknowledge that there is a problem leads to their rejection of any remedy. That is why we await with considerable interest the reaction to our new clause. It is, indeed, a modest step and should commend itself to any Government, with the slight exception of a printing error in subsection (4) which reads "1990" instead of "1991". I am sure that that will not deflect the Chief Secretary from giving it serious consideration.

The new clause is a modest step. It would alleviate a little the burden of high interest rates on businesses and the additional pressure on them to reduce manufacturing investment. That is just the type of step for which industry is calling. The new clause aims to give temporary additional financial help to companies by accelerating somewhat the capital allowances that they would otherwise have received after 1991 and bringing them forward into 1990 and 1991. It also aims to increase the rate of writing down allowances to 40 per cent., rather than 25 per cent., and 10 per cent. rather than 6 per cent.

As I have said, the new clause is a minor and modest measure. While it does not commit the Treasury to the additional relief in the long term, to which Treasury Ministers have been so resistant, it accelerates the relief that would have been given anyway in later years and gives that relief at a time when the state of the economy is causing particular difficulty and when manufacturing industry and investment is so hard pressed.

One of the most damaging myths of the Thatcher years, promoted so heavily by the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), is that manufacturing is no longer of critical importance to our prosperity. That statement from the former Chancellor of the Exchequer revealed a great deal about his attitude. The reason why he advanced a proposition so ludicrous to most Opposition Members was not even that he believed it himself but that he had to find something to explain away the problems that began to be evident in the mid-1980s following the devastation of our manufacturing industry presided over by the now Lord President. The Chancellor needed to show that the devastation, to which even he had to admit, did not matter too much, so he came up with the idea that it was because manufacturing did not matter so much any more. He argued that the improvements in earnings from internationally tradable services—the so-called invisibles—more than made up for any deficiencies in manufacturing earnings which were apparent even then.

Unfortunately, time has overtaken that argument because invisible earnings themselves are becoming invisible and that excuse is no longer credible even to Ministers who are used to believing or putting forward 10 incredible things a day, particularly at the behest of the chairman of the Conservative party. Now, instead of trying to explain what is happening in terms of the overall record on manufactured trade and the statistics that summarise our position, the Government have taken to talking loudly, rather fast and somewhat aggressively about particular aspects of policy which they claim, if they are particularly selective about their statistics, show some degree of success. Of late, the Chief Secretary has talked about output, productivity levels, exports and so on.

The Opposition certainly welcome any signs of improvement in the vitally important manufacturing trade on which Britain depends for its prosperity, but the selected figures that the Government use are usually, if not always, completely unrepresentative. In fact, they represent a period of recovery from catastrophe rather than a record of success. It is rare indeed for Ministers to dare to examine the entire record of their period of stewardship.

We gain the clearest picture of where the country stands as against our competitors by considering just two of the many confusing different sets of statistics that tend to be put before us in such debates. Those two sets of statistics encapsulate the picture. One set represents the results of our overall performance, never mind the bit on output, productivity or exports. The overall results of our performance in manufacturing is perfectly summarised by our balance of payments deficit. The second set of statistics, which provide the underlying contributory factor behind that balance of payments deficit, are those concerning the levels of investment in manufacturing industry.

Let us first consider the statistics preferred by the Government. I will put them in context to help the Chief Secretary with the argument that he will no doubt advance. The most favourable statistics that the Government can put before us relate to the increase in manufacturing productivity. Some of my hon. Friends argue—I concede that the argument has some force—that if one throws hundreds of thousands of people on to the dole there is bound to be some improvement in productivity. Apart from that, however, we recognise that some improvements in productivity have occurred and we welcome them, even if the pace of such improvements is now, unfortunately, slowing down.

The Opposition argue, with more force, that if investment per capita had been higher in earlier years, productivity improvements might not only have come earlier but have been more soundly based and thus not have needed the impetus of large-scale unemployment. Those are the caveats that one must enter against the best figures that the Government can produce.

We often hear in the House and elsewhere about the increase in manufacturing output. Not so long ago, the Chief Secretary made a speech about the improvements that he has recently witnessed in manufacturing output. He said that in the past three years that output has risen faster than the gross domestic product as a whole. That is fine, but he also went on to say that that

"indicated a marked turn-around compared with the historic performance of manufacturing industry"

That statement suggests to us that whoever else should be consulted about the history syllabus, it should not be the Chief Secretary. The historical record of manufacturing output as a percentage of GDP shows that, from 1948, there was a general gradual rising trend, followed by an unprecedented nose-dive between 1979 and 1981, since

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

when it has been more or less static. There has been a slight improvement on the more or less static record that preceded the latter part of the Government's record, but there is no doubt that output is nowhere near the levels reached between 1948 and the late 1970s. It is rather strange to define the last few years as "historic". The scale of the nose-dive that occurred in the early 1980s is equivalent to between 3 and 4 per cent. of GDP. That is the order of magnitude of our balance of payments deficit and that decline in output is directly linked with it.

We are delighted to note the recent growth in manufacturing exports. It is more than welcome, but there is a long way to go before we can overcome the volume of manufacturing imports, which, between 1979 and 1989, has risen to more than double the rate of manufacturing exports during the same period—the period since the Government came to power. Such are the factors which have contributed to the accumulation of our massive balance of payments deficit that summarises the overall effect of our manufacturing performance.

If we want to take a historic moment from the years of the Government's stewardship it is 1983 when, for the first time since the industrial revolution, manufacturing trade in this country went into deficit—it has continued to decline ever since. Even the appearance of such a deficit is alarming enough for a country that still earns its living, and must continue to do so, by manufactures. The size and scale of the deficit—some £16 billion last year on manufacturing goods alone—is the most alarming feature of all. Equally alarming is our failure to take the steps most likely, even in the very long term, to redress that balance.

4 pm

That leads on to the question of investment. Just as manufacturing is the source of our wealth and the engine of growth, so investment is the engine of manufacturing. Our record on investment is worse than appalling—it is frightening. Apart from productivity, the Government's other boast in terms of recovery is of the recovery in company profitability. That is good and my hon. Friends and I are pleased to see company profitability improve, but where did that profitability go? If it went into increased investment at all, it went into increased investment overseas—investment by acquisition rather than investment for growth of the kind being carried out by our competitors. That is the main reason why Britain, in too much of its manufacturing, has lost its competitive edge.

That has not happened everywhere. There are companies in Britain that are world leaders in their fields, and we applaud them. We are delighted to have them and we are grateful for their performance, but it is no coincidence that those companies, the leaders in their fields, are the firms which invest. It is no coincidence that they put money into research and development and into training, and that they plan long term instead of considering investment, as some of the Prime Minister's favourite industrialists do, only if it results in profits in two or three years' time. Nor is it any coincidence, most of all, that those companies plan to expand and grow and not simply to stand still.

The Chief Secretary may be familiar with a study carried out by Warwick university and quoted in the MBA review in June 1989. It suggested that four out of five United Kingdom companies considered that their sales objective should be to defend the status quo and their existing market share. In Japan, four out of five companies considered that their sales objective should be to grow, to overtake and to take the market shares of their competitors.

The Chief Secretary may have had a chance to study papers presented at a recent conference sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry on innovation in industry and on the needs of high technology. Apart from the many papers that commented in depth on the fact, for example, that we were the only country to cut spending on civil research and development in recent years when our competitors were increasing their spending on those items, a senior industrialist pointed out that some of the most famous Japanese companies took 20 years of planning, investment and expansion to become world leaders in their fields, to take over from previous world leaders—frequently American companies—and that they succeeded, at least in part, because they set themselves the goal rather than to stand still.

The Opposition believe that Britain and British manufacturing industry need most of all to foster a culture of sound management devoted to investment and growth. We greatly regret that that culture has been undermined by the decade of Conservative rule, which instead has fostered admiration of tycoons and asset-strippers and has rather sneered at people who look for long-term prosperity rather than making a fast buck.

The consequences of the lack of that general culture are most evident when we consider our record on investment. Manufacturing investment as a proportion of gross domestic product fell sharply in the recession period 1979 to 1981. Indeed, as a level of expenditure in constant prices, only in the last couple of years has it recovered to just above the 1979 level. But when one examines the position not in terms of constant prices, but as a percentage of GDP—the percentage of wealth available and the indication of the commitment of our country to investment in our future—one sees that it has still not returned to the lowest level achieved between 1974 and 1979.

The Government prefer to talk about business investment, which includes investment in such things as car parks and casinos, rather than about manufacturing investment, but even as a percentage of business investment, manufacturing investment has fallen in recent years by as much as 7 per cent.

I said earlier that many of us would argue that productivity might have improved more soundly and earlier if investment per capita had been at higher levels. Investment per person employed in the manufacturing sector has been so disastrous that among the 18 countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development we come 14th, above only one or two immediate neighbours such as Greece and Portugal.

Equally disturbing are the developments in industry, such as the increased number of bankruptcies. I am sure that the Chief Secretary has received the recent Dun and Bradstreet report showing that more than 11,600 firms went bankrupt in the early part of this year and that the pace of failure was quickening. Against that background, the forecast from the Government and others is that our levels of investment are declining while those of our competitors are increasing all the time. That forecast is true both of the Government's favoured business investment and of manufacturing investment. The most

recent Confederation of British Industry forecast shows that investment intentions are at their lowest level since 1982, with the balance of future investment intentions at minus 8 per cent.—and the Government's reply to those problems is nothing, absolutely zilch. It has been stated that when the Department of Trade and Industry—for once taking an interest in industry which the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry did not find out about in time—asked McKinsey and Co. to examine our electronics industry, its report cast doubt not just on the industry's prosperity, but on whether it could survive at all. Yet despite that worrying report on a key sector of industry, the Government did absolutely nothing.

In the 11 years for which the Government have held office, our ability to supply our own need for manufactured goods has steadily declined, and with it the underlying strength of our economy. That has been reflected in our historically catastrophic balance of payments deficit. That is the road to ruin, paved not with good intentions, but with weak excuses.

The Opposition believe, as does most of British industry, that we must take steps of the kind set out in a minor and modest way in the new clause if Britain is not to be left even further behind as our competitors plan, invest and grow to meet the challenges of the single market. More than that, we need a vision for the future —a different culture for manufacturing industry.

The Opposition's vision for manufacturing industry is not a plan to increase company earnings per share by fiddling the accounting rules or having more takeovers. It is not a scheme to push up the nominal returns by delaying much-needed investment or squeezing up profits by cutting back on training. The Opposition's vision is of a British industry which extends its knowledge through research, and expands its capability through training and its output through investment.

That is the reason for the new clause which, if carried, would represent a minor contribution towards helping British industry to continue to invest despite the problems heaped on it by the Government's failures. If the Government are not prepared even to consider such a helpful but minor step, for which the Government and the Chief Secretary know that industry and the Opposition are calling, it will be a clear signal to British industry, to the country and, most of all, to our competitors, that Britain has given up the race for 1992.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I want to respond briefly to the remarks of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett); I shall then listen to other contributions and, if I catch the Chair's eye, I may be allowed to respond to them later.

The new clause is about a short-term acceleration in the rate of tax depreciation for investment in equipment and building by manufacturers and other industries, but the hon. Lady turned the debate into a rather more general discussion of the economy. Many of the issues that she raised have been debated many times before—for instance, at Question Time.

First, the hon. Lady alleged that there had been no improvement in recent years in the British economy. We, of course, refer to the marked step-change in growth. The hon. Lady chose to concentrate all the time on manufacturing—for her, it was the only measure of economic performance. Of course manufacturing is an extremely important part of our economy, but it is wrong to suggest that it is the only measure of economic success.

When assessing overall economic policy, the real measure should be a combination of growth and inflation performance over the decade. Judged by those two criteria, the performance of our economy in the past decade compares well with that of our competitors and better than it did before. That is certainly true of growth. We are going through a lower period of growth now, but even taking account of this year's lower growth rate we shall have grown faster over the past decade than the EEC average, and we certainly compare much better with our competitors in growth terms than we did in the previous decade. So growth is the most appropriate measure to employ.

The hon. Member for Derby, South sought to dismiss the growth in manufacturing productivity as merely the result of de-manning. Of course there was a considerable shake out in the early 1980s, but that just shows how uncompetitive British industry was. There was a strong concealed unemployment element in British industry, and most business men and manufacturers admit that the problems faced up to in the early 1980s had to be faced up to; and that has helped make British industry more competitive and profitable.

I was pleased to hear the hon. Lady acknowledge for once that there has been a considerable increase in the profitability of British manufacturing and business—it is extremely important. Where on earth is investment to come from? It must come from profitability. There are all sorts of arguments in which statistics are bandied about, but it is an indisputable fact that the profitability of British business is, thank goodness, higher than it has been for several decades. That is extremely encouraging.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I have been following the right hon. Gentleman's argument closely. He said that we should use two measures of economic performance: growth and inflation. He went on to talk about growth but somehow omitted to talk about inflation, which is not only much higher than that of any of our key competitors but scoops up much more in corporation tax and therefore places a greater burden on industry.

Mr. Lamont: The Government repeatedly make it clear that we regard our inflation as unsatisfactory and unacceptably high. I did not make the usual speech about performance under the last Labour Government because we are always accused of delving too much into the past and of exploiting it. It is, understandably, something which Opposition Members prefer to forget. The inflation record of this Government is incomparably better than that of the Labour Government, but even that is not so relevant as the fact that the policies that the Opposition advance are likely to bring a return to high inflation, especially because of their attitudes to public spending.

The hon. Lady also spoke about investment. She did not say explicitly but presumably believes that the corporation tax reforms that were introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer are inadequate for encouraging investment. When Labour was in power corporation tax was 52 per cent. We have reduced it to 35 per cent. and have got rid of the allowances.

4.15 pm

Is that a good bargain? Is it better for business to have higher profits, a better rate of return and permission to keep more of its profits, or is it better to have a much higher rate of corporation tax which subsidises and provides an incentive by way of allowances to investment? I do not think that there is any evidence that the new system has damaged investment because since it was introduced we have seen strong investment growth.

In the past three years business investment has grown by 40 per cent. Non-residential investment is a higher proportion of our GDP than of the GDP in any other country except Japan. The hon. Lady says that we should talk only about manufacturing investment. I reject that argument, just as I reject the argument that we should talk only about manufacturing when discussing the economy as a whole. We must look at investment in all sectors.

It was amusing to hear the hon. Member for Derby, South say that business investment included car parks and all sorts of "frivolous" investment. It includes important investment in the retail sector and in tourist facilities, some of which employ many people. It is not correct to say that the only investment that matters is in manufacturing. As the hon. Lady said, manufacturing is important, but it is by no means the whole story.

Since the new tax regime was introduced, there has been strong growth in investment. Britain has been enjoying an investment boom. One of the reasons for problems about inflation and on the current account is that the enormous boom in investment has exceeded domestic savings. The suggestion that the new structure introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby when he reformed the corporation tax system has damaged investment is not borne out by the facts. If it had damaged investment, we would not have an extraordinary and continuing good record on inward investment. We get a larger proportion of American and Japanese investment than any other country in the European Community. Foreign companies come here for many reasons, and among them is the tax regime. They like the fact that we have one of the lowest corporation tax rates of any country.

When the new tax regime was introduced, Labour strongly opposed it, but I still do not know the Opposition's precise attitude. Of course, Labour has opposed many things in the past. The Opposition seem to jettison everything right, left and centre and nobody quite knows what they stand for. We certainly do not know their stance on capital allowances. I hope that when the hon. Lady speaks again she will make it clear whether she wishes to see a system with capital allowances that subsidises investment through the tax system. Such a system is not necessary to encourage investment. It is not especially desirable, nor does it encourage the best sort of investment.

Opposition Members scoff and laugh at the phrase "quality of investment". When we say that the quality of investment is better today, we simply mean that the rate of return earned on investment is higher than ever before. We want a tax system that does not subsidise people to invest purely in quantitative terms. We want a system that encourages people to retain their earnings and ensures investment in the most profitable areas.

The hon. Lady is right to say that investment is what matters for the longer term, but it must be investment in the right projects and in those that earn the best rate of return. That will do most to underpin the long-term performance of the economy.

The hon. Lady referred to a speech of mine about manufacturing, and I think that it was probably the one that I made to the French Chamber of Commerce. Speaking from recollection, I think that I said that foreign investment in Britain was contributing to the manufacturing base. I evidenced the motor industry which, when the Labour party was in office, had suffered from a remarkable increase of more than 50 per cent. in import penetration. Since then, it has stabilised and there has been considerable foreign investment, not just by the highly publicised Japanese firms—one of which is to invest in the hon. Lady's constituency—but by American companies. I do not think that anyone can dispute that the outlook for the British motor industry has improved beyond all recognition—profitability has improved; industrial relations have improved; the market share has stabilised; and there is much higher investment than for many years.

During that speech, I pointed to the fact that some independent commentators had analysed the position and said that a number of independent reports had been published suggesting that there might be a rise in manufacturing as a proportion of gross domestic product. The hon. Lady is right to suggest that that is a marked difference from the trend during the past few decades, under both Conservative and Labour Goverments, during which manufacturing as a proportion of GDP declined. The proportion of GDP represented by manufacturing in Britain is not markedly different from that in France, Italy or the United States. Opposition Members hark back to a world that existed decades ago, and which I do not think will easily return. However, it is interesting that the independent commentators to whom I referred thought that a small change was taking place on the back of some spectacular foreign investment in, for example, the motor industry.

The debate is really about the tax regime that we want for investment. Do we want a low rate of corporation tax—one of the lowest in the world—that encourages people to retain their earnings and look for the most profitable investment? The hon. Lady implied that that was not the Labour party's view. She said that she did not want companies to retain earnings per share simply for the benefit of shareholders. In fact, that is how companies raise capital from the private market to provide the investment that is needed tomorrow.

Although the hon. Lady made a general economic speech, she did not produce one scrap of evidence that the tax regime and the changes to it have in any way harmed investment. On the contrary, there has been a strong growth in investment since the changes were made. I do not think that there is a good case either to make the hon. Lady's proposal a permanent change—which I think is what she wants—or to implement it just for one year, which is what she was advocating. It would be a mistake to change the tax system just for one year to accommodate slower growth in the economy and in investment.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I obtained information from the Library showing that, as a percentage of gross domestic product, British corporation taxes are far higher than those of our principal competitors. I was given the following figures: the United States, 2 per cent.; West Germany, 2 per cent.; France, 2·4

per cent.; and the United Kingdom, 6·2 per cent. The Library staff were amazed. Can the Chief Secretary enlighten me on this point?

Mr. Lamont: I do not know whether I can enlighten the hon. Gentleman, but I can attempt to answer his question. This has been a subject of considerable debate. The comparisons depend on what taxes are included. Some comparisons have included social security payroll taxes in other countries. The comparisons are affected also by the rate of growth of profitability. We have cut the rate of corporation tax, just as we have cut other tax rates, and revenues have soared. The profitability of British industry has risen markedly, resulting in a considerable increase in the rate of tax paid by British companies. For the first reason I gave, I would treat the comparisons with caution. It is not a matter of comparing like with like. Japan, which has highly profitable industry, appears to bear a high company tax burden. That is a reflection of its profitability.

I do not believe that there is a case for mucking about with the tax system on a temporary basis. The evidence so far is that the original corporation tax changes have proved to be effective and have stood the test of time.

Mr. Beith: The Government try to have it both ways. They spend some of the time telling us that the rate of corporation tax has been reduced and that business is better off and some of the time telling us that the Revenue is so buoyant from corporation tax that the community as a whole is better off.

Mr. Lamont: What is the contradiction between rate and yield?

Mr. Beith: It cannot be true that business is better off from paying less tax and that the tax yield is greater. The Chief Secretary knows that the revenue that the Government have obtained from corporation tax has increased sharply because of profitability and inflation. I, for one, welcome lower rates of corporation tax, and I have supported the Government when they have lowered those rates. Business is still paying a great deal of corporation tax, so that is a relevant consideration when we look at the level of investment and the extent to which corporation tax might influence it. Obviously, it is only one of the influences, but it could be significant.

The Government are fond of telling us that investment is booming and that we have remarkable levels of investment. The Red Book is full of relatively flowery phrases about our investment record. The Chief Secretary knows, however, that the quality of investment and where it is taking place are contested. The phrase "business investment" includes an enormous range of sectors—manufacturing, finance, business services, buildings, computers and leisure activities—which are of varying significance in terms of helping our balance of payments and their effect on future profitability.

Many analyses have suggested that key manufacturing groups have not been the subject of an investment boom. The Chief Secretary will know of the arguments put by Gavyn Davies in the paper that he presented to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the points made on similar lines by John Muellbauer in an article in the *Financial Times*. The latter said:

"The evidence . . . here suggests that, with few exceptions, investment has grown more in the sectors in the economy which are more sheltered from international competition and which make a smaller contribution to the balance of payments."

John Muellbauer made the interesting point that one manufacturing sector in which there has been increased investment has included paper, printing and publishing. He said:

"The rise in investment there is partly due to national newspapers moving out from Fleet Street, the spread of free newspapers and the demand for printed material from the growth of financial services"—

printing all those privatisation prospectuses and other things that generate so much paper in our society. For that to be about the only major exception to a pattern in which the key areas of manufacturing industry have not attracted major investment is worrying and significant.

4.30 pm

The large increase in investment between 1986 and 1988 was built on the back of an unsustainable credit boom —for which we are now paying the price—and the current levels of inflation date back to that period. Already, the effect of high interest rates seems to be hitting investment and investment intentions have been cut sharply. It is debatable whether the improvements already made will continue.

It can be concluded that the corporation tax structure is worsening the position because of the effect of inflation. Inflation is at a far higher level than that of our competitors, which raises the tax that companies have to pay. Business is paying for the Government's failure to control inflation. Some of the time the Government like to blame business for inflation because they claim that business is being weak in dealing with wage claims; that depends on whether the Government are in a monetarist mood at the time. Business is paying the price for the high level of inflation.

One of the elements that could contribute most to encouraging investment is stability in economic policy and that includes stable exchange rates and stable interest rates. That argues for membership of the exchange rate mechanism, which has been the universal call of business for a long time. It also argues for the mechanisms to ensure stable prices which exist in those countries about which the Government are having such difficulty in their public pronouncements at present. Here we are lecturing Herr Pöhl, saying that he does not know how to handle inflation and that he would not have known how to deal with the kind of unemployment that existed in Jarrow, when Germany has produced a stable price regime out of its independent central banking system.

The stability in Germany is the envy of British business and, in that climate, a great deal of investment is taking place. As the unification of Germany proceeds, German business is especially confident about being able to invest in East Germany because it knows that it would be doing so in the stable economic and political climate of the Federal Republic, with all the assurances that that gives that there will not be sudden and dramatic changes of policy and that there will not be sudden and dramatic changes in the economic management of the country. All that is a result of a German system that brings together a proportional representation election system, and a monetary and financial discipline system. Some members of the Labour party now deride and laugh at that, but it

is the key to much of Germany's post-war success and the investment in which German firms so freely and readily engage.

Those who want to lecture Germany and say that we are doing it far better simply have not got the evidence to do so. Neither the Chief Secretary nor Labour Members who wish to do so—there seem to be fewer of them now—have the evidence to make the claim that we know how to operate the system better.

Along with stability, money is of crucial relevance to investment. That will be determined by the success of the Government's economic management. There is at present a debate—partly stimulated by the Government—about short-termism, which is a phrase that occasionally escapes the lips of Ministers. Industry has accused the City of not taking a sufficiently long-term view of investments and has accused the banks of looking for the second-hand value on which to lend rather than for the potential profitability of the investments that industry seeks to make. Clearly, the Government must give attention to that side of the problem as well as to the tax implications of the new clause if we are to make progress.

Alongside that, there should be key public investment in transport if industry is to take advantage of and be able to operate effectively in the single European market, and if industry in the north of England, Scotland and Wales is to operate once the channel tunnel is open on a competitive basis. That is an area in which countries in mainland Europe—and especially Germany—are willing and keen to invest. However, it is an area in which the British Government seem to think that there is something indecent or improper about serious and significant public investment.

There needs to be investment in education and training to give us the work force who can make use of the high-technology investment in which industry needs to engage. The Government's reluctance in those areas is seen by industry to be a handicap.

If all those policies were pursued, would it help to make changes in the corporation tax structure such as those proposed by the new clause? The Labour party's new clause seeks to increase capital allowances from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent. That would enable a firm to set off more of the capital cost of an investment against corporation tax in any one year.

That is potentially an expensive change and I am surprised that the Government did not refer to the cost—perhaps they are saving that for their reply. We could be talking about cost implications in the order of £1·5 billion. That is why we have previously put forward proposals for increased capital allowances on new investment so that we do not take on the large deadweight costs of increasing the allowance for writing down all the existing investment. That would have a stimulating effect, particularly in the present circumstances, and could be undertaken at less expense than the proposals we are considering.

I am sympathetic to the intentions of Opposition Front-Bench Members, but I wonder whether this proposal has been subject to the rigorous examination of all proposals lest they add to the total cost of the Labour party's programme, which is now under such scrutiny.

Mrs. Beckett: I said that this was a temporary measure. I do not have the papers immediately to hand, but I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman reads the clause with care and looks at the dates involved he will find that the cost is more likely to be about £130,000 or £150,000 than the sums he mentioned.

Mr. Beith: I am naturally suspicious about the claim that such a measure can be as temporary as the hon. Lady suggests. Perhaps I am doing her a disservice. Such a short-term change in the tax system would not survive. At the end of the period industry would be crying out for an extension and there would be a great deal of pressure. To be fair, if the period were strictly limited, the costs could be contained on that basis.

A more logical distinction is one that attracts to new investment the higher level of depreciation allowance mentioned in the new clause. The Government cannot continue to be so complacent about investment in manufacturing industry. I should have thought that their experience over the past 12 months with the rate of inflation taking off should have taught them that there is no advantage in claiming that things are better than they are. The Government have spent much of the past few years making exaggerated claims about the economy, some of which were extremely damaging to expectations. If people are told that they will be better off and that the standard of living will improve, they will borrow more because they will expect to be earning more money to pay for it when the day of reckoning comes. Constantly repeating a misleading view about the state of the economy does not do any good and does not encourage us to address the key problems faced by the economy. A little more realism on the part of the Government and an admission that there are problems with investment would be welcome. I am glad that the new clause is before us and I am sympathetic to its objectives.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The speech of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury would have been more impressive if it had not been made against a background of a balance of payments deficit of £15 billion to £20 billion, which, I note, he did not mention.

The Government's true record lies in two factors. First, manufacturing industry turned into deficit for the first time in centuries. Secondly, there was the coincidence of the arrival of North sea oil. Those are the economic factors that will determine the way in which the Government are viewed in the future.

I agree with the Chief Secretary about the need to achieve quality of investment. This is a modest measure. I agree with the counter-cyclical argument which was, after all, used by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). The right hon. Gentleman introduced a counter-cyclical measure, and very valuable it was. If one tells people that there is to be an investment incentive with a cut-off date, and if one chooses the right time in the economic cycle, one can achieve continuing growth for the future based upon it. That, too, is of value.

The most important aspect lies in the forecasts given in the Red Book at the time of the Budget. In the summary of economic prospects, we read that manufacturing output in 1989 grew at a rate of 4·75 per cent. In 1990, growth is forecast at zero. In the first half of 1991, it is forecast at 0·75 per cent. That is a truly miserable record, and there will be little incentive for anyone to invest in the plant and machinery that are so important.

The Chief Secretary is right to say that we need to look at all investment, but when the right hon. Gentleman said that manufacturing was not the only measure of economic success, he was not according to it the importance that it should be accorded. Financial services have been the glamorous part of our investment and our economy. We had hoped to be the banker of the world. We had hoped to make enormous improvements and extensions. But we must remember that a financial economy rests fundamentally on its manufacturing industry. We seem not to recall that important fact. Britain became a financial centre as a result of the industrial development that took place in the last century and the century before that. New York became a financial centre as a result of the development of America's manufacturing industry. Frankfurt is becoming a financial centre as a result of the development of Germany's manufacturing industry and Tokyo has become a financial centre as a result of the development of Japan's manufacturing industry. There is a time lag in all these matters and the time lag is working against us and in favour of Frankfurt and Tokyo. I do not view that process with pleasure because I understand and accept the importance of having a financial centre. But in organising the structure of our investment and in arriving at an appreciation of the importance of that sector, we should not fail to take into account the basis on which it rests; if we fail to do that, we do ourselves a great disservice.

The Chief Secretary noted that productivity had improved as a result of the removal of concealed unemployment in the early 1980s. I am sorry to say that there was not much waste of energy and activity in Ashton-under-Lyne when the $2·40 pound and 17 per cent. interest rates reduced the number of manufacturing companies by one third. I am talking about medium-sized, reasonably high-tech firms—plenty of companies of the kind to be found in Tokyo and in Germany. Those companies suffered as a result of our economic performance in those years and we must restore to them some of the advantages that similar companies in other countries enjoy.

I am concerned that capital allowances hardly meet the cost of depreciation. In my early years as an engineer, I used to operate a jig borer. It was a very expensive piece of machinery. I do not know how much the comparable model—taking into account the development of that branch of engineering—would cost today, but I would guess about £50,000. At the end of 12 months, one would get £12,500 in capital allowances. What is the profit margin on such equipment? I bet that if one tried to sell the jig borer back to the manufacturer, the salesman or the distibutor, one would not get £37,500 for it. That means that there is an investment disincentive because we have not allowed for the true cost of depreciation. We are giving no incentive at all because we are failing to meet the cost of depreciation. The hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) shakes his head. I do not think that he understands the size of the profit margins in such industries. The salesmen get paid very handsome sums indeed. As a result, the depreciation costs are not met.

The figures produced by the Financial Secretary at the time of the Budget show how little prospect there is for growth—zero growth is forecast this year. As my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) rightly pointed out, this is just the time when we should be doing something to promote investment incentives. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, there are various ways of doing that. I find it sad that the Government do not appear to understand the nature of the problem sufficiently to come up with some sort of solution. They think that there is no problem. That is most worrying. Once we have realised that there is a problem, we can deal with the matter. The Government's failure to do that will take me into the Lobby with my hon. Friends tonight.

4.45 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said that new clause 2 was a modest proposal. Perhaps it is too modest, but as my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) rightly said, it is at least an attempt to give some minor assistance to British manufacturing industry.

The Chief Secretary was extremely euphoric about the economy. Let me remind him that in 1979 the United Kingdom had a balance of trade surplus in manufactured goods. That was in the days of the Labour Government —the days of picking winners, investment grants and 100 per cent. writing-down allowances. But in 1989—the last full year—we had a balance of trade deficit of £16 billion in manufactured goods. Those figures are the best evidence available and they tell their own story. They tell the story of the massive decline in Britain's industrial and manufacturing base during 10 years of Tory Government. The blame for that decline lies at the Government's door and it has been caused by the actions that they have taken —and have failed to take—in respect of manufacturing industry.

Those actions are perhaps too numerous to detail in such a short debate, but I can give one or two examples. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to the years from 1979 to 1982, when the present Leader of the House was Chancellor of the Exchequer. It has been calculated that the right hon. and learned Gentleman managed to obliterate 25 per cent. of Britain's manufacturing industry in those two years.

It is extraordinary to note that when the Tories came to power, mouthing monetarism, in 1979, few of them understood how a monetary system could be operated within the open financial system that we have in Britain. They certainly did not understand the limitations of monetarism. Eventually, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) understood its limitations, but it took a long time for the Government to reach that conclusion. Between 1979 and 1982 we had macho overkill monetarism. The body count of factories and industries on the industrial battlefield was horrendous. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to his constituency, but we all have examples from our own constituencies.

While the present Leader of the House was beavering away at the Treasury, Lord Joseph was beavering away at the Department of Trade and Industry dismantling most of the regional incentives, grants and investment allowances that went to the areas where most of Britain's manufacturing industry was located. The Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry both did their job and, as a result, at least 25 per cent. of our manufacturing base disappeared, never to return.

Let us move on to 1984 and the actions of the right hon. Member for Blaby which are, to a certain extent, the

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

reason for the present new clause. Before the 1984 Budget, we had 100 per cent. writing-down allowances in respect of plant and machinery. If a manufacturing firm invested in plant and machinery in the first year, it could write off the whole cost. However, that did not suit the Government's plans or their view of the way that the economy should operate. Therefore, the Budget provided for 75 per cent. in the second year; in the third year the figure would be 50 per cent.; and in the fourth year the allowance disappeared completely. Now it is 25 per cent., which goes into the pool. The new clause proposes to increase the figure temporarily to 40 per cent.

The right hon. Member for Blaby would have justified what he did. We heard echoes of that from the Chief Secretary, on the basis that it is better to have a lower rate of corporation tax and to eliminate the tax breaks. That is a Reagan view of taxation. However, because most of the allowances benefited more manufacturing industry, the benefit of lower corporation tax in the main goes to the service sector, the financial sector and the south-east. All those areas are less dependent on plant and machinery. That was the effect of what was done in 1984, and that is why pressure was put on manufacturing industry: because it lost the benefit of the allowances for investing in plant and machinery.

We have been told that the Government do not believe in using the tax system for social engineering, and that we must have a level playing field. They have no inhibitions about using the tax system to encourage the business expansion scheme—all that money went into property; to encourage the personal equity plan schemes—all that money went into the stock exchange; or to encourage private shareholding. However, we apparently cannot use the tax system for the social engineering purpose of trying to benefit our manufacturing industry.

Since the 1970s, the Tory party has shown little understanding, sensitivity or belief in manufacturing industry. Those of us who sat in the House throughout the 1970s saw successive Tory Members with some experience in manufacturing and industry being replaced by the estate agents, the so-called financial analysts, the stockbrokers and insurance brokers and the third-rate merchant bankers. Most of them were from the south-east, where there is no tradition of heavy manufacturing or engineering. There was no belief in manufacturing industry and, apparently, no need to examine it.

If the speeches of 1978-79 are read again, they prove very informative. Hon. Members suggested then that Britain no longer needed a manufacturing industry, but would rely on its overseas investments; that it would become a tax haven fit for such people as the Rolling Stones and Tony Jacklin to come back to. The Leader of the House made such a speech in 1978-79. Britain was to be dependent on invisibles, living off those invisibles. We know what has happened. The Government have an extraordinary record: they have destroyed much of our industrial base, and have managed to eliminate the invisibles as well—to the extent that they are now literally invisible. It is no good the Chief Secretary shaking his head. We know that there has been a revision of the figures, but the invisibles are now minute. We have lost our industrial base and the oil, and we do not even have the invisibles. That is the measure of the success of the Government's economic stewardship of the country in the past 10 years.

There may be one final act of mayhem—the exchange rate mechanism, the final solution. There is a case for the ERM and for fixed exchange rates—which I happen to believe in—provided, as the Prime Minister rightly said the other day, that in the end the exchanges can be chained by the actions of a sovereign Government. There is a case for linking exchange rates—as much as possible—with those of our trading partners, especially as 60 per cent. of our trading is now done with the EEC. There is also a political case for the ERM: it is better to be a member, and to try to stop the nonsense of economic and monetary union. However, I doubt whether we can do that.

The Government have said that the exchange rate mechanism is the magic formula—the deus ex machina—that will apparently win them a fourth term of office. Their strategy—if it can be called one—is brutally simple. First, we should march the jolly old pound up to the top of the ERM mountain—the Treasury has been doing its best—and then, a little later, we should march interest rates as fast as we can down the mountain. Of course, with lower interest rates, the British consumer-elector feels better, and spends more on imported goods. The property-owning democracy sees the value of its property increasing and the prospect of unearned capital gain. Everyone is happy again, and people vote for the present Government. Where does that leave British manufacturing industry? It is at the top of the ERM mountain, withering away like the ark on Mount Ararat.

The wheel has come full circle. The curse of the early 1980s seems set to be repeated by the Government in the early 1990s, and British manufacturing industry will again suffer. I would like the Chief Secretary to accept the new clause, but of course he will not, because the Government have no interest in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Roy Hughes: I support the new clause. It essentially concerns capital allowances and manufacturing incentives, and—as my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said—it is a modest proposal.

The new clause illustrates the need to improve the efficiency of our manufacturing industry and to encourage investment, not only in capital goods but in training. Likewise, it points to the need for a major extension of our manufacturing industry. Some seasoned observers would say that we need to increase our manufacturing base by as much as 20 per cent.

We are trying to examine what Government policy is about. I suggested to the Chief Secretary that the Government claim that they have reduced the rate of corporation tax. Let me repeat the figures that I have been given by the Library, which show that British corporation taxes as a percentage of gross domestic product are much higher than those in our competitor countries. In 1988 the figures were as follows: United States, 2 per cent.; West Germany, 2 per cent.; France, 2·4 per cent.; and the United Kingdom, 6·2 per cent. I grant that the Chief Secretary has tried to give me some explanation of those figures.

If the Government are really keen to help our manufacturing industry to grow and become more competitive, they need to turn their attention more decidedly to tax matters.

Taxation, after all, impinges on training, research and development. The Government seem to be reluctant to invest in our universities and polytechnics to produce skilled people and new ideas. It is ideas that bring about the new industries and factories, and provide employment for our people. They help to build the economic strength of our country. We must build and create for ourselves the products that our people increasingly demand. At present we are importing many of those goods.

Not long ago, the Government were claiming that they had achieved an economic miracle. Their claim was illusory: it was nothing more than a South sea bubble. The position is summed up for me by the fact that West Germany has a trade surplus of about £50 billion, while we have a trade deficit of some £16 billion—or even more—in manufactured goods.

A few days ago, a senior Cabinet Minister resigned. He was very critical of West Germany. From my observations, over the past 40 years or so Germany has adopted a most responsible position in international affairs. Perhaps even more important, it has built a highly successful economy. The right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) was the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He had an opportunity to do something about Britain's economic position and the difficulties in which it finds itself. Instead, the Government seem to have taken almost a fiendish delight in the destruction of much of our manufacturing industry. It is as though the Government thought that the economy was all about trade union organisation, the closed shop, and so on: the dragon had to be slain. That was their attitude. We had an illustration of that a week or two ago, with the attitude of the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to razing Ravenscraig to the ground—the last remaining bastion of the steel industry in Scotland. That has been the Government's attitude. How wrong can they be?

5 pm

Much in British manufacturing industry needed to be put right—I grant that. There was overmanning, inefficiency, poor management and, above all, a failure to invest. For the past decade or so the country has had all the benefits of North sea oil. Germany, with its strong currency and extremely favourable trading position, has had no such benefit. North sea oil revenues were paid out in social security benefits, and the rest has been invested overseas, presumably to fatten up our competitors. That money should have been used to restore the manufacturing base in this country.

The charge to be levelled against the Government is that they have essentially failed the nation. In fact, the more successful that we have become in our quest for invisible earnings, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli has pointed out, revenue from invisible earnings has tended to diminish. The more success there is, the greater will be the tendency to import manufactured goods, so there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

We have witnessed a major growth in the service industry, which, with great respect, produces nothing tangible. Manufacturing jobs have dramatically declined and, in turn, have tended to be replaced by low-paid jobs, many of them part time and largely for women. We have gone cap-in-hand to the Japanese and the Germans. We have said to them, "Come and invest in our country. Wales in particular at present has all the hallmarks of an undeveloped country." Our trading deficit has got out of hand. The gap will not be bridged by a growth in tourism or by increased efforts on the part of the City of London.

New clause 2, in its limited way, points to the logic of our present situation. Our vast balance of payments problem is due to the size of our manufacturing base. A small base dictates the output of manufacturing industry. When we do not make in Britain the goods that people in Britain want, there is a demand for imports. In our case, the demand is substantial. Whatever gloss or disguise is put on that problem, it brings about the deficit in our balance of payments current account. For any lasting solution, we must rebuild our manufacturing industry. To do that, we need incentives. New clause 2 at least points the way.

We need a favourable exchange rate. We also need a marked decline in interest rates. We must compare our interest rates with those of our major competitors—indeed, they just do not compare. People are not being encouraged to invest. We must examine service costs—for example, water, gas and electricity. All that privatisation has done is to increase charges for those services. A credit boom did not help. Its only effect was to suck in more imports. The Chancellor should now talk to financial institutions and tell them to refrain from advertising and promoting credit.

An impediment to our economic success is the increasing decline of our infrastructure. Firms rightly point to extra cost, the direct result of congestion and difficulty in moving goods around.

Our record on research and development is far behind those of Germany and France. Our investment in training, for example, is reckoned to be only one tenth of that in West Germany. Training must be stimulated and innovation must be encouraged. New clause 2 is merely a pointer in the right direction.

We are to form an integrated single market in the EEC in 1992. Competition will be ever more fierce. We are ill-prepared, and much responsibility for that rests with the Government. What should be an exciting challenge is turning into a serious threat for Britain's whole economic future. Much of the responsibility for that dire situation is directly due to the Government.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I support new clause 2. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) said, it points the way, but it is not the solution to the economic and manufacturing decline that we have seen under Governments of both parties in the past 20 years or perhaps even during the latter part of this century. One of the reasons why our manufacturing base has declined is that too few Members of Parliament have actually worked in industry. Too many come from the commercial sector, and too few actually know what it is like to work with out-dated equipment, to have personal skills but not to be given the tools to finish the job. To an extent, that is what new clause 2 is about.

The Department of Trade and Industry in Victoria street has been used as a siding for failed Cabinet Ministers. We saw a perfect example of that during the past week, but I had better draw a veil over that incident or the House will get excited again, although judging by the present attendance I doubt whether that would be likely.

The fact that we have had so many Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry in the past few years raises the

[Mr. Eric Martlew]

question of whether the Prime Minister really regards that aspect of the economy as important. The answer is clearly no. She seems to emphasise trade rather than industry and the latter is allowed to wither. As I have said, the House does not really understand industry because Parliament is based in the south of England, which has not had a great tradition of industry and of manufacturing objects that are useful. The south is very good at manufacturing money, insurance and banking and it is the location for the headquarters of many companies, but it has always been second best to the north in producing goods. Thus, when industry declines, the wealth of the north of England, Scotland and Wales also declines. We never saw the recession here in the south. When I walk through the suburbs of London, as opposed to the inner city areas, I am well aware that there is a great deal of affluence and that, although many people are working, pushing pieces of paper about, very few are actually manufacturing products.

When I worked in industry, I worked for a multi-national company and we used to look at the productivity levels of the various factories in Europe. We often lagged behind Germany, Holland and Switzerland, not because we were less skilled, although training in this country was not given the same premium as in others, but because we tended to be a low-wage economy. When considering investments and assessing how much it will cost to install a new machine to increase productivity, the pay-back time in a low-wage economy is much longer than in a higher-wage economy. That meant that we did not get any investment. Because the Germans were far more highly paid, it was much easier to justify such incentives in the German economy, so Germany tended to get new plant and equipment and its productivity was therefore much greater than ours. That was a tragedy. Indeed, it is a tragedy that low wages do not help the economy of any country. If we are trying to compete with the third-world countries—or even with second-world countries such as Singapore or Taiwan—with a low-pay, low-wage economy, we shall fail. We can succeed only if we are prepared to invest in manufacturing industry to the extent that our competitors in Germany, France, Holland and Japan are investing.

The Minister made great play of the amount of investment that we receive from Japan, Germany and other countries, but when did a British company last buy a Japanese car firm? When did we open a television assembly plant near Tokyo? The answer is that we have not done so. We are trying to attract foreign investment. Our economy is failing in important areas such as high technology. Yet we invest in Taiwan and Singapore. The captains of industry and banking in this country say, "There's a nice low-wage economy—we should be able to make healthy profits if we close our plants here and move them over there." They simply cannot come to terms with the fact that we need to be opening assembly plants ourselves, similar to the Datsun plant in Sunderland. Why are we not saying to British Aerospace, for example, "We should be opening similar plants in Japan and Germany"?

It is difficult for us to export to Japan because the Government have yet again failed to get rid of the unofficial tariffs that the Japanese have erected against us. Although we are exporting, we are not successful. We have to rely on inward investment because the incentives given to our own companies are not great enough.

I was a member of a promotional organisation called Inward in the north-west of England. Our job was to attract inward investment from abroad, but we ultimately concluded that we should open an office in London—if we could get away with it—to try to attract industry from the south-east. To me, that illustrates the great divide between north and south. The south of England was regarded almost as a foreign country, and we felt that we should look there for our inward investment.

There are no incentives to invest. The Budget was supposed to provide an incentive to savers, and we can save only if we earn, and this country in general and its population in particular do not earn enough. If we were earning more, we could save more and invest more, but we are all aware that that has not been the case.

5.15 pm

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East has said, we have probably the least well-equipped work force in western Europe in terms of training. We have failed to give our people the educational qualifications and the skills training that are needed to bring this country into the top rank of manufacturing and industrial countries. We have wasted our time on poor youth training schemes—they are better now—and on employment training, which beautified the countryside when we should really have been equipping our young people with skills to match those of the Germans, the Italians and the French. The Government should have taken a lead in that. Even in eastern Europe, work forces were given skills. That is why, even before there was talk of German unification, no resentment was felt towards the workers who were crossing the Berlin wall because the West Germans knew that those people were bringing with them skills which could be marketed in the west.

My constituency of Carlisle has recently been classed as a "boom town for the 90s" by the Henley Centre for Forecasting. Carlisle is the only city in the north of England to have been put in that category. Carlisle has developed despite the Government's refusal to give it industrial grants, and only because the Labour-controlled council has—with the private sector—developed schemes to make Carlisle attractive.

However, we suffer from one of the problems that has recurred in the debate—a poor infrastructure. We are a long way from the markets that we serve. Our rail service is inadequate. The road service to the south is reasonable, as anyone who travels down the M6 would accept, but the road to Europe—the road from the west of England to the east—is appalling. By any standard, the A69 and the A66 are appalling. I welcome the Government's decision to improve the A1 to motorway standard, but we shall not see the benefit of that until the Government decide to develop the A66 as a dual carriageway.

That is another example of the way in which the Government are not generally prepared to invest in the infrastructure. My city is doing well not because of its manufacturing base but because of its service base, because it is the regional capital of Cumbria and because we now have a major shopping centre. Unfortunately, however, due to the Government's policies in the past, too many of the shops that are doing well in my constituency are selling goods that have been made abroad. We see the

words, "Made in Great Britain" on too few labels. It is always "Made in Germany"—I keep returning to Germany—or "Made in Japan".

The Government and the House must realise that unless we can manufacture more higher-quality goods and sell them abroad, no matter what we do with the exchange rate we shall go bankrupt at the end of the exercise if we do not put our balance of payments right. Great Britain Limited will not cease to exist, but it will cease to be an economic power just as it ceased to be a nation with an empire. We shall sink as Greece sank from being a great power with a major say in what went on in the world to a nation that is regarded as not in the front rank. I do not want to see that happen to Great Britain Limited. Unless we are prepared to take initiatives such as the one in new clause 2, we shall fail.

The new clause is not an answer, but it is part of an answer. In the Budget the Government once again entirely ignored the problem of the decline in manufacturing industry, but we ignore it at our peril. It is easy to make proposals in opposition, but I hope that the next Labour Government will recognise the need to manufacture more, invest in new equipment and re-equip our industries. Let us buy an H registration car for our industry, instead of running it on a B or C registration as we are doing now —let us give our workers the tools that they need so that we can compete equally with the continent and with the Japanese.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Until a few moments ago I had not given the first thought to speaking in the debate. I have just attended a meeting with Ministers where we discussed industrial development and its implications for my constituency and the problems there. I do not wish to labour the point about my constituency. I simply wish to say a few words about the importance of measures such as that proposed in new clause 2 and why I believe that they are important.

Ministers will be aware that over the years I have always argued for a market analysis and that a free market in a mixed economy can be harnessed to deal with problems of unemployment wherever they arise in the country. I have never advocated massive state intervention. On occasions I have supported Government measures which I believed would have the desired effect. But there is a huge, gaping hole in the Government's position which persists today and from which I cannot understand why the Government refuse to move. I cannot altogether accept the Government's position, but I see the reasoning behind it. They believe that regional policies are not required in the sense that regional assistance is not necessary or could be reduced. That is not my case, but I understand the logic of the Government's case. They believe that it is not only the level of assistance that draws people to an area of high unemployment and that other factors should be taken into account.

I reject the proposition that the Government should stand idly aside while sectors of manufacturing industry are lost which are significant to the national economy. I wish to give an example that I used in Committee some years ago. It supports my case more vividly than any other example.

I was once a clock manufacturer. After I left the industry about 12 or 13 years ago I took an academic interest in it. I watched the destruction of the British quartz movement manufacturing industry. I saw it move from two firms to one firm and then from one firm to, in effect, the end of the industry. When there was only one firm, I saw the failure of Smith's Industries, which was a big employer in Wishaw in Scotland, to invest in the technology in which the Germans were investing. The consequence was that, in effect, Smiths lost its market. Now it is not even in business.

I use the clock movement and quartz movement industry only as an example. Is it in the national interest to allow companies to lose labour, technology and expertise and allow an invasion of imports? That is the inevitable consequence of the Government's approach to industrial development. In my view, it is irresponsible to proceed on that basis. That automatically makes the case for returning to conditions in which some sort of Government machinery is responsible for defining the areas of manufacturing industry which should be supported by whatever means or mechanism to ensure their survival and, indeed, development.

Under the Labour Government the Government machinery took various forms. There was the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation in the 1960s, the National Enterprise Board in the 1970s and then the National Economic Development Council, which had working parties to deal with various aspects of manufacturing industry and produce policies to ensure industries' survival and investment in them. In microchip technology Inmos is an example of where such a policy might be said to have been successful. One cannot avoid adopting such an approach to the modern economy.

I do not envisage armies of civil servants sitting around in offices making macro-economic commercial decisions on who should invest where and how much. When arrangements such as I have described are restored, I envisage a far greater role for the private sector in terms of manufacturing, distribution, retail, banking or other experience in taking decisions. However, there is a role for people to ease our industry into a position in which it can compete effectively with other countries.

To return to quartz clock movements, it seems that a product of which the Germans can produce tens of millions, the Japanese can produce hundreds of millions and the Koreans and Taiwanese can turn out could be turned out by Britain. Yet those countries send the mechanisms to the United Kingdom. The product could be made by British manufacturers. Why cannot Britain produce its own quartz clock movements? Why must every clock made in the United Kingdom have a Japanese or other foreign movement in it? It is because we have not taken a strategic decision on the clock industry. As I said, I have no family or other connection with the clock industry, but only an academic interest in what happens in so far as it illustrates my case.

Surely a strategic decision should be taken and Britain should have a quartz producer that is capable of feeding case makers throughout the United Kingdom with movements to put in their clocks which they could then export round the world. There would be nothing wrong with that. It would not require the Government to bend an ideological principle or commitment to accept that proposition. It requires some flexibility and understanding that someone, somewhere must take a decision and make sure that resources are available. Whether someone wants to build a factory in the middle of Westminster or in

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

John o' Groats is not a consideration here. We must simply make a decision to ensure that the products are made in the United Kingdom.

The Minister might say, "Leave it to the market." When the Minister replied to me earlier, he said that he subscribed to the market. The market is not capable of taking the decision. While the market might identify the product, it might say that the investment required and the return on that investment was too long-term. No entrepreneur would be willing to enter the market on that basis. That is the dilemma. In many product areas short-term decisions are taken in the knowledge that, were longer-term ones taken, those products would not be viable. In the balance of calculation about how we frame our manufacturing industrial policy, I wonder whether we reasonably consider the longer-term implications of the decisions that should be taken.

We cannot rely exclusively on the market, although we do not want the state to interfere by saying, "Put a factory up there. Here is all the money. It does not matter who you hire." We need the state to put together a package whereby we give birth to industry and the private sector is pump-primed to ensure that the manufacture of whatever product takes place in the United Kingdom in the national interest.

5.30 pm

I have picked on one product, quartz clock movements —what an obscure product—but there are many others that one could cite. If one reads the *Monthly Digest of Statistics* one discovers areas in which there is a huge gap between the level of exports and imports. One also discovers product areas in which there is a preponderance of imports in the market. Those areas of heavy import penetration should be identified.

I believe that my hon. Friends in the trade and industry team have published some figures that identify particular problem product areas. Those areas should be targeted. I am not asking for massive state funding to get industries off the ground, but the Government should devise policies to ensure that somehow those product areas lift off as centres of manufacturing industry. To some extent, the new clause meets that objective as it is the vehicle for identifying

"in the Standard Industrial Classification issued by the Central Statistical Office"

particular areas that might be targeted. I believe that I have not mistaken the aim of the new clause.

In the past nine years we have been utterly reliant on the market to attract industry and, in that time, I have proposed that we should target particular areas to give birth to manufacturing industry. However, we are now moving to a different scenario. On our doorstep in eastern Europe a huge, new economic power is about to develop. In the short term, eastern Europe will offer cheap labour. It also has an absence of traditional trade union areas of restrictive practice. Many of the factories set up in western Europe operate on the basis of green-field sites even within the trade union legislative umbrella. Following the liberalisation of eastern Europe the trade unions created may mirror the trade union structure created in Germany after the war—I understand from my hon. Friends that Britain was largely responsible for that. Trade union development in eastern Europe may more closely mirror the industrial complexion of Germany than of other parts of the world, including parts of our manufacturing base.

New trade union representational arrangements, green-field sites, new plant and development, cheap labour and the pivotal position of east European countries will mean that their industries will have a considerable advantage over companies that locate in the United Kingdom. After all, those countries will have far easier access to Europe's main markets, despite the advent of the channel tunnel. How will Britain compete if we rely exclusively on the market mechanisms to which the Minister is totally committed? To some extent, I share his commitment, but how can we possibly compete?

I understand that reservations have been expressed by some industrialists in West Germany as they appreciate that the drift will be for new plants and factories to develop in Czechoslovakia, Poland and particularly in Hungary. Such developments will also take place in other parts of eastern Europe as they open up. If that happens, how will we compete? In those conditions we might be forced to reassess whether regional policies are required to deal with the problems in areas such as west Cumberland.

In three years' time, when we are through the hoop of at least some of the difficulties that will arise in eastern Europe, for which the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will take responsibility, capital will be funnelled into eastern Europe to take advantage of the new markets created. I do not think that it will then be easy for the United Kingdom to attract industry to areas such as my own. In those conditions, the new clause would be even more important because at least it addresses the problem of targeting assistance into manufacturing companies. At least that would give us a competitive edge against companies starting up in other parts of Europe, especially eastern Europe.

Although I want eastern Europe to develop, I am extremely concerned about its implications for the United Kingdom, particularly if we have a Government who remain ever wedded, in an unrelenting fashion, to the principle of a free market that is able to respond to the industrial and employment needs of our people. I cannot place my faith in that analysis and I believe that there are some Conservative Members who share my concerns.

The new clause does not require any massive compromise on the Government's ideological stance. I believe that the Government should look favourably upon it. Despite any reservations that the Government may have about the new clause—its wording, the appeal system or the extent to which it can be implemented—were Ministers to say that they took on board its central thrust, I am sure that British industry would respond favourably.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This has been an interesting and wide-ranging debate. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) ranged particularly wide and made a real motherhood speech. In a debate that was meant to be about capital allowances, he managed to introduce the channel tunnel, proportional representation and his favourite subject, the ERM, all of which he felt would solve whatever investment problems existed in the British economy.

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not in his place because I wanted to explain why I had not given the cost of the Opposition new clause. It is difficult to give the cost because it depends on how successful the proposal would

be in generating new investment. As drafted, it is not restricted specifically to new investment. It would apply to existing investment, so potentially it would have a huge deadweight cost. Disregarding that, if it attracted just new investment, the cost might be about £260 million in 1991-92 and a further £360 million in 1992-93. While the costs are difficult to quantify, if the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) were successful in her proposition and it brought forward more investment, the costs would be higher.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) made an interesting speech and was concerned that I had not referred to the balance of payments and current account deficit. I did not do so because I had not anticipated the debate being so wide-ranging. I differ from the way in which the right hon. Gentleman views the current account deficit—I do not regard it as the profit and loss account of the nation, as many Opposition Members appear to do. As I have said on many occasions, the current account deficit reflects much more a phenomenon of excess demand in the United Kingdom and not of a loss of competitiveness. If it were a loss of competitiveness, we should not be seeing the extraordinary growth in exports, particularly manufactured exports, that we have witnessed in the recent past, particularly in the past 12 months.

Although the deficit must be reduced, it is much more a symptom of excess demand—of inflation—than of anything else. Inflation is the main problem. When the hon. Member for Derby, South says that we do not recognise the problems, I assure her that we have always recognised inflation as a problem. Indeed, we recognise it much more than the Labour party is prepared to say it is a problem. We are absolutely determined to get inflation down and we regard it as unacceptably high.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that a reason for the deficit may be the fact that there is a structural problem in relation to British industry? In large areas of the production of consumer goods, are we not producing because the production is done abroad?

Mr. Lamont: I do not accept that the current account deficit reflects structural problems. The great structural change, to which the right hon. Gentleman refers, that occurred in the British economy took place in the early part of this decade. The structural change in our current account deficit has occurred in the last few years—in the period when demand has plainly been excessive—when the Government responded to the conditions of 1987, a response which, with hindsight, was over-generous. But it is not a structural problem because the structural changes —the loss of some manufacturing capacity, the most inefficient and unprofitable—all occurred in the early 1980s, whereas the phenomenon of the current account deficit is more recent.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne dwelt on manufacturing, and I shall say more about that, but he also played down the role of the service industries in the economy and referred to services as though they were totally dependent on manufacturing. I suggest that that is the wrong way to look at it. Services and manufacturing are interdependent. Some manufacturing industries have a close relationship with service industries. For example, the output of the computer industry is heavily influenced by the demands of the financial services industry. The idea that services are not wealth-creating or are dependent entirely on manufacturing is a myopic and out-of-date view.

5.45 pm

I freely agree that manufacturing is an important part of the economy, but it is no use harking back to an age that is past. In the early part of the century, this country enjoyed about 75 per cent. of the output of the world's textile industry. Had Opposition Members been present over the years, they would have been complaining every decade as that percentage fell, reflecting an inevitable transfer of manufacturing capacity to some of the poorer countries. We should not be against that, as it has been greatly to the advantage of those countries. It was inevitable as poorer countries industrialised and came into the world trading system.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne also felt that the 25 per cent. allowances under the new regime did not match depreciation. As he will recognise on reflection, writing-down allowances of 25 per cent. give an effective eight-year write-off period for machinery and plant, with relief, of nearly 60 per cent. of the cost in the first three years. The rate of depreciation allowed by the tax system compares well with commercial rates of depreciation in most situations. Obviously it varies, according to the assets and from one company to another, and there are also some special arrangements for short-life assets.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) made an interesting and entertaining speech, as he always does. He began by saying that the Government did not understand monetarism, a point that he often makes. I think that he sometimes tries to disguise the fact that he is a true monetarist, as we know from his remarks that interest rates are the best way of controlling monetary growth and that credit controls are ineffective. The right hon. Gentleman, when a Treasury Minister, studied these matters, understood them and drew the correct conclusions. That is why he occasionally feels that he has a licence to attack the Government for not being monetarist enough. I sometimes think that he is trying to cover up his own position.

The right hon. Gentleman felt that the 1984 reforms had helped the service sector as opposed to manufacturing. It is true to a point that, by its nature, the reduction in allowances—which went more to manufacturing—benefited the service sector, but it depends on the profitability of the individual company. The changes gave the greatest incentive and reward to the most profitable companies, including profitable manufacturing companies. That is an important point to make about the new tax regime.

Much of the debate has centred not on the new clause but on the economy. Indeed, it has been an economic philosophy debate about the role of manufacturing in the economy. As I said at the outset, manufacturing is extremely important to the traded sector. But Opposition Members are in danger of disregarding the other three quarters of the economy which comes from non-manufacturing. It is ridiculous to regard all wealth creation as coming from one sector.

I said that if one looked at manufacturing as a share of GDP, one found that the transition in this country, which happened under the last Labour Government—the reduction in manufacturing as a share of GDP—has gone

on for decades. It mirrors what has happened in European countries and in north America. The share of GDP represented by manufacturing in this country is comparable with the situation in France and America.

In recent years, however, we have seen some encouraging signs, with remarkable growth in productivity in manufacturing. In the recent past we have also witnessed strong growth in manufacturing investment, which has grown by an average of 8 per cent. per year since 1983, compared with an average of 1·5 per cent. per year under the last Labour Government.

I said that foreign investment had played a part, which illustrates that foreign companies do not regard the tax regime for taxing profits and giving incentives for investment as anything other than attractive. If they did, we should not be doing so well as we have been in attracting foreign investment.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) asked a strange question. He asked when a British firm last took over a Japanese car company. I was not aware that the Japanese had taken over any British car firms. What they have done is to invest in green field sites. Nissan and Toyota have been new green field investments, which should be welcomed by everyone, including the Opposition. I am sure that the hon. Member for Derby, South will agree, since Toyota is in her constituency, that there is no reason why Nissan and Toyota should not be regarded as just as much a part of the British economy as the Ford motor company was in the past.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) referred to his earlier speech on clocks, which I remember because I was here when he made it. The clock does not seem to have moved on very much since then. He said that he was in favour of market forces and did not favour interventionism. He went on to say that he favoured only a little bit of interventionism, but that sectors should be identified and there should be a bit of money in the resources. I fear that once we begin that argument, it is difficult not to do so with ever-gathering enthusiasm, as the Labour party does.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to Inmos, although he was not quite sure what it did. He said that we were rather good at it, but it was a complete disaster.

Mr. Denzil Davies: It is still there.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My right hon. Friend says that it is still there.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury seems to question the balance between interventions and markets. Why is it that the Japanese target in that way? If they can do it, why can we not do it?

Mr. Lamont: This is not a debate on the Japanese economy.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: But the Japanese do it.

Mr. Lamont: I do not believe that the Japanese pursue the model that the hon. Gentleman describes. It may have been the model in Japan after the second world war; the Japanese may have a different relationship with their banking system, but that is a different matter. However, the relationship between the state and the industry is not as the hon. Gentleman describes it. [HON. MEMBERS: "MITI."] I hear Members on the Opposition Front Bench muttering about the Ministry of International Trade and Industry in Japan, but the role of MITI has changed considerably. The striking factor about the Japanese motor industry is the sheer number of different, competing companies, which is more significant than any alleged relationship with MITI.

There has been much argument about the state of manufacturing industry in this country. I can give no better authority than the director general of the Confederation of British Industry, who remarked a few weeks ago:

"We enter the 1990s with the supply side of the British economy in comparatively better shape than at any time in our history."

No doubt Labour Members will describe that as hype, belief in a miracle and exaggerated Tory propaganda, but it is the considered judgment of the director general of the CBI. I much prefer his opinion to anything that the Labour party has put forward in this debate.

Mrs. Beckett: This has been a most interesting debate. I have a feeling that I may have misled the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) earlier. I was so amazed by the figures that he gave on the cost of our new clause that I gave an example of the implications that it would have for an individual company. I also stressed that I thought his proposals were completely exaggerated. I am not sure whether I made that as clear to the hon. Gentleman as I would have wished, but no doubt he will deduce it from the record.

When he opened the debate for the Government, the Chief Secretary talked about growth and inflation during the decade, and how the Government's record was good and stood up well to any comparison. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said, the Chief Secretary did not say anything else about inflation, and we all know why.

The Chief Secretary talked as though growth had been spectacularly higher than at any time in our history. Growth rates during the decade as a whole were no higher than those that we had generally experienced before the initial oil crisis of the early 1970s. Although we were all pleased by the levels of growth achieved, they were not, I repeat, anything to boast about in terms of our general history and the development of the country's economy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: What about our growth rate in the 1980s—was it or was it not above the EC average, and was it or was it not below that in the 1970s?

Mrs. Beckett: From memory, if one leaves out—as the Chief Secretary prefers to do—the figures at the start of this Government's period of office, from 1979 to 1980, the answer is yes. However, once those figures are included and we look at the Government's entire period in office, the picture is different. I made that point earlier. [HON. MEMBERS: "There was no oil."] As I hear from the Benches behind me, there was the minor matter of the large revenues that the Government enjoyed from the North sea which were not available to any previous Government. One must question the Chief Secretary's use of that set of statistics.

The Chief Secretary referred, however briefly, to the problems of the current account and suggested that part of the reason for them was increased investment. He said that investment goods had contributed to the deficit. As I am sure the Chief Secretary is aware, the proportion of imports of goods for investment and production—we accept that our imports are extremely high—is no higher than in the 1970s and early 1980s. If anything, the

proportion has declined and many of the goods described in the categories of production and investment are not what most of us would think of in relation to the manufacturing industry. They include X-rays and coconut. I understand that in 1988, for which I have the figures, only 18·6 per cent. of manufactured imports were pure capital goods. Therefore, we can dismiss the argument that it is only the high level of goods for investment that has contributed to our current account deficit.

The Chief Secretary said that there had been a strong growth in manufacturing investment, particularly in the past couple of years. He suggested that some commentators thought that there was a bit of a change and that there would be an even greater improvement in the near future. That is the most extraordinary claim of all, apart from the one that the Chief Secretary has just made and to which I shall return. Manufacturing investment as a proportion of our gross domestic product has declined since 1979 and is still nowhere near the 1979 levels. Even if we consider it in, not quite cash terms but constant prices, it returned above the 1979 level only as late as 1988.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I had always understood that one of the difficulties about computing the percentage of investment in manufacturing industry was that when vertically integrated companies decided, for example, to hive off their transport function to an independent company, that became, by definition, no longer a manufacturing function. One of our difficulties in comparing the figures is that a great deal of what used to be called manufacturing is now called service.

Mrs. Beckett: That is one of the most spurious arguments that I have heard for a long time. There is no doubt that, under this Government, every section of the collection of statistics has been degraded and, in its use, been distorted. I am quarrelling not with the statisticians, but with the politicians who try to make a case that will not stand up to close examination. However one measures manufacturing investment and compares it with that of our competitors, there is no dispute—not even from the Government—about the figures that I have just given: as a percentage of gross domestic product, manufacturing investment has declined and, at constant prices, it has only just climbed back above the level from which it fell in 1979.

6 pm

The Chief Secretary had the cheek to say a moment ago that since 1983 manufacturing investment has grown by an average of 8 per cent. compared with 1·5 or 2 per cent. under the last Labour Government. I remind him of a recent answer that the Chancellor gave my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) which showed clearly what would have happened had the comparatively lower rates continued. I accept that there was a smaller rate of increase, year by year, in manufacturing investment under the last Labour Government. Nevertheless, had that rate of increase been attained by this Government manufacturing investment would be almost £2 billion higher than it is today.

The Chief Secretary then suggested that investment might be improving; we certainly hope so, but we see little sign of that in his or anyone else's forecasts.

The right hon. Gentleman asked whether the Opposition favour tax allowances of the sort trailed in our new clause. I thought that we had made it clear that we favour the use of tax allowances for investment, although we should certainly want them to be well targeted and used primarily by manufacturing industry. There is no difficulty about that, and I am not sure why the right hon. Gentleman thought that there might be.

The Chief Secretary criticised me for suggesting that companies should not seek to increase their earnings per share. Of course, I understand that companies want to increase their earnings per share—that is what the market wants. I pointed out that we do not want companies to do this by fiddling accounting rules or by launching takeovers; we want them to improve their earnings by improving the performance of the company—a rather different point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister put a price on the amendment, which reads,

"may be prescribed by way of regulations made under this subsection".

Given that the goods covered are not classified in the new clause, surely it is impossible to price it.

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend is right. The new clause offers scope for careful targeting, which is why it was drafted in that way. To be fair to the Chief Secretary, he said that his costing was something of a guess. We must be kind to the Government; they have to find something to say and their guesses are growing increasingly desperate with every day that passes——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mrs. Beckett: If my hon. Friend does not want to be kind to the Chief Secretary, I am happy to let him have another go.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Government spread myths throughout the country about the cost of Labour's programme. If they included in their assessment the figure that the Minister gave at the Dispatch Box, it would be a gross misrepresentation. Certain products might be covered at a cost of less than £1 million. It is quite impossible to assess the cost of the new clause.

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend is right.

Mr. Norman Lamont *rose*——

Mrs. Beckett: If the right hon. Gentleman must.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Lady gave an astonishing reply to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). Is she really suggesting different rates of allowances, defined for specific sectors within manufacturing? That is what the hon. Member for Workington suggested, and she knows it.

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend suggested no such thing. The Chief Secretary cannot have been listening. The new clause suggests no such thing, either. My hon. Friend merely suggested that it was important to define carefully the categories within which the allowance might be made, which is not the same as suggesting different rates.

The Minister said that there was not a scrap of evidence that a lack of capital allowances is harming investment. It is one thing to suggest that there has not been a dramatic deterioration in the figures since the abolition of the allowances—although there has certainly not been much improvement, as they are still low. But the whole point of the new clause was to suggest a slight alleviation of the

[Mrs. Beckett]

predicament of interest rates being so high. All the statistics and Government and other forecasts for the recent period have shown the problems that industry faces because of interest rates, which are expected to have a damaging effect on investment, and that is what the new clause attempts to deal with.

As to whether the problem will do long-term damage, I remind the Chief Secretary of what the April-May issue of "European Economy" magazine said. The Commission drew attention to levels of investment across the Community and referred to the Community's co-operative growth strategy—and to the fact that across the Community the growth of investment is stronger than the growth of gross domestic product. The Commission hoped for an expansion of 4 per cent. in real terms this year. However, the magazine also says that there has been a marked slow-down in some countries and says of the United Kingdom:

"In this last country, gross fixed capital formation could actually decrease in 1990."

It is significant that the Commission pointed out that that aspect is improving, although not as fast as it would like, in most Community countries; so this is another example of our competitiveness being harmed—and it is already poor.

I referred earlier to the world competitiveness report produced by World Economic Forum. It lists the United Kingdom as a mediocre 12th of 23 countries, with its problems compounded by the fact that we are 16th in the table when measured by per capita investment in education, and 19th measured by the numbers enrolled in higher education. That, too, can only harm our competitive position.

Several of my hon. Friends have made excellent speeches drawing attention to the problems of manufacturing industry which we believe the new clause might, in a small and temporary way, help to alleviate. The Chief Secretary ended by quoting the CBI, and I should like to do the same. The CBI called on the Government to make precisely this sort of assistance for industry a priority in this Finance Bill. The then president of the CBI referred to the danger that investment plans will be undermined

"by the high cost of capital, the squeeze on profits, and slower growth".

He spoke of these risks

"undermining Britain's growth potential throughout the decade".

That is the danger.

Throughout this debate the Chief Secretary has failed to refer to our enormous balance of payments deficit, and it has clearly emerged, as we feared it would, that the Government are not prepared to take steps or to consider measures to alleviate the problems faced by British industry—because they refuse to accept that they exist. One of the worst features of the Chief Secretary's remarks was his pooh-poohing of the idea that manufacturing industry was important. He claimed that the Opposition say that it is all that matters in wealth creation. He must be well aware that, from the point of view of our overseas earnings and our traded sector, it is manufacturing that is the wealth creator and the source of all our wealth. It could be the basis of a secure and successful future for this country, but it is plain that under this Government such a future holds no security.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 207, Noes 264.

Division No. 297] **[6.10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul

Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen

Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 3

ADDITIONAL RELIEF FOR LDC DEBT

'After section 88C of the Taxes Act 1988 inserted by Section 66 above there shall be inserted the following section:

"88D additional relief for overseas Government debt.

(1) Where in relation to a debt to which section 88A(2) above applies, a company has included a provision in its accounts for any accounting period ending on or after 20th March 1990 which exceeds the aggregate amount which has a been deducted under section 74(j) above in relation to that debt for that and any previous accounting period, then it shall be entitled to additional relief under subsection (2) below subject to the clawback provided for by subsection (3) below.

(2) The additional relief shall be a deduction from profits chargeable to corporation tax for that accounting period equal to the difference between the aggregate amount mentioned in subsection (1) above and the lesser of

(a) the provision mentioned in subsection (1) above and

(b) the maximum provision which would have been made in relation to the debt had the company followed the recommendations contained in the Bank of England's guidelines for overseas debt provisioning in force at the end of that accounting period;

and for the purposes of subsection (1) above any relief given by virtue of this subsection shall be regarded as an amount deducted under section 74(j) above.

(3) The additional relief granted by subsection (2) above shall be withdrawn to the extent that, at a date three years from the end of that accounting period the company has not made a relevant release of the debt; and an assessment made to give effect to this subsection (or subsection (5) below) may be made at any time up to six years after that date.

(4) For the purpose of subsection (3) above, a relevant release means

(a) a release of the debt in favour of the Creditor Overseas State Authority for no consideration, or

(b) a disposal of the debt to the Overseas State Authority for a consideration equal to or less than its book value at the end of that accounting period, or

(c) a disposal of the debt by the company under a development plan or an environmental protection plan approved by the Treasury;

and the Treasury shall be empowered by this subsection to issue regulations demonstrating the criteria which it will use in deciding whether or not to approve under this subsection a development plan or environmental protection plan submitted to it for approval.

(5) Nothing in subsections (1) to (4) above shall cause the aggregate profits charged to corportion tax of any person for the accounting period in question, and all previous accounting periods in relation to which he was chargeable to corporation tax, to exceed those which would have been so charged had this section never been enacted; and this section shall have no effect to the extent that it would otherwise cause such excess to be charged to corporation tax.".'.—*[Mr. Boateng.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 3 is a modest measure, made all the more so by the restrictions of the Ways and Means resolution. However, its principle is important. It is introduced against a backcloth of crisis because of growing poverty in the developing world. There is a debt crisis that threatens to make that poverty even worse, and that will impact adversely upon Britain's banking system.

One in every five of the world's population has less than a dollar a day on which to live. More than 1 billion people —about a third of the developing world's population—are living on less than $370—£206—a year. The problem of poverty has been ably and comprehensively recorded in a recent report on world development by the World bank. It studies the last decade, which it considers to be a lost decade because of the opportunities that presented themselves to deal with the problems of poverty, but which were not taken or were squandered. Even more than a lost decade, it was a decade of despair, especially for the children upon whom poverty impacts adversely as it reduces their opportunity to achieve even basic standards of education. It was a decade of despair for the farmers, especially the single crop and subsistence farmers who found the whole basis of their agricultural economy undermined. It was a decade of despair for the women of the third world whose backs have borne the greatest brunt of debt and poverty.

Against that backcloth, the measures are meagre. Nevertheless, they are important because it is vital that there is a reduction in debt and that we recognise the contribution that the commercial banking sector can make in that process. Commercial banks play a disproportionate role in the net transfer of resources. Debts to banks, including guarantee export credits, represent 40 to 45 per cent. of the total debt of the debt-burdened countries. In 1988, £28 billion of their £30 billion net transfer to creditors was on transactions with commercial banks. It is clear from those figures that a reduction in net transfers to commercial banks is critical if we are to alleviate the debt burden. Even with that reduction, there is unlikely to be any substantial gains in that area.

The new clause seeks to offer banks more relief than that proposed in the Bill. However, the relief would not be unconditional; it would not be just a handout. It would be clawed back if, within three years of the accounting period in which the relief is claimed, it had not been given by way of reduction in indebtedness—either through the sale, at a loss, of the debt to the debtor country, or a swap that had environmental or development gain. That must be done within three years or the relief is clawed back, with interest.

6.30 pm

This modest measure is an incentive to the commercial banks to take their obligations seriously. It is commercially desirable to the banks, but there is also a moral obligation on them. It is important that the banks see their responsibilities as a matter not simply of commerce but of common morality. The Opposition are bound to say—I do not think that they are entirely alone in this—that there was something distinctly unseemly about the paean of special pleading in the Grand Committee Room by several Conservative Members on behalf of the banks. They addressed us at great length about the hardships experienced by the banks. It was a bit rich that their cry should drown the cry of the dispossessed

and the deserted of the world. Such pleas are a bit much from Conservative Members who come along with their carpetbags loaded with dosh while people in the developing world have to live on a dollar a day.

One in five people in the world has to live on a dollar a day—a shaming statistic, as hon. Members would agree. It should be possible to devise a programme of aid and assistance that is not limited to reducing indebtedness but is geared towards providing not just a safety net but a trampoline by which it will be possible for the developing world to bring itself up. The issue relates to the obligations not simply of aid donors but of aid recipients to ensure that the aid is not misused and abused. All too often over the past decade aid has been misplaced by us donors then misused by the regimes and Governments of the recipient countries. The poor have not had the advantages of development, and medium and long-term gains in those countries have not been made possible.

The new clause should not be seen as an end in itself; it is but a faltering step in the right direction. I wish to set it in the context of the Brady initiative. That initiative made a truly faltering start in addressing the issues, the magnitude of which we now fully understand. That faltering start was highlighted in the recent report by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, which concluded that the Brady initiative

"will be partial in its effect; and in the case of those countries which have adopted a Brady package its impact will be modest. The Brady initiative is not likely to provide a solution to the problems of the middle income debtors as a whole."

I do not think that any hon. Member could find fault with that conclusion. The United States Treasury Secretary, Mr. Brady, said that creditor Governments should consider how to reduce regulatory accounting or tax impediments to debt reduction where they exist. The new clause would reduce one such impediment and as such is commendable. We hope that the Government will find it in their heart to take it on board, and we commend it to them with that in mind.

The Brady initiative is weak in terms of its lack of ambition. It aims to reduce bank debts by some 20 per cent. The former vice-president of the World bank, David Knox, argued that we should try to cut the Latin American debt service to private creditors by 70 to 80 per cent. That shows the scale of the Brady initiative. A wider study group was chaired by the former managing director of the International Monetary Fund—not a body known in the developing world for its liberality or for its breadth of understanding of the impact of its strictures on debtor countries.

I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) for helping me to pronounce the name of that former managing director, Dr. Witteveen—they are very communautaire in Islington; the Dutch trips off the tongue. We in north-west London must learn from them. Dr. Witteveen correctly said that we should take 50 per cent. as a starting point for bank debt service reduction by highly indebted countries. I note that the Chief Secretary is waiting to demonstrate his linguistic ability. No doubt there are plenty of authorities upon whom he can rely.

The number of authorities that support the Government's approach on this issue is limited, if not non-existent. Who knows? Perhaps some can be dredged up from somewhere. Perhaps a family friend will help—but we must not trespass into family grief. We look forward to hearing what the Economic Secretary has to say because this is an issue that requires urgent solutions. There are no easy solutions, and we do not pretend that there are. This matter requires us to go beyond sentiment to strategy, but we require some strategy if we are to deal with the problems of indebtedness.

The "World Development Report" was clear about the importance of addressing the issue of debt in relation to poverty because it is a prerequisite and a precursor to a successful arrival at a position from which it is possible to address the issue of poverty in the developing world, to deal with the issue of debt and to relieve some of the burden that currently encumbers those countries. If the necessary domestic policies—which are recommended by the World bank—to maximise the best available resource of those countries, their labour, are linked to social policies and to welfare policies that are focused on the needs of those most in need in the countries in question, that in itself is a welcome development. I am sure that hon. Members will agree with the thinking of the World bank on this issue.

Before one is able to address those domestic concerns, the international context of indebtedness must be got right. That is the conclusion of the "World Development Report" and it is worth considering in full. The report concludes:

"Many low-income countries—especially but not exclusively in Sub-Saharan Africa—find themselves with daunting debt and debt service burdens at a time when they need to invest more (in order to improve their long-term prospects) and, simultaneously, to increase the consumption of large numbers of people in poverty. Further efforts by the international community will be needed to reduce their debts and to increase concessional assistance to them. These efforts should be conditional on appropriate policy reform in the countries concerned. Aid and debt relief will be to no avail if appropriate policies are not in place."

That report puts the issue of debt clearly in perspective. The new clause addresses that issue in a way that will effectively suspend the operation of new clause 88B and will reapply the old law, although only temporarily. If in the three years after relief has been granted the debt has not been released completely, sold at a loss to the creditor state or disposed of under an approved development plan or under an environmental protection plan, the additional relief is withdrawn and new clause 88B comes back into operation. That is secured by new clause 88D(3). Our proposal is more modest than we would want and the Ways and Means resolution weighed especially heavily on us in this respect. However, the new clause is a start and we have to begin somewhere. As a start, we commend it to the House.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): We welcome the new clause. The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) did not make any great claims about how radical the effect of the new clause would be. However, it pushes the modest provision that the Government have introduced in the Bill a step further in the right direction. The hon. Member for Brent, South said that the new clause and the Government's proposal are consistent with the Brady initiative, although he is right to point out that, as the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service concluded, the Brady initiative

"will be partial in its effect; and in the case of those countries which have adopted a Brady package its impact will be modest."

Given the scale of the debt crisis facing many developing countries, any package is to be welcomed

[Mr. James Wallace]

inasmuch as it helps to relieve them of debt. However, we should be under no illusion about the amount that still needs to be done if the heavy burden of debt is to be removed and if, in removing it, we are to allow those countries the opportunity to go forward and to seek and undertake development with far greater confidence and ability.

6.45 pm

The hon. Member for Brent, South referred to the background against which the new clause is moved and to the need to relieve many nations of their debt. It is important that we remind ourselves of the scale and consequences of that debt. The debt crisis has ensured that over many years many of the debtor states have been denied the resources that they need to build sustained and sustainable economic growth. As a result, many of the basic services of food, shelter, health, education and employment have been denied to the people.

The hon. Gentleman made the valid point that much of the debt that has been incurred has not gone to relieve the burden of the plight of the poorest people in those countries. They have continued to suffer and the prospect of any relief of their suffering has been seriously hindered by an ever-growing debt problem.

"The State of the World's Children Report 1989" states that average incomes in Africa and Latin America have fallen by 10 per cent. to 25 per cent. in recent years, that health spending has been reduced by half, that education spending has been reduced by 25 per cent. in the 37 poorest nations and that in over half the 103 developing nations there has been a 20 per cent. drop in the number of children attending school in the six to 11-year-old age bracket. Those are startling figures and should bring home to us the nature of the problem and its human dimension. They should also encourage us to an even more dramatic response than we have had in the Bill or in the new clause.

It is also important to recognise, as we are now all environmentalists, the effect that debt burdens have had on the environment. That has resulted in the marginalisation of small farmers, which has been one of the causes of the slash-and-burn exploitation of forests and of other desperate and environmentally destructive survival strategies. Apart from the need to improve the lot of many of our fellow human beings, there is also an urgent need to take steps to remove the need for many people in these countries to take action that will be environmentally damaging.

The hon. Member for Brent, South did not make great claims for the new clause. However, much will depend on the Bank of England guideline. My reading of the new clause—I am subject to correction if I am wrong—is that if the guideline for a country does not increase by more than 15 per cent. over three years, nothing in the new clause would give any further relief above that already provided under clause 74. However, the incentive for packages to be implemented which is implicit in the new clause is welcome; the matter is not left to chance. A degree of urgency is instilled into the measures and that is especially welcome, as is the definition of what releasing a debt amounts to. That is helpful and widens the original definition.

This gives us an opportunity to ask whether the amendment is a big step forward. The answer is that it is not. I suspect that some of its deficiencies are a fact of life because there are things that Opposition parties are unable to do in the context of the Finance Bill. There are restrictions which prevent Opposition Front-Bench Members from taking steps which are as dramatic as they would like. It also gives us an opportunity to ask in which direction the Government wish to move in future Finance Bills to extend the provisions that they have introduced. Is this to be the sum and substance of their contribution towards encouraging banks to write off or sell back debt, or can we look forward to further initiatives in future Finance Bills, particularly if the measures introduced in this Bill are seen not to be sufficient? I should be interested to hear from the Economic Secretary what proposals he has to monitor the use made of the current clause and what further proposals he might have to extend it.

One way to improve the new clause and make it more effective would be to entitle banks to full relief on any level of provision and subject that to clawback. That may have been impossible for the Opposition to propose, but it would be much more effective in trying to achieve the objectives which I am sure that all hon. Members wish to achieve. The debate will have been worth while if the Treasury Bench will say that this is only a first step towards taking much more drastic and radical action to alleviate a global problem affecting our fellow citizens. Although the provisions are modest, they are to be welcomed.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): The scale of the debt problem relating to developing countries should not be underestimated. No one participating in this debate or in the Committee has underestimated the problem, but there are differences in the way people feel that it should be addressed. The World bank classifies 46 of the 111 countries reporting to it as "severely indebted". Those countries owed $675 billion out of a total developing country debt of about twice that figure. They are mostly to be found in the African continent, mainly in the sub-Saharan region. Relative to their exports and economic activity, the total debts of low-income debtors are even larger than those of the developing world's largest debtors such as Mexico and Brazil. Most of those countries have a debt service to export ratio of at least 25 per cent., which goes some way towards explaining the fact that many of the aid agencies viewed the 1980s as a decade of negative development for those countries.

For some countries, the debt repayment and the austerity measures designed to facilitate that repayment have had such serious economic consequences that social and political unrest has resulted. There have been riots in countries such as Algeria, Venezuela and Zambia, which are countries that we are supposed to be assisting. The austerity demanded by the so-called middle-income countries was no more effective. Brazil's external debt in 1973 was $9 billion. Between that time and 1985 Brazil paid $145 billion as debt service while a total of $121 entered the country as new loans. That means that in that period there was a net outflow of $24 billion, yet the total debt still rose to $95 billion by 1985. If that is an example of the developed world helping the developing world, one can forgive the average Brazilian for saying, "You can keep your money—if that is the way the International Monetary Fund and the World bank assist us, heaven help us if they ever try to undermine our economy."

Brazil is the sixth largest exporter of foodstuffs, yet 30 million of its people subsist on fewer than 1,600 calories a day—600 below what is regarded as the basic minimum by the World Health Organisation. There is no shortage of examples of other countries whose economies are in desperate straits and are being driven further into the mire by the avarice and heartlessness of the commercial banks throughout the developed world, including banks in this country.

Between 1982 and 1988 there was a net transfer of resources from debt-burdened countries to the banks of $144 billion. That is a disgrace and a dereliction of the duty by the developed countries to their less fortunate counterparts. The pendulum must begin to swing back towards the third world countries. Banks now have provisions worth in excess of 50 per cent. of their third world loans and can afford substantial debt reduction without incurring significant additional losses.

The Brady initiative of 1989, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), recognised that debt reduction is now essential. However, many banks still resist the temptation to reduce their debts. It is clear that neither Brady nor the 1980 Toronto agreement, under which western countries cancelled a third of debt servicing costs over 14 years—that was aimed at the more seriously indebted countries—eliminated the negative net transfer of resources to which I have referred.

World problems require world solutions. The Government could and should be doing more to encourage our banks to reduce or sell their debts to the developing countries. Clause 66 gives tax advantages to banks when a debt is sold back to the debtor country. That is welcome as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. In Committee the then Financial Secretary rejected the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) relating to the widening of the scope of relief to cover environmental swaps. It is right that that issue should be the subject of further consideration now.

These arrangements are becoming a major feature of the method by which commercial banks and voluntary aid organisations use debt reduction to assist indebted countries. The bank donates its loan expenditure to a charity—the Midland bank did this with UNICEF in the Sudan two years ago—and the charity then arranges with the developing country to provide in local currency an equivalent amount which is then used for approved development products. That is a sensible method of addressing a debt burden which is often a millstone around the neck of developing countries. It turns such a problem into a positive advantage. It is relieved of the debt while guaranteeing funding of a project that enhances the quality of life for at least some of its people. Surely that must be welcomed.

The Government should recognise that and be prepared to offer tax incentives to British banks to encourage them to follow the example of the Midland bank. I am not so naive as to think that banks are in the business of philanthropy, but by using the corporation tax system they could be encouraged to sell back debts and become involved in meaningful debt disposal under a development or environmental protection plan.

In Committee the Financial Secretary gave what I and many of my hon. Friends felt was an unconvincing response on this issue. I hope that the Economic Secretary, who I am sure will soon become the Chief Secretary's successor, when he has had time to consider the matter further will feel it within his power to presage that appointment by appreciating the value of the provisions of the new clause and agreeing to add it to the Bill.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): I am not surprised that this debate has ranged beyond the immediate tax provisions of new clause 3. Hon. Members have raised a number of important related points.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That could not have happened; the occupant of the Chair would have intervened.

7 pm

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Gentleman says from a sedentary position that that could not have happened because the occupant of the Chair would have intervened. I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Opposition Members were illustrating their arguments by providing examples that were not directly concerned with the tax provisions of new clause 3. Certainly those of us who were here enjoyed the debate and learned a great deal from what hon. Members said.

On the United Kingdom's general strategy on third world debt, I cannot agree with those who argue that our approach is not working or that we are not making available sufficient resources. Our approach has been to give our support to an internationally agreed strategy which was reaffirmed by the G7 Heads of State at Houston earlier this month. The Government believe that the strategy that we and our international partners have adopted offers by far the best way forward.

Hon. Members have referred to the provision of official resources. These have been significantly increased and will be increased again when the International Monetary Fund quota increase comes into force. The United Kingdom is contributing significantly.

I accept that new clause 3, to which the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) spoke, seeks to encourage debt reduction and debt forgiveness and that it is well intended. But clause 74—together with existing reliefs for charitable donations—already covers significant ground.

The relief proposals in the new clause could be very costly, and I shall refer to that in a moment. It depends on what exactly is meant by giving extra relief up to the maximum provision recommended by the Bank of England's guidelines, as those guidelines provide not a precise level for each country but only broad bands. If the proposal means that banks could claim relief up to the top of the band within which any particular country fell, the extra relief in 1991-92 could cost up to £350 million. That is partly because it would override the phasing arrangements on increases in provisions which we have introduced and partly because it would allow tax relief up to the top of the Bank of England's bands rather than —as under the procedures that we are introducing—to an intermediate point within them. That would completely undermine one of the main objectives of the Government's proposals which is to keep the costs to the Exchequer of doubtful sovereign debt within bounds.

The Opposition may feel that that money would be well spent if it went to reducing the debt of third world countries but, effectively, under their proposals, banks would get such loans whether or not they engaged in debt reduction. Under our proposals, they will get immediate

[Mr. Ryder]

relief for any loss on disposals of debt back to the borrower Government. The tax advantage to a bank that took part in a debt reduction scheme—over a bank that did not—would be just the same under our proposals as under the Opposition's proposals. The only difference would be that, under the new clause, there would have been a substantial interest-free loan by the Government to the banks.

Moreover, during the three-year period, banks would be discouraged from selling their debt on the secondary market. Any fall in sales as a result would hit those debtor countries that are able to buy back their debt, especially those that have acquired it unofficially on the secondary market.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Before Ministers slip into producing mythical figures in this debate, as they did in the previous debate, may I ask the Economic Secretary this? He referred to a figure of up to £350 million. Will he give us the bottom-end figure?

Mr. Ryder: I am prepared to say that the relief would cost about £350 million and that if it cost less, it would not cost much less. We are talking about a significant sum. That much has been acknowledged throughout our proceedings on the Bill: we are dealing with very large sums. Some of my hon. Friends criticised my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for taking more than he should have done in his Budget on 20 March. No one is quarrelling about the fact that the sums that have been calculated and agreed among a wide variety of organisations are accurate, and those are the sums on which we have been working.

The Government have greatly improved the provisions for tax relief for company donations to charities. Banks that wish to assist development and environmental charities can take advantage of the provisions. I recognise that gifts in kind are not deductible, but it is possible for banks to arrange a transfer of money which will achieve the same effect and, provided that the amounts do not exceed the allowable limits, there will be tax relief. I am happy to repeat the assurance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—I look forward to reading this in *Hansard* tomorrow—gave in Committee that if charitable relinquishment of debt starts to run up against the 3 per cent. limit of dividends paid in the year, we shall, of course re-examine the matter.

The resolution of international debt problems is inevitably a long-term matter. But we have come a long way since the crisis broke in 1982. It is significant that debt levels have stabilised. For the most heavily indebted middle-income countries—the so-called Baker 15—the total debt stock has fallen about 10 per cent. from its peak. It is also important to recognise that the systemic risk to the banking system has been averted. For example, the exposure of United States banks to least-developed countries has fallen from about 200 per cent. of their capital in 1982 to about 70 per cent. in 1988. For British banks, the figure has fallen from around 150 per cent. to 50 per cent. in the same period.

Let me refer to this country's record on debt strategy. I remind the House that we fully supported the strengthening of the debt strategy agreed by the IMF and World bank boards just over a year ago. The Brady plan, which has been referred to, has encouraged the process of debt reduction by the commercial banks. Progress has already been made. In particular, recent commercial bank agreements with Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Morocco, the Philippines and Venezuela involve significant debt and debt service reductions. A combination of debtor reform efforts and commercial bank debt reduction has helped improve confidence in debtor economies, perhaps most noticeably in Mexico where there has been some welcome return of flight capital.

Among middle-income countries, the bulk of whose debt is owed to the commercial banks, it is primarily for the debtors and their commercial creditors to resolve debt problems. I cannot accept that the taxpayer should be expected to bail out the banks. Among the poorest countries, whose debts are primarily to official creditors, Governments have a more prominent role. That is why the Government have paid a good deal of attention to the needs of such countries. The House will be familiar with what has been done. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), the previous Chancellor, launched an initiative which led to the adoption of Toronto terms, alluded to by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson), at the June 1988 summit. This recognised the need for relief on official debts for the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa. I am sure that we are all pleased that the Paris club has been implementing this initiative and that already about 18 countries have benefited from concessional rescheduling covering over $5 billion of debt. Additionally, the United Kingdom has written off nearly £1 billion of old aid loans and all our new aid to low-income countries is provided on grant terms. Some 70 per cent. of our aid goes to the world's 50 poorest countries and the recent Houston summit encouraged the Paris club to review the implementation of the existing options that apply to the poorest countries. It is worth quoting from paragraph 55 of the Houston communiqué:

> "Significant progress has been made during the past year under the strengthened debt strategy, which has renewed the resolve in a number of debtor countries to continue economic reforms essential to future growth."

Of course, private sector investment is also important, and in that regard the United Kingdom's record in the developing countries is of a high order. Only the United States and Japan are greater sources of foreign direct investment than we are. Nearly $10 billion of United Kingdom net direct investment went to developing countries between 1985 and 1988. Of course we try to encourage countries to remove restrictions on foreign direct investment, and many are now doing so.

The World bank has become increasingly environmentally sensitive in its project programme design, and the United Kingdom has encouraged and welcomed that development, playing a significant part in board discussions and initiating some time ago the desire for the World bank to become more environmentally sensitive. We are happy for commercial banks to engage in debt-for-nature swaps if they so choose. However, we think that official aid is better and more effectively used for directly financing environmental projects than for official participation in debt-for-nature swaps.

We must all be encouraged by the progress made in some countries with severe debt problems in getting to grips with a more market-oriented approach to economic policy-making. An example of that is the trade liberalisation in Mexico and Venezuela. Several countries, such as Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, are implementing

privatisation programmes. As in eastern Europe, there has been a growing recognition of the failure of centrist policies and the dangers of excessive fiscal deficits. If the shift towards more market-oriented reforms can be sustained and extended, many of those countries will be more likely to achieve the growth objectives for which they have been searching. No one understands that better than the majority of the politicians now running debtor countries, many of whom come to London for talks.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Central referred to Brazil. As it happens, Brazil's Finance Minister was in London yesterday, and it was clear from what she said that Brazil has made major strides towards becoming a more market-oriented economy along the lines that we have been discussing tonight.

7.15 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I apologise to the House if I have not been here for all the Economic Secretary's remarks. From his glancing reference to eastern Europe, I gather that he is concerned about the possibility that, now that there has been a change of regime in those countries and they are following more sensible market-led policies, they may be burdened with debt from the previous regime that ran their economies in an unsatisfactory way. Can the Minister offer any hope of a degree of "forgiveness" for the debts that countries such as Poland incurred under the previous regime?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend knows that we are doing a great deal to help Poland, which is one of the most severely indebted countries in the world. Although I have not visited Poland, I think that my hon. Friend has, as have some of my ministerial colleagues, who came back and said that the Poles recognised that the advice with which we have been able to provide the Polish Government on market-oriented reforms and privatisation is as valuable as any economic advice that they have received.

As my hon. Friend knows, the International Monetary Fund has been exceptionally helpful to Poland. The British Government play a full part in the councils of the IMF and the World bank, and will continue to do so. If my hon. Friend reads the communiqué of the Houston summit of 11 July 1990, he will find that there is no such commitment to Poland along the lines that he suggested, but paragraph 36 says:

"We commend the work done by the Commission of the European Communities on the coordination by the Group of 24 . . . of assistance to Poland and Hungary inaugurated at the Summit . . . which has made a significant contribution to helping these countries lay the foundation for self-sustaining growth based on market principles. We welcome the decision of the Group of 24 to enlarge the coordination of assistance to other emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia."

I understand why the Opposition have tabled the new clause, but I do not think that we can support it. It would be very costly——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I do not think that the Minister replied to the important question asked by the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman). The hon. Member asked about debt forgiveness, and the Minister referred to the Houston agreement and what was decided there. Why does not he answer the question directly? Why is it impractical to write off a part of Poland's debt that was incurred under a Government whom some might regard as fascist?

Mr. Ryder: As the hon. Gentleman knows, Poland is not the only country in eastern Europe—although it is by far the worst affected—to have been misruled by a communist regime, to the extent that it owes money to other people. It is our aim to ensure that all the countries of eastern Europe are treated fairly and in the same way. It would not be right to select one country for special treatment. That much was recognised by other countries in the Community, and was acknowledged at the economic summit meeting in Houston only last week.

Mr. Watson: The Minister referred to the need for a market-led economy to assist countries with vast foreign debts. He mentioned Brazil, as I did earlier. Brazil is massively in debt: I am not aware that it has ever—certainly in recent times—been anything other than a market-led economy. However, that has not stopped it having a low standard of living for the vast majority of its people, and building up a massive debt. Does the Minister agree that as long as Brazil—the sixth largest food exporter in the world—has 30 million people surviving on 1,600 calories a day, it is not just a question of a market-led economy, but a question of the debt that it is obliged to service and live with like a millstone round the neck?

Mr. Ryder: I take the hon. Gentleman's views seriously. During my discussions with the Brazilian Minister of Finance only yesterday, she told me that the new policies being followed by the Brazilian Government along a market-oriented path were encouraging more foreign investment and helping to put that economy on to a surer footing than it had been on in the past. That is true of many other countries in Latin and South America, which are following precisely the same policies.

The new clause could prove costly; I have put the figure at £350 million. I do not think that it will give the banks any new incentive to forgive debt, but it would have an adverse effect on the operation of clause 74, which already increases the relative attraction of debt reduction schemes by not phasing losses made on disposals back to the original borrower. We have pointed out for some time the scope for voluntary commercial debt reduction. The Government welcome the growing menu of options for the banks and the progress made under the strengthened debt strategy. Clause 74 already provides an adequate incentive to take part in debt reduction schemes, and I do not think that there is any need for the new clause.

During his speech, the hon. Member for Brent, South referred to Dr. Witteveen, and he saw a broad smile cross my face. Perhaps he thought that I was smiling because he had mispronounced "Witteveen". I do not know how it is pronounced, but Dr. Witteveen is the distinguished person responsible for drawing up the IMF plan when the Labour Government went broke in the 1970s. The hon. Member for Brent, South spoke warmly about some remarks of Dr. Witteveen. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman passed such kind remarks about Dr. Witteveen when he drew up the IMF agreement for Britain in 1976. I say that in a light spirit. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman—my favourite designer Jacobin from Brent—who has the last word in the debate, will explain that he supported Dr. Witteveen in 1976.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Is not it true that the British system of taxation relief is more generous than that of any other country and that our banks have provided against third world debt more extensively and at greater speed certainly than the United States of America banks have been able under their legislative regime, and more quickly than those under European legislation? Therefore, it seems strange that the new clause should be advanced on this Finance Bill.

Mr. Ryder: There has been a great deal of criticism of British banks by some—not all—Opposition Members, and I am certainly more than happy to confirm what my hon. Friend says. In view of the argument that he has just deployed, I am surprised that British banks come in for the amount of criticism that they often get from some Opposition Members. It is a pity that that is so. Most British banks are extremely keen to help developing countries. After all, they have lent a lot of money to those countries and they want to do everything that they can to get it paid back. It would be against their better interests to do anything else.

I hope that the hon. Member for Brent, South will feel able to withdraw the motion. However, I do not expect that he will. This is my final word in the passage of the Bill. It has been great fun to speak opposite the Labour Front Bench team. I much look forward to the Third Reading speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). I have heard his Third Reading speeches before. They are a turn that should not be missed. I hope that all my hon. Friends will rush into the Chamber when they see his name on the monitors.

Mr. Boateng: I should not want to be churlish after the valedicatory remarks of the Economic Secretary as we reach the end of the passage of the Bill. The Economic Secretary should be able—I am sure that he is—in relation to banks and their approach to third-world debt, to make a distinction between debt provision and debt relief. The act of provision is of no comfort to the developing world. The act of relief is of considerable comfort. We are seeking to encourage the banks to move from provision to relief. It is as simple as that. This modest new clause pushes, prods and encourages the banks along that route. Given the chance, several Opposition Members would prefer a little more stick and a little less carrot, but we recognise the strictures of the Ways and Means resolution.

As for the good Dr. Witteveen, I am now aware of the good doctor's somewhat chequered past, but it is a past in which he played a role in the economic history of our country. We have moved on. I do not envisage that his services will ever be required again by a Labour Government, and I do not intend to hold against him the fact that his services were required in the past. He is now a repository of considerable wisdom on the issue.

I commend to the current Economic Secretary more of what Dr. Witteveen had to say about the proposal, which we developed upon the basis of work done by Dr. Stephanie Griffiths-Jones of the institute of development studies at the University of Sussex. On her work and, therefore, the new clause, Dr. Witteveen said:

"Dr Griffiths-Jones has correctly pointed out that in most European countries provisions against country debt are tax deductible, so that no fiscal incentive remains for banks to actually reduce the debt of these countries. Her proposal to limit the tax deductibility to banks that participate in debt reduction plans seems quite reasonable to me. It seems a somewhat anomalous situation that in most European countries commercial banks have now built up provisions of more than 50% of their total country debt, which in many cases have been deducted from their taxable profits, while in the Brady Plan debt reductions of much smaller percentages are being proposed."

That goes directly to the heart of the new clause and approves it in circumstances in which the current level of provision is such as to warrant a measure of this nature.

The four major United Kingdom banks—Lloyds, Midland, NatWest and Barclays—made provision of £4,290 million in the past financial year. That is 55 per cent. of their cumulative provision in recent years. Ultimately those provisions would attract—it goes precisely to the point that was made by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells)—£1,501 million in tax relief, which is roughly equivalent to one year's aid budget. Those figures are astronomic. The new clause would address the challenge that they present to convert some of that provision into relief for countries most desperately in need.

At times during the Economic Secretary's speech there was a degree of complacency about the Government's record on overseas aid and development. It was a particularly unhelpful degree of complacency. In real terms we are donating less now than we did under the previous Labour Government. Let me reiterate the pledge that has been made by the Opposition time and again. We shall move, as a matter of priority, towards fulfilling the United Nations' objective. We shall not rest until 0·7 per cent. of our gross national product is devoted to overseas aid and development. That is the United Nations' objective, and we readily embrace it. It is one which, once again, has been commended by the World bank in terms that are directly in opposition to the implications of the speech of the Economic Secretary when he suggested that all that was really required—no, perhaps that is not entirely fair to the hon. Gentleman, when he suggested that what was required was largely that the developing world should embrace the rigours of the market and have a shot or two of privatisation.

7.30 pm

I am afraid that life is not as simple as that. We have learned in our own country that life is not as simple as that. Life is certainly not that simple in the developing world, which is precisely why the World bank's recent report made it clear that a two-pronged approach is now required. Yes, it should recognise the importance of restructuring the economies of the developing countries, but it should also recognise the importance of cushioning the shock of that restructuring with welfare plans that go hand in hand with that process. That makes sense. That is the pattern of development aid that the Opposition are promoting. We look to the Government to respond to the World bank's report. We pledge ourselves to a target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product because we recognise that if that were done, in conjunction with the rest of the developed world, as the World bank has asked us to do we would together have increased the flow of assistance to $144 billion by the year 2000 from its current shameful level of $51 billion. To do less is not good enough.

The Opposition are not complacent and we therefore intend to push our new clause to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 189, Noes 244.

Division No. 298] **[7.31 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter

Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.
Order for Third Reading read.

7.43 pm

Mr. Norman Lamont: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill has been less controversial than some of its illustrious predecessors. It has also been shorter. Nevertheless, it contains measures of substance, in particular on savings and for business. Debate on the Bill, both in Committee and on the Floor of the House, has been characterised by a spirit of co-operation and good will. I pay tribute to the work of my right hon. Friend who is now Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary for their skill and hard work in negotiating the Bill through Committee.

I am glad to say that the Bill has also benefited from several amendments tabled by both Conservative and Opposition Members. I am rather worried about the unity of the Opposition Front Bench team. When we debated ESOPs in Committee it was suggested that the doubts expressed by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) about the need to have a majority of worker trustees or a minimum transfer to employees were a bid to join the Conservative party. It seems that the hon. Gentleman has taken up that suggestion. In *The Daily Telegraph* of 6 July I found a short piece headed "Tory candidate". It reads:

"Mr. Nick Brown, 37,"—

I shall not comment on that—

" . . . has been selected as prospective Conservative parliamentary candidate for Derby South, held for Labour by Mrs. Margaret Beckett."

I knew that the hon. Gentleman was after a Treasury job, but I did not know that he was after the hon. Lady's job.

Mrs. Beckett: I think that I should correct the record. The gentleman in question is not my hon. Friend but a gentleman who runs a debt collection firm in the city of Derby.

Mr. Lamont: I am very grateful for that clarification.

The eloquence and persistence of my hon. Friends, notably my hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), were instrumental in the introduction of the new clause on actors. I hope that by giving tax relief for agents' fees the clause has gone some way towards allaying the fear that schedule E treatment would impose an unreasonable tax on performers.

I am also grateful to the Opposition Front Bench for technical amendments on child care and charities and to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) for a helpful amendment on ESOPs.

The Government have also introduced several new clauses and amendments since the Bill was read a Second time. Clauses 25 to 27 give effect to the proposals announced in the Budget to introduce gift aid. For a long time charities have asked for tax relief for one-off gifts to supplement the considerable reliefs that we have already introduced. We were glad to have been able to make a further extension to the reliefs available. It was suggested that the £600 minimum limit was too low. But I am sure that hon. Members will appreciate that it is not practical to give tax relief for all small one-off gifts to charities. Of course, the payroll giving scheme already offers tax relief for regular giving of small sums. Clause 24 raises the annual limit a further 25 per cent. to £600.

The levy on trust port privatisations, provided under clauses 114 to 119, was debated extensively both on the Floor of the House when we discussed the Ways and Means resolution and in Committee when several hon. Members tabled amendments. The trust ports are owned by the state, not by the Government, and it must be for Parliament to decide who should benefit from the proceeds of sale. As we said in Committee, it is, of course, a matter of judgment what proportion should go the Exchequer. I

explained in Committee that, in our view, a 50 per cent. levy on the proceeds of the sale both recognised the fair claim of the taxpayer and left plenty of money in the business and for the new shareholders. It will provide an appropriate return to the taxpayer for past investment in the ports while rewarding the considerable initiative of the port authorities in introducing private Bills and ensuring sufficient funds for new investment without giving the newly privatised ports a competitive advantage over their competitors.

Clause 30 and schedule 15, also introduced in Committee, provide for the abolition of composite rate tax from 1 April next year. The composite rate has been described as an abiding anomaly of the tax system. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has campaigned for a long time on this matter. It owed its existence to a long-running dispute between the Inland Revenue and the building societies in the latter half of the 19th century over whether and how tax should be collected from building society shareholders. CRT provided a compromise solution and came into effect in 1895. Sir Stafford Cripps proposed that it should be given a statutory basis in 1950, and this was effected in 1951 when Mr. Gaitskell was Chancellor.

Everyone would agree that the composite rate has had a good innings and, although its administrative advantages should not be underestimated, the rapid growth in depositors and a growing number of non-taxpayers, with the introduction of independent taxation, means that it is time for it to go. Removing CRT over such a short time scale has presented the Inland Revenue with a major programme of work. I should like to pay tribute to Revenue officials for their positive response and for the rapid progress they have already made in dismantling the composite rate system.

Abolition will benefit those savers who do not pay tax, a quarter of the population in all. Five million married women will gain, along with 4 million pensioners, 2½ million other adults, and 2½ million children.

The abolition of CRT will support and complement the other savings measures contained in the Bill. Clause 28 will ensure that TESSAs—tax-exempt special savings accounts—are available from banks and building societies from next January, offering savers the opportunity to invest up to £9,000 over five years, with interest entirely tax free if the capital is left undisturbed.

The beauty of TESSA is its simplicity and flexibility. We have had contractual savings schemes in the past, but they have always been considerably regulated, burdened by a plethora of rules and an interest rate determined by the Government. TESSA is different. The institutions will be free to offer competitive rates and savers will be able to take their interest in the way which suits them best—either in the form of a regular income, which will suit those retired, or rolling it up within the account, which the younger saver may prefer.

The advent of TESSA has received a wide welcome, even before the final details have been settled, and a number of banks and building societies have said that they will be participating. I believe TESSA will contribute towards encouraging the saving habit and that it will be the success it undoubtedly deserves to be.

The Bill does not, however, just benefit bank and building society depositors, important though they are. Savers through friendly societies will benefit from the 50 per cent. increase in the annual limit on premiums payable under tax-exempt life insurance policies.

Investors in equities will benefit from the abolition of stamp duty on shares, which gives Conservative Members particular pleasure. Stamp duty is an ancient tax dating back to 1714, the year of Queen Anne's death. I regret that it was introduced by a Tory Administration; and it has become increasingly anachronistic. It always seemed curious to me that, if one put one's money in a building society, one paid no tax, but if one put one's money into shares, one incurred an immediate loss on one's savings in the form of stamp duty. We have already halved this surcharge twice from the high level of 2 per cent. we inherited in 1979, but it is now time to take the final step. Abolition will help not only the direct investor in shares, but the tens of millions of people who save through the institutions, whether through pension funds, life assurance or unit trusts. It will also strengthen the competitive position of the City, which we all have in mind as we approach 1992.

The increase in personal equity plan limits and the ESOP measures included in the Bill will also widen share ownership. Clauses 31 to 40 will introduce capital gains tax deferral for sales of owners' shares to ESOP trusts, which have received support from Members in all parts of the House. The Committee debates this year and last on ESOPs were like a meeting of the ESOP appreciation society, with no one waxing more lyrical than the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East. Roll-over relief for sales to ESOP trusts will provide a further impetus to that special form of employee share ownership.

Taken together, the measures I have described add up to a major package for savers and form the centrepiece of the Bill. In the medium term, they could play an important role in ensuring balance between savings and investment, which we discussed in earlier debates. Of course, in the short run there is no substitute for monetary policy.

There is more to the Bill, however, than savings. It contains important measures for business which may not have been headline-grabbing measures since they were targeted at the smaller, less glamorous company. The rise in the profits limit for the small companies' rate of corporation tax to £200,000 and £1 million represents a doubling in two years. That will reduce the tax burden for 20,000 companies.

The simplification of VAT registration rules will be of particular benefit to smaller companies replacing three complicated turnover tests, which required companies to assess an uncertain future, with one simple test based on turnover over the past 12 months.

We have also tackled what many considered unduly onerous provisions concerning VAT relief for bad debts. Under the current scheme, bad debt relief is available only in the event of formal insolvency. The provisions in the Bill replace that for an automatic relief for debts which have been outstanding for two years. These proposals will save business £150 million in a full year, and have been widely welcomed. Indeed, as seems to be the case with much of the Bill, the main criticism, if any, is that we are not going far enough.

We appreciate the concern that has been expressed by hon. Members and outside organisations. There has been some suggestion that the two-year period is still too long and that it should be reduced. Clearly any line is somewhat arbitrary. We settled on two years in the light of the

[Mr. Lamont]

concern that there might be scope for abuse within a shorter time period. The other major concern was that some companies will have to wait somewhat longer for relief. That is true, but it is a cash-flow loss since they will get the relief in due course. No company is a cash loser from the scheme.

The issue of the tax treatment of the doubtful sovereign debt provoked a lot of heated and lengthy debate, which I am sure was fruitful. The purpose of the provisions, which were again debated today, is to provide a more certain method of calculating the tax deduction that can be made for doubtful sovereign debt and to smooth out further increases in the cost of relief to the Exchequer while preserving the principles on which tax relief is based.

Another measure that has provoked a lot of debate is the benefit-in-kind exemption for workplace nurseries. A number of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, argued for a broader relief. I believe that we have drawn the line correctly. In the past decade the dominant thrust of tax reform has been to widen the tax base. The more one does that, the lower one can set marginal rates. That remains our policy and we must not lose sight of that. It is a targeted relief, which is inexpensive. In removing the small existing obstacle, we have simplified the system and given a small push to employers to provide more nurseries.

This is the fourteenth Finance Bill introduced by the Government. It builds on our record of tax reform and includes a series of measures for savings and giving. It will also encourage wider share ownership and help business. I commend it to the House.

7.58 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): First, I congratulate the Financial Secretary to the Treasury on his promotion. He carried the main burden of work for the Government, as the Financial Secretary always does, when steering the Finance Bill through Committee. I am sure that I am giving away no secrets when I say that many of my hon. Friends predicted a move for him.

I can understand the Prime Minister's thinking in this matter. She emerged beleaguered from her bunker, eyes glazed and fixed, staring at eastern Europe. Looking around her dwindling band of loyal, fanatical right-wing supporters she picked the most Teutonic-looking she could find, pinched him on the cheek and sent him off to his new post to hold out for as long as he could.

I am genuinely sorry that the Financial Secretary is leaving Treasury affairs and I offer him two helpful pieces of advice for his new job. First, be nice to the Germans. Secondly, and perhaps closer to home, look out for the Scots.

In our approach to the Bill, the members of the parliamentary Labour party have been conscious, as we were last year, of the views and advice of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the fact that the details of the Bill are not scrutinised in the other House. That places a heavy burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the Opposition, and I include in that the hon. Members for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). We tackled that burden in a thorough and carefully researched way.

The Chief Secretary referred to some of the changes that we managed to make to the Bill. It is important for the House to remember that the composition of the Committee reflects the composition of the House. It is therefore not possible for the parliamentary Labour party —although we tried hard—to get its way with amendments by force of votes. We have to persuade the Government of our case rather than outnumber their supporters. It reflects enormous credit on the work that my hon. Friends put in that we managed to achieve so many changes to the Bill. I will take the House through a few of them.

Clause 25, which relates to gift aid, is perhaps the most significant single example that I could cite. As originally drafted, that clause would have allowed any individual who made a qualifying gift aid donation to escape all higher rate tax for that year. Although the Government voted against our attempted reforms in Committee, they finally conceded on Report that they had made an error and accepted our amendment No. 41.

If that error had become known and used by the majority of higher rate taxpayers, it could have cost the British Exchequer a substantial sum, possibly as much as £4 billion, and potentially even more in the absence of retrospective correcting legislation. I believe that such correcting legislation would have been almost inevitable. When the Chief Secretary, in the run up to the next general election, tries to add up the Opposition's public expenditure programme and attempts to cram everything that we propose to do into year one and make it look as expensive as he can, I hope that he will have the decency to deduct from that vast and undoubtedly massively overstated total the money that we have saved the Inland Revenue with amendments of that sort.

When we discussed clauses 31 to 40—the provisions relating to ESOPS—there was a consensus in the Committee. ESOPS has its supporters on all sides. A number of drafting points arose, which were successfully addressed by the Opposition and the Government accepted our case. As originally drafted, those clauses would have allowed many substantial sales of shareholdings in companies with ESOPS to be carried out free of tax. That could have been achieved by selling the shares at full market value to ESOPS and investing the proceeds in assets on which, in practice, no chargeable gain would have arisen when they were sold. Private homes and BES shares were the two major examples.

We referred on the Floor of the House to the loophole in relation to private homes, and soon afterwards the Government tabled new clauses 14 and 15 to close it. The cost of that error, if uncorrected, may be difficult to assess because it would have required greater use to be made of statutory ESOPS, but it is clear that within a few years the abuse could have led to a substantial loss to the Revenue. It is right that the parliamentary Labour party should play its part in ensuring that such errors are corrected.

When we discussed TESSA and SAYE we found that, as originally drafted, the TESSA legislation would have stopped banks and building societies deducting for corporation tax purposes the interest paid on TESSA accounts. The Government accepted our point in Committee. Yesterday, on Report, the error was corrected. The Government also realised that the SAYE rules, on which the TESSA rules were based, must have

been similarly flawed for the past 20 years or more. They introduced amendment No. 19, at least in part retrospectively, to correct the flaw.

Many other matters were successfully addressed by the Opposition. When we discussed gift aid we suggested that a de minimis limit should be set. The idea was rejected, reconsidered and finally implemented. That correction was made yesterday by Government amendments Nos. 11, 12 and 15. We also suggested that the word "payment" in the gift aid clauses was not wholly clear. In response to our representations on that, the Government clarified the Bill.

The Chief Secretary referred to the extensive debate that we had, in which the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) took part, about the tax treatment of actors. Our pressure, combined with pressure from Conservative Members, gained from the Government a concession that was introduced in new clause 7. Actors who may be following these matters should reflect that the parliamentary Labour party turned up in full strength to vote for a new clause to secure the concession. We would have voted for a new clause standing in the name of the hon. Member for Beaconsfield had we had the opportunity to do so and we tried to create such an opportunity by attempting to prevent the hon. Gentleman from withdrawing his proposal, but he did not feel able to stand by his guns. Had he done so and carried two or three of his hon. Friends with him, the concessions could have gone even further.

On the question of personal tax returns, there was unanimity in part on the points that we made in Committee because the views that my hon. Friends and I expressed were echoed by some Conservative Members. Those efforts gained from Government amendment No. 24. The point of our amendment was expressly to limit the inspector's power to ask for extra information to accompany individuals' tax returns. In other words, we limited it to information relevant to the individual's tax liability. Our purpose was to prevent fishing expeditions —a practice that we regard as undesirable—and a number of Conservative Members agreed with us on that.

We persuaded the Government to amend the clause dealing with child care. It would be wrong of me not to refer to a success that was achieved from the Opposition Back Benches. My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey), supported by hon. Members on both sides, pressed the Government to backdate the reduction in the rate of pool betting duty and this was agreed to by the Government.

The Bill as drafted was amended substantially in Committee and again yesterday on the Floor of the House. The main reason for so many changes being made was that the Bill was sloppier in its drafting this year than had been the case with Finance Bills in the previous two years. No clause exemplified that more than the clause dealing with waste disposal, which we discussed at length, the Opposition desiring not to allow to go through uncorrected that which ought to be corrected. As originally drafted, the clause was a disaster and would have been virtually unworkable. The suggested changes, recommended largely by the industry, were reflected in a huge number of amendments, many of them in identical terms, tabled by the Government, by the Opposition and by Conservative Back-Bench Members. It must be almost unprecedented for a Government to table seven amendments to one short clause of a Finance Bill in Committee to correct appalling drafting. A total of 35 amendments tabled to such a clause, of which 33 were designed to correct drafting errors, must be an all-time record.

I should like to place on record our thanks to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman), who chaired our proceedings in such a good-natured way and facilitated our discussions. I am sure that that view is shared by Conservative Members. I should also like to thank my hon. Friends who came on to the Finance Bill Committee and gave us such support. I hope that I do my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) no harm in expressing my thanks for her loyal support to those on the Labour Front Bench. I should also like to thank my hon. Friends the Members for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), who is my next door neighbour, for Vauxhall, for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), and for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson), all of whom played their part in supporting us in our successes on the Bill, for which I am grateful.

I am saddened, as I know that we all are, not to have had the services of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), who acts as the usual channels for the Labour party—a duty that seems to have fallen on my shoulders by default on the part of everybody else who let me do it. I know that hon. Members on both sides will wish my hon. Friend a speedy recovery from his back injury.

I understand the restraints placed on Conservative Members during the course of the Bill, but I am surprised that Conservative Finance Bill Committee Members have not been taking part in today's debates on the Floor and did not take part in yesterday's debates. It is often said that Back Benchers on the Government side are wanted for their bodies, not their minds—an appalling prospect, but there it is—and that was nowhere more evident than during the discussion on clause 74. The largest rebellion on the Conservative side came in relation to that clause, which deals with the tax treatment of banks' sovereign debt. The division in the Committee was clear cut—Labour Members spoke for the third world, and Conservative Back Benchers spoke for the banks. Three of those Conservative Members, as two of them properly declared, have financial interests in banking. The banks involved are the Saudi International bank, Morgan Grenfell, a merchant bank, and the Standard Chartered bank.

Hon. Members will be asking who those Tories are. Like other Conservatives, they have certain characteristics that we can identify from the past and expect to find in future. It is easier and more pertinent to the present discussion to think of their less happy characteristics, such as the insensitivity to others' feelings which was most noticeable in their behaviour on clause 74 when dealing with the debts of overseas Governments, their obsession with themselves, their strong inclination to self-pity and their longing to be liked. Some even less flattering characteristics can be attributed to those Conservatives as an abiding part of their character—in alphabetical order, angst, aggressiveness, assertiveness, bullying, egotism, inferiority complex and sentimentality. Two further aspects may be cited as reasons for concern about those people. The first is their capacity for excess—they love to overdo things and kick over the traces, as I am sure that the Chief Secretary will recognise. Secondly, they have a

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

tendency to overestimate their own strengths and capabilities, and so it came to pass when we voted. I am sure that the Government will be grateful to me for that penetrating analysis and I hope that it will help them with their management of future Finance Bills.

Before leaving the Conservative party's performance on the Bill, I must say a word about the performance of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. As the House has discovered, this is the third Finance Bill on which I have served and I am probably the Chief Secretary's greatest fan, although certainly not his only one. I admire his rumbustious performances in Committee and his command of the detail. In Committee he showed us how the Financial Secretary's job used to be done when he had the job—taking in washing and carrying out duties for the Secretary of State for Transport—in the exciting debate that we had on the clauses relating to privatised docks.

The Chief Secretary brought back memories for me and for many of my hon. Friends who have served on such Committees before. He did the job well, with style and panache, but I hope that as the job is vacant he will not get it back: the Opposition have a different candidate for the post of Financial Secretary. Given that the Chief Secretary unaccountably ruled me out in his opening remarks, I think that the Opposition would vote for the Economic Secretary to get the job. Conservative Members will have to make up their own minds whether I am entirely sincere in putting forward for the post a person whose ability and decency in dealing with the Bill has won him genuine friends among the Opposition, or whether by recommending him I am seeking to destroy the chances of anyone competent getting the job in the hope that a less able person will be chosen instead. I leave the matter ambiguous so as to achieve the result that I want.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Who does the hon. Gentleman want for the leader of the Liberal party?

Mr. Brown: I will see about that next year.

We have scrutinised the Bill in some detail and we have had some successes. We have relied heavily on our advisers and I think that the Government recognise that we have been well served by the whole of our team of advisers this year. I know that my colleagues on the Front Bench and my parliamentary colleagues who served with me on the Bill would like me to put on record our particular thanks to Mr. Steve Tovey, who had acted as our principal adviser. The advice that we have received has been of a high calibre and Mr. Tovey's diligence, hard work and sheer professionalism mean that it is he and not we who should take the credit for our successes with the Bill. That credit rightly belongs to him, while the blame for the Bill's shortcomings rightly rests with the Government.

8.18 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): We have just listened to a most agreeable speech from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). This has so far been a most agreeable debate. It will be a matter of deep regret to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it is to me, that we were not members of the Standing Committee. I have not served on the Standing Committee of the Finance Bill since the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) was Financial Secretary to the Treasury. Then we had agreeable Standing Committees on the Finance Bill and the right hon. Gentleman, who, characteristically, is in his place, made a deep impression on the Standing Committee, as did my right hon. Friend the former Financial Secretary on this Standing Committee.

We are coming to the end of the annual ritual of the Finance Bill. It starts on Budget day when the Red Book is published. In less than two hours, this Finance Bill will have completed its journey through the House. An agreeable ritual accompanies the Finance Bill, and it is clear that the good will in Standing Committee has been extended to the Third Reading debate.

I shall address my remarks to only one aspect of the Finance Bill. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made it clear again and again that the overriding objective of the Government is to defeat inflation. Let us note how the military metaphors always apply to inflation. One may wonder what the Finance Bill has to do with defeating inflation. It has nothing whatever to do with the Government's monetary policy, but it has a great deal to do with their fiscal policy.

In each of the past three years there has been a substantial public sector debt repayment, and I warmly welcome that. The first of those three years was the first time there had been a repayment of debt since Lord Jenkins of Hillhead was Chancellor of the Exchequer. His achievement gave rise to admiration among many of my right hon. and hon. Friends. It fell to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) to fashion the first of three successive Budgets which repaid debt—a policy greatly to be admired and one continued in this Finance Bill.

The Finance Bill provides for a statement, made on 20 March, of public sector debt repayment for this financial year of a further £7 billion. I thought at the time that that target was not high enough. The excise duties should have been increased further than they were. Although less than four months have elapsed since my right hon. Friend presented his Budget to the House, the truth is that the estimate that he then made of public sector debt repayment for this financial year has already proved to have been too optimistic. That is not just my view; the Treasury also believes that there is a real likelihood that the public sector debt repayment outturn for this financial year will be less than the Chancellor forecast on 20 March.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Will the hon. Gentleman concede that the Treasury is borrowing money at the moment and that although there may be a net repayment by the end of the year it may prove to be small; and that there could even be net public sector borrowing by the end of the financial year?

Mr. Gow: As the forecast by my right hon. Friend less than four months ago appears to have been too optimistic about the size of the public sector debt repayment, and as Treasury forecasts made by people, however eminent, have turned out in the past to be dramatically different —*[Laughter.]* I see that I carry the House with me. I hope that I am carrying Treasury Ministers with me. I am asserting the plain truth, acknowledged in the Red Book. Treasury forecasting is about as accurate as some of the weather forecasting that we receive—it is wildly out.

The Red Book is littered with commitments to defeat inflation. For hon. Members who may think that I am exaggerating, I offer paragraph 1:

"The objectives of the Government's economic policy are to defeat inflation."

Paragraph 2 states:

"The central objective of the Medium Term Financial Strategy is the defeat of inflation."

My right hon. Friend the former Financial Secretary then goes on to list the evils that flow from inflation, and I could not have put them better myself. I am pleased that the Economic Secretary is in his place; he is the architect of our monetary policy. I am glad that he has shown his characteristic courtesy by coming in, but in any case this is what the Financial Secretary said:

"Inflation damages the economy by increasing uncertainty, discouraging investment and reducing profitability. The social effects of inflation are no less destructive. Inflation redistributes income and wealth arbitrarily and capriciously."

I agree. One might have hoped, in view of that powerful and accurate analysis of the evils that flow from inflation, that the policy would have been more effective than it has been.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will be given leave to address the House again because I want to remind him, and the Economic Secretary, and the Lord Commissioner, who also has some responsibility for these matters, of what our party said in its previous two election manifestos——

Mrs. Beckett: What about the next one?

Mr. Gow: It is not yet fashioned. It will be interesting to see whether the same commitments made in 1983 and 1987 are repeated in 1992. The hon. Lady and I will be watching for that with the keenest anticipation.

I do not want to go back too far, but it is fair to go back to 1983, when we said:

"In the next Parliament, we shall endeavour to bring inflation lower still. Our ultimate goal should be a society with stable prices."

In 1987 the manifesto said:

"The Conservative Government will continue to put the conquest"—

note the military metaphor—

"of inflation as our first objective. We will not be content until we have stable prices with inflation eradicated altogether."

If my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary would like to intervene, I shall give way to him—but I see that he would not. So he does not quarrel with those words, upon which he and I fought the last election.

Another matter which appears in the Red Book is the exchange rate mechanism. On page 22, the following words appear:

"Tight monetary and fiscal policies will be maintained . . . The Government sees membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism . . . once its conditions have been met, as complementary to the MTFS policy framework."

If we join the exchange rate mechanism and by doing so we agree to use our best endeavours to keep sterling within a certain narrow range as compared, in effect, with the deutschmark—although my hon. Friend the Minister will say that it is compared with a basket of currencies—and if sterling appreciates so that it is in danger of going above the higher parameter that has been set, and if my right hon. Friends are then obliged to abate interest rates, what will happen to inflation 18 months to two years later? That is the drama with which the Treasury will be faced if we join the ERM, because the Government have said that they want to abolish fixed exchange rates and move to a floating exchange rate, and that is what we have done—apart from the period when my right hon. Friend the former Chancellor was shadowing the deutschmark. Apart from that, we have said that we want a floating exchange rate. The moment that we join the exchange rate mechanism we shall go back to precisely that policy which hitherto the Conservative party has rejected.

No doubt there are advantages in joining the exchange rate mechanism, but I advise caution on the part of the Treasury and the Lord Commissioner, who studies these matters with great care.

I shall vote with enthusiasm for the Third Reading of the Bill, although I think that the Government's fiscal stance is not tight enough. We could have borne down heavily upon inflation because the key elements in defeating it are tight monetary policy and a tight fiscal stance. The Bill should provide for higher excise duties, especially because the Chancellor's estimate of £7 billion for the public sector debt repayment is likely to be less.

I hope that the Treasury will reaffirm our commitment to persevere with the policy of abating inflation until that evil is finally removed from our economy, which in recent years has shown that it is peculiarly resistant to our attempts to defeat inflation.

8.30 pm

Mr. Beith: The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), with whom I do not always agree, spoke about inflation and the role of fiscal policy in dealing with it. He is right that when we are in the exchange rate mechanism, which the Government intend to join, interest rates will not be readily available as a tool of economic management for other purposes. It follows that what the hon. Gentleman said about the Bill will be even more relevant to future Chancellors as they consider what part the level of taxation should play in controlling demand in the economy.

Like the hon. Gentleman, I think that the Government were mistaken in their assumptions about the necessary level of taxation this year. Future Governments who say that there will be no increase in taxation, or that it will continue to fall until income tax is 20p in the pound, will be ignoring the position in the exchange rate mechanism. They may seek their objective by taxes other than income tax, such as excise duties or VAT, but there are certain dangers in that course. Fiscal policy will become more, not less, important when we are members of the ERM.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne talked about the military metaphors that are applied to inflation. At the end of his speech he unwisely slipped into non-military terminology—the rather soft, peace corps terminology that the Government have started to use about inflation—when he talked about "bearing down" upon inflation. It is possible to bear down on something which is still going up and which will continue to go up. That conjures up the picture of a person throwing himself over the fuselage of a well-fuelled ascending aircraft in the vain hope that he can arrest its ascent by his weight. There is no sign that the process of bearing down is stopping inflation from rising. We are a long way from stable prices and zero inflation.

The other member countries of the ERM, and the Federal Republic of Germany in particular, are nearer to stable prices and the achievement of zero inflation. What do they have in addition to fiscal policy and the other mechanisms that we might seek to use? They use all sorts of measures to which the hon. Member for Eastbourne and the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry are most hostile, such as a central bank with autonomous

[Mr. Beith]

responsibility for price stability. I cannot understand why Conservative Members who care deeply about inflation do not recognise the success of the mechanisms that they are so prone to criticise.

Several hon. Members have privately said to me that the Bill is boring. That in itself is not a criticism, because it is not the purpose of legislation to provide entertainment for legislators. If some of the exciting Bills this Session had not gone through the world would be a better place and Britain would be a better country. The poll tax Bill provided plenty of excitement, but now it is all misery for our constituents. Being boring is not in itself a bad feature of legislation. It is possible for legislation to be worthy as well as boring—as is this Bill in some respects.

The Bill proposes tax-exempt saving schemes and the abolition of composite rate taxation, about which the Chief Secretary was kind enough to say that I have campaigned for a long time. If he had started on that road a year ago he would not have had the awkward transitional year of independent taxation before composite rate taxation is abolished. In that year it is in people's interest, and especially in the interests of married women, to take offshore bank and building society accounts because the composite rate taxation scheme is not yet in place. It seems much more sensible to proceed more quickly to the removal of composite rate taxation. Nevertheless, I welcome this long overdue tax reform and I am pleased that it is in the Bill.

I welcome the use of tax changes in the Budget to improve safety at football grounds. We would have liked the Government to go further and bring an end to the removal by the Exchequer of so much money each year from amateur sport. Some Labour Members supported us in the Lobby yesterday. I am not sure of the precise number, but we were not supported by all those Labour Members who were present. That was disappointing.

I welcome the proposals on third world debt, although they are but a small part of what needs to be done. We need much more official debt cancellation and there is obviously a need for the measures that we discussed earlier to increase the incentive on banks to write off or sell private sector debt.

I also welcome the proposals on employee share ownership and I hope that the useful improved tax incentives will make the system more attractive. It is striking that the statutory basis for employee share ownership still has so many features that make it an unpopular means to the desirable extension of employee share ownership.

The Government's proposals on workplace nurseries created a ripple of excitement when they were first announced. However, they make a paltry contribution to child care. By themselves the proposals are not logical. The Chief Secretary keeps saying that help is targeted, but it is not. The measure will assist that limited number of women who work in industries and factories that have workplace nurseries. There is nothing well targeted about it and it will not help any especially deserving group of women. I am glad that there is to be tax relief, but I should like to see it much more widely extended by the sort of voucher tax relief that I proposed yesterday and in earlier debates on the Bill and which Labour did not support. That would attract money from employers to child care more effectively than the workplace nursery proposal could ever do. That is for the obvious reason that workplace nurseries are simply not appropriate for large sections of the retail trade, for the whole of small business and for many industries.

The Government are quite wrong in their approach to the port levy. They have introduced what they say is a 50 per cent. tax on the privatisation ports. However, most people in the industry say that in practice the tax will be much larger, partly because it is combined with other tax liabilities and partly because it is assessed at market value. If ports seek to place their shares in local communities or in local institutions to keep the money in their own regions rather than seeing it all go to the Exchequer, they will be taxed as though they had not done so. That will discourage ports with a sense of responsibility to their areas from taking the privatisation route. At the moment only two ports are going through the process. If there had been only one perhaps the Finance Bill would have been ruled as hybrid. That would have made an interesting change to our proceedings.

The Chief Secretary has said that if other ports seek privatisation through the private Bill procedure and manage to devise schemes which ensure that more resources are available for the port and the improvement of the infrastructure in the area round the port, he will introduce retrospective legislation to make sure that those ports pay the full 50 per cent. That is an unusual undertaking by the Government. It is a deliberate disincentive to the devising of schemes by which resources that have been largely contributed by local communities and through local effort and enterprise could be retained in those areas.

The Chief Secretary said that a 50 per cent. or greater levy was a reasonable rate of return on the Government's investment in the ports—*[Interruption.]* He said that, and I wrote it down. Frankly, if the Government were offering any savings instrument that created a return of 1,000 per cent. or more—which will be the Government's return on their investment in the ports—there would be queues outside every post office in the land to buy such remarkable savings certificates. The Government are obtaining a nice rake-off because they think that there is money that no one appears officially to own. That money would be better used improving the roads and the rail services to the ports and in freeing those who have to live round the ports from environmental and other pressures created by the expansion of those ports.

There are omissions from the Bill. There is little on environmental aspects other than further measures on the taxation of cars as a benefit. However, it is still more tax-efficient to buy a married woman a car than to provide her with child care facilities. That is a strange sort of level playing field—a phrase that the Government are so fond of using—but I recognise that the Government have gone some way along that road, although they need to go further. A great deal more could have been done, such as tax incentives for catalytic converters, reform of the vehicle excise duty, help for industries involved in recycling, incentives for recycling, and so on. Instead, the Government are sitting around awaiting proposals from the Secretary of State for the Environment that will come at a time when they cannot be introduced until, at the earliest, next year's Finance Bill.

The Committee proceeded in the most cordial atmosphere, and I am sure that it would have co-operated

if the Government had seized the opportunity to introduce new clauses to deal with the appalling circumstances presented by the poll tax. If the Government had suggested major changes that would have brought immediate relief this year and paved the way for getting rid of the tax next year, I am sure that the Opposition would have co-operated to ensure that such clauses were passed quickly into law. The Bill could have tackled other issues, such as the integration of income tax and the national insurance system and the reform of capital taxation. However, those will have to wait for another day.

The Finance Bill has been a sideshow to the economic divisions within the Government. While we were debating the details of taxation, the Chancellor was not gracing our proceedings. Even the Chief Secretary must, at times, have been distracted by the arguments within the Government about whether and when we should join the exchange rate mechanism, European monetary union and what the Governor of the Bank of England said about how he views the role of the Bank of England. All that culminated, in the closing stages of the Bill, in the promotion of the Financial Secretary to Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He kindly stayed in his Treasury post to complete the Bill. I do not know whether he has been paid two salaries for the three days that he has performed his two roles. His departure symbolises the chaos within the Government over the most fundamental features of economic policy and which made the whole of the Finance Bill look like a minor sideshow.

8.44 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that the Committee had proceeded in a cordial atmosphere. All who served on it would agree that, in the main, there was a cordial atmosphere. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said, the Budget was a most impressive start to that procedure. It must have been an extremely difficult task for a new Chancellor, at a difficult time, to introduce exactly the right Budget that was needed by the nation. There is little doubt that the general impression given not only by the Chancellor but by the economic pundits was that it was a skilful Budget, clearly and cleverly presented.

I am pleased that the Committee generally continued in that atmosphere. However, it is strange that the Opposition claimed that Conservative Members were only Lobby fodder, subservient to their masters, yet on the one occasion that there was a major debate involving Conservative Members they complained, as though only Opposition Members had the right to speak. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) is present, and he was one of those who spoke at extreme length on that occasion.

The Finance Bill was delicately steered through the Committee by the Government team. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary was extremely well served by my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), now the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He showed the most marvellous lightness of touch through some of the long hours of debate. If Conservative Members had been as subservient as was suggested by the Opposition, it might be thought that the Government Whip had had an easy time. In fact, he had the most difficult and delicate task in keeping order when discussing certain matters in which Conservative Members had either an expert or a particular interest. I assure him that he has kept his friends on the Committee, and the compromises accepted by the Government were most welcome.

The Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen were noted for, more than anything, their breadth of knowledge and of selection of individuals. It was one of the largest Front-Bench teams of any Committee. They are a most attractive bunch of people——

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): That is not how I would describe them.

Mr. Hanley: I think that their variety was attractive. In the main, the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen were well humoured and there was only one occasion on which we sat until 2 am. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) served his party's interests well. He is respected on both sides of the House. However, one man's brief introduction is another man's filibuster. After he had spoken for many hours, Conservative Members had the feeling that it was just the beginning of a much longer speech. The Opposition were almost cheating in employing him on their team because he could always be called upon to give a speech that Conservative Members would take a fortnight to prepare and at least a week to deliver.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my hon. Friend recall those vivid moments, which lasted for some six hours, when just one amendment from me provoked three and a half hours of debate? That shows the reticence and the skill of Conservative Members in taking three or four minutes to propose an amendment. It also shows the flowery language of Opposition Members.

Mr. Hanley: I suggest that my hon. Friend watches his back as he walks home tonight. Many of us had forgotten that it was his fault that the debate lasted for so long that evening. I am amazed at his honesty. I was wondering who the swine was. That might be unparliamentary language, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but had you been there on that occasion I am sure that you would share my vocabulary. My hon. Friend was brief in introducing his measure, just as many of us were because we had to get through the business.

I hope that the Opposition will not blame me for picking out one hon. Member, but I particularly enjoyed the maiden performances on the Labour Front Bench by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), who worked hard on what was clearly a most unfamiliar brief. We must welcome also the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), whose Geordie twang rang regularly round the Committee Room with great good humour.

I should like to refer to some of the milestones in the Bill. It is consistent with the Government's policy that we should create an economy in which individuals have a greater choice over the use of most of their income. They should choose how to spend their money and should be guided in spending it responsibly. There are two ends to that. First, we should not encourage people to borrow money. I believe that the current interest rate policy, although unfortunate and difficult for many, is necessary. Secondly, we should encourage people to give if they have a surplus. There is no doubt that the growing spirit of charitable giving, which is welcome, has been well rewarded by the Government.

[Mr. Hanley]

The move to increase payroll giving from £480 to £600 a year is extremely constructive. It is disgraceful that Members of Parliament who so regularly castigate the Government for not giving enough to charity, for whatever cause they espouse, set a miserable example. Hon. Members will say that Members of Parliament must meet many expenses out of their meagre incomes—*[Interruption.]* There are no flies on me—well, there is one near me at present. There are 650 Members of Parliament who receive a regular salary for their work in the House. Fewer than 50 make deductions under the payroll giving scheme. It is not difficult to make such deductions. If Members of Parliament made deductions, they would benefit many charities of their choice, and there is a rich variety to which they could give. They could take advantage of the taxation savings by giving and they would set an example to people outside. Payroll giving is one of the most hopeful aspects of recent Budgets, but hon. Members should set an example.

Gift aid is hopeful for charities. In *The Independent* on 21 March, after the Budget, the Charities Aid Foundation said that the Budget was "a major breakthrough" and "a charities bonanza". It is a charities bonanza only if people take up the inspiration that the Government have given and if they give. That gift aid amounts to £600 or more up to a total of £5 million per donor. I hope that a new spirit of giving will result from the Government's contribution to the taxation system. I welcome the extension with respect to corporation tax.

This is a savings Budget, not just a giving Budget. Surely savings must be the main focus for it. The tax-exempt special savings accounts are a good way of encouraging people to save money in the medium term. An even better measure was the announcement that composite rate tax would go. There is always something miserable about a taxation system that is so inflexible that it makes those who should not under any normal system pay tax have to suffer a deduction. The fact that children who saved their pocket money and elderly people who saved a few pence and pounds suffered by saving safely was a miserable part of our previous taxation system. It has taken a Government of vision and generosity to get rid of composite rate tax so that those on low incomes and those with small savings can make the most of their deposits. The Government's move came as a surprise to the House, but it was totally consistent with the Budget's savings angle.

Personal equity plans have not always been a tremendous success because of the downturn in the market, with Black Monday just two short years ago.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): My hon. Friend speaks from personal experience.

Mr. Hanley: I speak from personal experience. It is one thing to have tax-free income and tax-free gains, but it can be a disadvantage to find that one has losses against which one cannot claim. No one ever said that investments always go up. Personal equity plans are a sensible way of saving money. They help to introduce the stock exchange and its ways to the smaller saver and to spread risk. I believe that this is an extremely good scheme. I know of the personal interest of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary in the creation of PEPs, and I pay him full credit for that.

The annual limit on investment in qualifying unit and investment trusts will be increased from £2,400 to £3,000 and the limit for non-qualifying unit and investment trusts will be increased from £750 to £900. That is sensible and will help to reduce the risk in these investments. PEPs are not for everyone—there is no doubt about that. That is why the abolition of composite rate tax is such a wise move.

I disagree with some parts of the Budget. The threshold for inheritance tax has been increased in line with statutory indexation from £118,000 to £128,000. Most people who think of inheritance tax believe that it is right to tax wealth when a person dies. There is, however, one item which does not make one say that a family is wealthy but which on a death may give rise to a high payment of inheritance tax—the family home—*[Interruption.]* I wonder whether the fly has now departed.

Mr. Boateng: No, it is going towards the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hanley: As I am talking about inheritance tax, this may be relevant. What happens to a family which has lived in a home for some time and in which the children may be of adult age but not earning? It is a great tragedy that, as a result of the death of the second parent, the family should have to sell the family home. The value of homes now is often higher than £128,000, which is the maximum for inheritance tax. I know that there are ways of giving the house inter vivos, but an exemption should be introduced to allow children, while remaining in a home, to be exempt from the payment of inheritance tax, not only by paying by instalments, but by being wholly exempt for at least a time.

I regret the taxation of actors. We are, of course, talking not about actors in general, as so many hon. Members seem to think, but about the taxation of new actors in the theatre only. I am talking not about people who act in films or on television, or those who have been acting for more than the past three years. The Bill affects the newest and lowest paid in the lowest-paid part of the profession. I regret the introduction of this tax, although I understand the general trend in the Inland Revenue for calculating schedule E rather than schedule D in certain cases. I sympathise with the feeling of my right hon. Friend the Economic Secretary that such a tax had to be introduced this year and I am pleased that a genuine and major concession was introduced thanks to the new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), supported by many colleagues.

It is typical of their approach to the Bill that the Government listened carefully to the arguments for many of the new clauses and amendments. I tabled a number of amendments, some of them on behalf of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. There was no blanket rejection of any amendment. The vast majority of them were picked up by the Government, considered carefully and sometimes reintroduced in words that were more acceptable.

The Government gave way on a number of Opposition amendments and accepted the Opposition's suggestions. I pay tribute to the research that has been afforded to the Labour party. Many of the Opposition's amendments

were non-political. Let us be fair: they were technical amendments and showed the depth of the research available to the Labour party. It is only right that Conservative Members should pay tribute where errors have been corrected and where a Bill has basically been improved by work, from wherever that work has been funded or from whatever source it has been derived.

The blind person's allowance will double to £1,080 at an annual cost of only about £2 million. That may seem a small amount, but it is a large improvement for people who deserve even more generous treatment. I am grateful for that.

We have had the final confirmation of the introduction of separate taxation for women. That is a milestone in the history of taxation. The fact that married women can now have total privacy in taxation affairs is very important. It is the only decent step for a Government to take and the fact that it has been introduced and carried through by this Government is a matter of pride to me. The independent taxation of women represents the removal of one of the last shackles on women. A married man, for example, was entitled to receive a tax rebate on money that had been paid by his wife through her PAYE if she had made an overpayment of tax, and there was nothing in law to make the husband pay that money back to her. That is how we treat chattels. It is only right that the party that first created a woman as its leader—*[Laughter.]*—that first created a woman as its leader and first gave a woman the opportunity to be Prime Minister was the first to give women true independence in taxation affairs. That is a great tribute to this party and to this Government.

9.2 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): It was a great revelation to hear that the Conservatives created women.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Just one.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, just one.

Mr. Home Robertson: And they got it wrong.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, they got it wrong in that instance.

I am sorry that I cannot join in the camaraderie which has pervaded this debate. One of the main reasons is that I was not a member of the Committee on the Bill—which has certain benefits—although I pay tribute to my hon. Friends and to Conservative Members who were. I know that they carry out an arduous chore. The other reason why I cannot join the general camaraderie is the nature of the Bill itself. There is almost nothing in the Bill that is relevant to our main economic problems. There is a lack of investment in the future, despite the continuing North sea oil boom—about £83 billion over the past 11 years. There is a lack of skills training, a continuing rundown of our welfare state and national health service, and growing public squalor in transport, education and environment. The Bill does nothing to address those problems and is a consequence of a peculiarly poor Budget.

The Chief Secretary mentioned wider share ownership. There are more individual share owners but there is a greater concentration of shares within the major companies—a greater concentration of power in fewer hands. It is significant that the Chief Secretary did not talk about wider home ownership. The Bill does nothing to help hard-pressed mortgage payers. The list of headings in the Bill does not even mention the subject despite the rising number of arrears and repossessions. The Government's interest rates policy has caused the problem. That has been the main Government club with which they have bashed the economic crisis caused by the consumer credit boom which was let loose as an election bribe. The £20 billion per annum balance of payments deficit is a consequence of the rundown of manufacturing investment.

As I said, the Government's high interest rates policy has been their club to bash the economic crisis. However, they are bashing new mortgage payers. There has been a rapid rise in interest rates—about 50 per cent. over the past 18 months. They have increased from about 10 per cent. to about 15·5 per cent. The Government claim to favour private home ownership and encourage people, particularly the young, to take out mortgages. They then leave them trapped by the rapidly rising mortgage rate. For example, in London, the average mortgage has increased by about £250 a month. That has contributed to inflation. I have seen a recent table showing that inflation in London increased by 14·9 per cent. from April 1989 to April 1990 and that was before the poll tax. That is 50 per cent. higher than the national average inflation rate. Increases in transport fares have been one contributory factor, but mortgage rates were the main factor. The Government are taking no action.

On Tuesday I introduced my Mortgage Assistance Bill but it received no response from the Government. That is why I am raising the issue again. This is an opportunity for the Government to respond. My Bill would have provided some options other than repossession for hard-pressed mortgage payers in the form of part ownership and shared ownership. It showed that something can be done witout too great a cost. There would have been some capital cost involved, but, in exchange, there would have been revenue income and considerable savings from not having to deal with so much homelessness.

The Treasury is to blame. High interest rates is the Treasury's policy and there is nothing in the Finance Bill—the main fiscal and economic policy of the year—to mitigate the problems that policy has caused.

The Budget was in March and it has been in Committee since then. We have had two days on the Floor of the House, yesterday and today. We have heard nothing—not a word—from the Government, who keep insisting that mortgage interest rates are not a problem. They have kept them off the agenda and turned a blind eye. When will they do something about the problem? When will they stop being complacent and take responsibility for the effects of their policy?

9.10 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I served on the Finance Bill Committee for the first time this year—unlike other hon. Members who have spoken, most of whom seem to be aficianados of many years' standing—but I can vouch for the fact that it is a civilised Committee on which to serve.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Surely not.

Mr. Bowis: It is a civilised Committee and the atmosphere is contributed to by hon. Members of all parties and by the Chairmen of the Committee, to whom I join hon. Members in paying tribute.

Mr. Sedgemore: Really?

Mr. Bowis: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene?

Mr. Sedgemore: I remember serving on four Finance Bill Committees one year. It was the year in which there was an emergency every three months and we used to sit through the night. Our sittings were bitter, nasty, unpleasant occasions. What is all this syrup that I keep hearing about?

Mr. Bowis: I, too, remember the days when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Nowadays we have more cross-party agreement on the wisdom of the measures introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to enable Britain to progress from the position in which the hon. Gentleman rightly confesses that his party left it.

We had in the Committee a mixture of common sense and imagination, as well as a degree of technical detail. I have often admired my colleagues' ability to grasp and to enlighten us on such detail. As has been pointed out, we have had the bankers' drafts in some of our debates. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) here—no doubt to complete the speeches that he made in Committee one evening, which served only to convince me that I was wise to by-pass banking as a career. But I jest. It was a good Committee which supported a good Finance Bill based on a good Budget.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) referred to home ownership, and I welcome his conversion to that cause. No doubt he will soon be coming across to support the party that created woman in its image. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would accept that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said, the best gift that we can give to homeowners is to get inflation under control. That is what the Conservative party's policy is all about and that is the background against which this year's Finance Bill should be seen.

Others have said before now that there are many mothers and fathers of inflation—not least, excessive pay demands and spending beyond one's means—but no one has accused savings of contributing to inflation. That is why the savings element in the Finance Bill has been so important. My hon. Friends have rightly paid tribute to the Bill's contribution towards encouraging savings. That is especially true of TESSAs and the announcement about the end of composite rate tax as well as the disappearance of stamp duty on shares. To coin a well-worn phrase, we are beginning to move towards a level playing field in savings, which many of us have supported. We welcome the move towards level playing fields, specifically the level playing fields of the football clubs and the health—in every sense—and safety of our football grounds. It is an imaginative and unexpected step that the Chancellor has taken: it is all very well for hon. Members to say now that they would have liked him to go further, but I welcome what he has done.

One item that I especially welcomed was the continued downward pressure on the company car perk—not that the Government are opposed to cars, to motorists or to all perks, but in constituencies such as mine we feel that more people should be using public transport to get to work. When we are trying to ensure that we have a good public transport infrastructure, it makes good sense to discourage people from using company cars.

The Bill also contributes to health. At last we have taken a step back up the tax ladder for tobacco products and, to a lesser extent, alcoholic products. That must be right. It is a great pity that in the last few Budgets it has been missed out. Those who support Parents Against Tobacco and other such organisations believe that ultimately the only way to deter young people from starting to smoke is to do so through prices. I hope that Treasury Ministers will continue that process in future years. I repeat the plea that I made in Committee for the committee that advises on the retail prices index to examine seriously the possibility of taking those items out of the index so that they are not seen as an inflationary item.

I welcome one item that is not in the Budget. The Government have wisely kept the structures and extent of value added tax as they are. I welcome the fact that they did not bow to some of the pressures from across the channel to impose VAT on the written word—books and magazines. It is wise of the Government to resist that, especially at a time when we are seeking to encourage education through the Education Reform Act 1988 and the national curriculum.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), I warmly welcome the concession that was made for actors. I declared an interest in Committee as an unpaid director of an actors' touring company, the London Actors Theatre Company. I see at first hand young actors struggling to enter the profession and often living in scruffy surroundings such as mobile homes, cars and vans. They are the people who will be helped by the Government's concession, which will at least enable them to set off against tax the fees of their agents who will ultimately enable them, if they have the ability, to make their way in the profession. It is churlish of the Opposition to be critical of that measure, or of the welcome that the Conservative party has given to it. It is a genuine step forward for the acting profession, and especially for young actors.

I must also express my gratitude for the steps forward that have been taken for those with disabilities, especially the blind. It is parallel to a decision made elsewhere on deaf students, which is also to be welcomed. Although that may not have been included in the Bill, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary authorised the expenditure. As we create wealth in this country, we should bear the vulnerable in mind. We need to create that wealth and to spend it where appropriate, and it is certainly appropriate to spend it on people with disabilities.

I welcome the Bill. It is a Bill for savings, for sport, for the environment, for health, for education, for charity, for arts, and for disability, but it will work only if we get the background of our policy against inflation right—and that will work through our interest rate policy. We are creating wealth. As we create wealth and reduce tax rates so that the tax take rises, we shall have money to spend. Through measures such as the Bill, we shall encourage people to save and to invest, and we shall enable service Departments to spend on areas of need, some of which I have highlighted. This is a wise Bill by a wise Government as part of a wide strategy to promote the well-being of our economy and our people.

9.20 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) alluded to the fact that the process that was set in motion on 20 March will soon be brought to a conclusion. Perhaps this is an appropriate time to look towards the deliberations that will soon be set in motion for the next Budget. I should like to help future members of the Standing Committee by suggesting how their deliberations could be made simpler.

I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to table 1.2 on page 6 of the Red Book, which was published in March. He will see that, according to the latest estimate for 1989-90, receipts by the Inland Revenue from the six main taxes—income tax, corporation tax, petroleum revenue tax, capital gains tax, inheritance tax and stamp duty—will total £76·4 billion. That figure is somewhat exceeded by the total figure given in appendix F of Command Paper 1021 for the comparable year, when no fewer than 88 reliefs and allowances against those six same Inland Revenue taxes cost £80·3 billion. In other words, reliefs and allowances exceed the amount of receipts by £4 billion.

I do not think that that is a party political point, but it is one to which my right hon. Friend could usefully turn his attention. That position exists because all politicians love to say to the electorate, "We shall give you so much against this and so much against that." Of course, we are sometimes in danger of losing sight of the fact that neither this place nor the Government have any money of their own to give away, save that which they took from the taxpayer in the first place. To counteract that, I must commend to my right hon. Friend the continuation of the shift of the burden of taxation from a direct to an indirect basis.

Mr. Tim Smith: My hon. Friend will agree that the allowances to which he referred are mainly made up by personal tax allowances, tax relief on mortgage interest and tax relief for pension schemes. I have much sympathy with his view that we should broaden the tax base and cut allowances. Which of those should we tackle first?

Mr. Gill: My hon. Friend asked me a direct question. Being a fairly blunt hon. Member, I tell him that the allowance that should be addressed is mortgage interest relief. I am convinced that, far from helping the overall longer-term position of people who want to get their feet on the first rung of the housing ladder, the effect of mortgage interest relief has been to accelerate the price of houses. Bricks and mortar are an attractive proposition to anybody, not least because of the substantial allowances also given under the capital gains tax regulations, which again are an accelerator in persuading and encouraging people to invest in bricks and mortar, thereby making bricks and mortar far and away the most attractive investment as against traditional savings, investing in stocks and shares or other means of disposing of one's income.

In answer to a parliamentary question earlier this year, I was told that 70 per cent. of the Exchequer's revenue came from taxes which, broadly speaking, were raised upon production and that the balance—30 per cent.—emanated from taxes which, broadly speaking, were placed on consumption. As a nation, we should look towards reversing that equation. Initially, we should seek to equalise it. That shift of emphasis would have several significant advantages. First, if we were to tax consumption more than production, we should be making a valuable contribution towards conserving the world's finite resources. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne said that he regretted that we had not been harder in increasing duties in the Budget. By increasing duties on those resources which are finite, we would be very much in tune with the spirit of the age, which is towards conservation and the ecology.

Another benefit from continuing the shift towards indirect taxation and away from direct taxation would be to stimulate investment still further. That is important to us as an industrial nation. We need to invest as much as we possibly can.

A further advantage of a move towards indirect taxation and away from direct taxation would be to encourage spontaneous saving. Although I warmly welcome the introduction of tax-exempt special savings accounts in this Finance Bill, it would be preferable to create a situation in which a man's or a woman's disposable income had outlets that stood on all fours. In other words, the decision to save and to invest to buy a home, or to take out a pension scheme, would stand on all fours equally.

If we reduced direct taxation—at the same time it would be necessary to increase indirect taxation—it would be an enormous psychological fillip to all wage and salary earners who, let us face it, like to take home as much of the fruits of their labour as possible.

Finally, in my catalogue of the benefits of shifting the burden of taxation, much more importance would be given to that old fashioned word "thrift". I am sure that many hon. Members would welcome that.

This is a good Finance Bill. I welcome it, especially for the help that it gives to companies, to savers and to the environment. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne, I shall vote for its Third Reading with enthusiasm.

9.27 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I rise to speak only briefly because I know that many other hon. Members wish to participate. I wish to speak against the Finance Bill for three reasons.

First, the Bill does nothing to bring down inflation. Indeed, it shows that the Conservative party is the party of high and continuing inflation. A few years ago, inflation blipped at 3 per cent. Since then, the Government have embarked on a course which has debauched the currency, debased the coinage and depreciated the pound in everyone's pocket. Inflation is now exactly 9·8 per cent. higher than the Government's objective of zero inflation —a lamentable performance by any standards. Let there be no doubt about the fact that the Government are depreciating the pound in our pockets. The Labour party will be the Government of low inflation—*[Interruption.]* I shall come to the technical economic reasons for that in a moment.

Secondly, the Budget leaves the Conservative party as the party of high and continuing taxation. We have had the argument before. I see the Red Book on the Bench beside the Minister. If he cares to open it and look at the relevant tables, he will find that taxation as a proportion of gross domestic product is higher under the present Government than ever it was under a Labour

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

Government. If he looks into the far distant future and all the figures for the years ahead—I await the jeers of Conservative Members, but they too should read the Red Book—for 1991, 1992 and 1993, taxation will still be higher under the Conservative Government's own plans as a percentage of GDP than it ever was under a Labour Government. It is our money, as the Prime Minister says, that the Conservative Government for ever take away. That is a scandal, so let us hear no more about the Conservative party being the party of low taxation. The Labour party is the party of low taxation.

Mr. Normant Lamont: Why has the party of low taxation voted against all the tax cuts that we have introduced? Why did the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer say that he did not expect that a Labour Government could reduce the tax burden?

Mr. Sedgemore: I could come to the global plans if I had more time. I could set out the macro—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I did not serve on the Committee. I did not discuss the reasons for the various amendments. If the Minister wants me to set out a macro-economic policy to provide lower taxation and set it against the background of how much we can and cannot borrow, I shall do so, but I fear that no other hon. Member would have the chance to speak before 10 o'clock.

The third reason why I oppose the Finance Bill is that it contains nothing to suggest that the Government have a coherent exchange rate policy. I remember a couple of years ago when we shadowed the deutschmark. The pound rose to DM3·25. That was a disaster, and it started a recession which was part of the lunacy of the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, from whom we have had apologies for that. The Minister has said that he, too, was partly to blame. The Governor of the Bank of England has also said that he was partly to blame. From then on, we saw a rapid depreciation of the pound. I should call it a devaluation, but I understand that if the market and not the Government causes it, it is called depreciation.

Then the pound fell to about DM2·8. Now the policy is in reverse. The Government systematically leak that we are about to join the exchange rate mechanism, so the pound is rising. It has risen to DM2·9 and it looks as though it may rise to DM3. What is this swings and roundabouts policy? The pound goes up to DM3·25, down to DM2·8 and back up to DM3. It is beginning to look as though the Government will join the ERM with an exchange rate of DM3 at the lower end. That is a deflationary policy. We shall enter the ERM throwing people out of work and losing economic growth. That is an absolute scandal.

I am sure that the Minister has read the report of the debate that I initiated in the House a few weeks ago. I suggested that a proper exchange rate at which the pound should enter the ERM would be DM2·6 in the middle of the band. I understand that the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who usually sits below the Gangway, has said that there should be a huge devaluation. He talked about DM2·4. It certainly cannot be DM3. If that happens, I forecast with absolute certainty and confidence that either there will be a grave recession in Britain or within 12 months the Government will return to a policy of devaluation.

On the grounds that the Government have a silly inflationary policy, a silly high taxation policy and a lunatic exchange rate policy, we should all oppose the Government in the Lobby tonight.

9.33 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): After that rather tiresome tirade from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), which had more to do with a modern version of "Through the Looking Glass" than anything else, I shall return to the Finance Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said that, as we dealt with the Third Reading, we were approaching the end of the annual ritual which had started on Budget day. In fact, it starts much earlier than that because, soon, someone senior in the Inland Revenue will send out an internal memorandum asking members of staff to put forward suggestions for next year's Finance Bill. When my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has completed his difficult task of sorting out next year's public spending round, he will, in November, turn his attention to next year's Finance Bill. It is right to pay tribute to the work done by the Inland Revenue on the Finance Bill throughout the year and to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench. A great deal of work goes into preparing the Finance Bill before the Budget sees the light of day.

When the Finance Bill was published it had 107 clauses, 16 schedules and ran to 156 pages. I was rather encouraged by that because, a few weeks previously, I had raised on the Adjournment the subject of tax simplification when I complained about the size of recent Finance Bills. This year's Bill is one of the smallest for some years, but since its publication it has, unfortunately, grown to 132 clauses, 19 schedules and 189 pages. I am sorry to say that, as a result of my efforts, we even added another clause yesterday on entertainers' expenses.

I do not for one moment suggest that the Government are entirely responsible for all the growth in tax legislation, but we should hold an inquiry into simplifying that legislation. Given its complicated nature, the time has now come to consider that. Complaints were rightly made in Committee about one of the schedules which was almost unintelligible.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) that we should be sceptical about introducing new tax reliefs because we should try all the time to broaden the tax base. I am glad that the number of new tax reliefs in the Bill is relatively insignificant. We should be aware that one man's tax relief is another man's tax increase. We should always be sceptical about introducing new reliefs.

The provisions that have been introduced in VAT will be of enormous help and will result in a much fairer system for VAT traders, especially because of the new arrangements for registration and bad debts. Previously I suggested that Customs and Excise had not done enough to publicise cash accounting to VAT traders and

I was glad to discover that a note was included in the VAT returns sent out recently to VAT traders to draw to their attention that if they notified Customs and Excise they could switch to cash accounting, which could be to their benefit.

I also welcome the provisions for charities, to which my hon. Friends have already drawn attention. The increase in allowances for payroll giving from £480 to £600 and the important changes made to encourage donations by individuals and companies are welcome. It is sometimes said that by introducing a new tax relief the Government suggest to people what they believe to be the right thing to do. Mortgage interest relief, for example, is designed to encourage owner-occupation. After all the changes that the Government have introduced in relation to charities no one need be in any doubt about what the Government hope to achieve. They should achieve their goal as a result of the substantial increases in charitable giving. In the past 10 years there have been similar substantial increases, but, by any standards, the changes introduced in the Bill are major and should greatly benefit charities.

I also welcome the changes designed to encourage further personal savings and the fact that TESSAs are designed to encourage those with the smallest amount to save. The abolition of composite rate tax will also help those people. Personal equity plans have been improved and I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will listen to some recent pleas to allow individuals to operate their own personal equity plan rather than having to go through a plan manager. If one truly believes in individual direct ownership of equities, that option should be available.

I also greatly welcome the increase in the premiums allowable for tax-exempt policies to friendly societies from £100 to £150 a year. That may not sound very much, but the policies are designed for the benefit of small savers —friendly societies have always helped such savers. In the next Session I hope that the Treasury will introduce a friendly societies Bill based upon the Green Paper that it published recently.

Clause 80 is also welcome because, in future, it will be possible for institutional investors to deal on the London International Financial Futures Exchange without fear of being taxed. That should lead to a large increase in business and ensure that LIFFE retains its predominant position as the leading market in Europe for futures and options.

Another change which will ensure that London remains an attractive place in which to do business is the abolition of stamp duty, which will ultimately benefit individuals whether their investments are made directly or through the institutions. I also welcome the undertaking that I received in Committee on the question of stamp duty on secondary market sovereign debt. I am glad that a new clause will be introduced next year to ensure that not just that business is done in London but the paperwork is done in London. At present, the business is done in London but all the paperwork is done in New York because of the fear that stamp duty may apply.

I welcome the change in the taxation of actors and the new clause that was agreed to yesterday. As I explained then, it is a satisfactory compromise, although we shall want to keep an eye on how it works out.

Any Budget is a package, and this one has been an attractive package. Reference has been made to the groups to which it has been attractive. The House should support the Bill with enthusiasm.

9.41 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): My hon. Friends have alluded to the cordial atmosphere that prevailed in Committee. It was broken on only one occasion, when I committed the folly of imagining that it was an occasion when a Back Bencher could address himself to some of the issues. Accordingly, I delivered myself of what I would describe not as a speech of extreme length but as one of modest length. I welcome this opportunity to carry on where I left off, but I shall not seize the opportunity, although I remain sceptical about the Government's view of clause 66, dealing with the restriction of tax relief on bad and doubtful sovereign risk debt.

For the benefit of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), who was uncertain about the matter, and for the avoidance of doubt, I declare my interest as a consultant and a former employee of Standard Chartered bank. I hope that that will prevent him from having any more sleepless nights—as occurred on at least one occasion in Committee—on my account. Having been bitten once, I stayed away from the Committee for a while, and I shall not delay the House unduly today.

My hon. Friends have paid tribute to the Chancellor for the skilful way in which he introduced the Budget. It has not been an easy backdrop against which to introduce his first Budget, but he has managed in the circumstances to produce some attractive, innovative and interesting features which have appealed to hon. Members in all parts of the House.

The United Kingdom economy simply will not lie down. I see that in my constituency, in the manufacturing heartland of Britain, where there are companies manufacturing, among other things, sports boats, garden slides, and so on. Most of them tell me that they cannot push the stuff out of their doors fast enough. The economy is not in recession, and that in some ways is making the Chancellor's task more difficult. All that is needed to get the British economy going again is an indication that interest rates are just tipping downwards. That will lead to a burst of entrepreneurial enthusiasm—it is building up in the British economy—which will get things under way again.

Many features of the Budget have been welcomed by my hon. Friends, and I will not add to what they have said. It is only fair to say, however, that the Chancellor dealt with the question of capital limits, and the generous increase—from £8,000 to £16,000—has been widely welcomed, particularly by elderly people who put money aside during their working lives.

In terms of basic rate tax, it was a mark-time Budget. Over the years, we have achieved a steady reduction in the basic rate of taxation—not by great leaps and bounds, but by steady progress towards the present rates. I hope that my right hon. Friends will be able to resume the onward and downward march of taxation in the coming year.

If the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) wishes to pretend that the Labour party

[Mr. Gerald Howarth]

is the party of low taxation, he will have to do something about his spending policies and those of his hon. Friends, who wish to burden the British taxpayer with a vast increase in taxation that will be unsustainable by the British people. My hon. Friends warmly welcome the conversion of at least one Opposition Member to the idea of low taxation. It shows that Conservative Members have been able to penetrate the thick skulls of at least some Opposition Members.

I wish to add my voice to those who have welcomed the abolition of stamp duty on share transactions. I should like there to be a system in this country such as that in Hong Kong, where one can look in the banks and see shares being traded in the window. I should like our banks to offer a similar facility in the United Kingdom so that we can have an easy share dealing operation here.

I am sorry that my amendment dealing with value added tax on gold was not accepted by the Government. It would have greatly benefited the United Kingdom and the gold bullion trade and our Britannia coin if we had been able to zero-rate gold coins. Some 18 months after VAT on gold coins was introduced in 1982, sales of those coins in the United Kingdom declined virtually to nil, and London has lost business to other financial centres, which is unfortunate. I appreciate the arguments that have been advanced by my hon. Friends in the Treasury, but I should like the Britannia coin to be tax free once more, so that something called the ecu and produced by the Belgians does not become more popular than the Britannia coin. An excellent advertisement in the 25 June edition of *The House Magazine* headed "Rule Britannia" demonstrated beyond peradventure why we should zero-rate our own excellent Britannia coin. With that message, I warmly endorse the Bill.

9.47 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor: One of the great annual pleasures of Parliament is membership of the Finance Bill Committee. The highlight of that—which you, Mr. Speaker, will unfortunately be unable to share—is to take part in a Committee sitting opposite the Hale and Pace of the Labour party, the hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). Year after year they come up with chirpy common sense. One of them has a good deal of Newcastle meat—or should I say, muscle—and the other often goes into flights of poetry and academic resonance, and remembers the massive tome—the 24 pages of Cornford in Microcosmographica Academica—in which he and I share a devout interest. It is the longest book that I have ever read and is, certainly, one that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury reads every night.

The highlights of the Finance Bill Committee are those evenings when, as the twilight descends on us, we know that we have some amusement ahead of us when the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East still has another amendment to propose. I do not want to cause any problems for my two hon. Friends—I shall call them that and break tradition on this one occasion. They are so good in Finance Bill Committees that they should continue to lead for the Opposition for many more years to come. I am sure that the electorate will endorse that at the next general election.

There is absolutely no doubt that the Bill has been part of a consistent strategy pursued by the Government. It is important to pay tribute to the ministerial team, particularly the Chief Secretary, who has combined, often behind the scenes, muscle and guidance to the Committee.

I must also mention the former Financial Secretary, whose performance in Committee obviously destined him for his subsequent stardom. The Economic Secretary took us through some highly technical points. There was no question but that they composed a formidable team, well capable of standing up to the Opposition spokesmen and their colleagues who are not present now.

I am particularly pleased about the main thrust of the Government's policy—their attempt to enable the enterprise society to create wealth, which gives this country more revenues which can be used to help those most in need. There are many elements in that process, and not all of them have to be done by the Government. Several hon. Members have referred to a range of policies designed to assist charitable giving. Too often we neglect the importance of the personal link between the donor of charitable aid and the voluntary organisation to which it is given. That often represents a personal commitment not only of a financial kind but to service to the community.

The Government are right to be proud of their record over several years of assisting charities. The largest 200 charities have doubled their income in recent years, and the Charities Aid Foundation and many other such bodies were delighted with the latest Budget initiatives. Perhaps this area of policy distinguishes us from Opposition Members, who still have a hankering for the state to do all the work. The voluntary organisations are important and we show our belief in their work by ensuring that people are helped and encouraged to give to charities, to covenant and to give as they earn. I am sorry that more hon. Members do not appear to take advantage of this last method of helping charities.

The release of entrepreneurial skills into the economy is the secret of this Government's success in transforming our country. We have created a vast new area of enterprise for many people in this country—that of small businesses. Despite high interest rates, there is a net growth in the number of small businesses of more than 1,000 a week. That says much for what we have achieved, and this Bill has contributed to small businesses' growth by simplyfing tax levels for them and giving them more encouragement. Many people throughout the country will be grateful for that; it underlines what the Government are trying to do —to enable people to have greater control over their own lives in the commercial and other sectors.

I pause to pay tribute to the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who has recently made several speeches in the City about the need for wider share ownership. The ownership of property is important to everyone, which is why, under successive Governments, the tax system has encouraged people to buy their own homes. It may be argued that that is a distorting element in the economy, but behind it lies a justifiable social desire to see people invest in houses, which gives them confidence, stability and a role in society. I believe that we should extend that principle to ownership of shares

in the companies for which people work. I know that I am not alone in this. The Government have done some work in this area, and I pay tribute to Opposition Members for their work on it in Committee and elsewhere; and to Liberal Members, who have had a long-term interest in it.

It is vital that people be given this interest, because, apart from living in a property, the most important other aspect of their lives is the work that they do, usually but not exclusively in a corporate organisation. A stake in the success of such a company brings with it more than the mere ownership of shares: it gives people a share in any increase in the company's capital—without destroying someone else's wealth to give them that capital. That is the beauty of shareholding. When the value of a company increases, everybody's stake in it rises in value and that gets away from the redistribution that was so often typified by Opposition policies. That is a constructive and worthwhile way to help people and give them the confidence that comes with an increasing amount of capital.

Secretaries in many of the companies that started share ownership schemes now have a capital stake in them that they could never have had before. Such a stake has given employees at all levels a better belief in the capitalist system and its importance and has also given them capital that they could not otherwise have expected.

The Bill encourages employee share ownership because it contains roll-over relief on capital gains tax for sales of shares by owners of a private company to an employee ownership trust. Hon. Members will agree that in previous Budgets the Government rightly made significant gestures to the employee share ownership movement. However, there was still not a level playing field and that was a disincentive for owners of private companies to sell to an employee trust. If they took the other route and sold for shares in a publicly quoted company, they could obtain roll-over relief. The issue caused considerable concern more than a year ago, and I pay tribute to the Chief Secretary for forcing through the regulations for roll-over relief. I hope that that will encourage many more advisers, practitioners and companies to make employee share ownership one of the dominant themes of the 1990s in the way that the pensions movement dominated previous decades.

Pensions are a diversified portfolio of mainly shares and are therefore immune from the risks that can arise from owning shares in the company in which one works. I should like to see employee share ownership operate alongside pensions because there is a direct relationship between effort in a company and the benefit that flows from that effort. In many cases there is opportunity for capital leverage. Roll-over relief is one of the major achievements of the Bill, and I hope that the Government will now take it further.

We have several successes on which to build, the most recent being the Companies Act 1989, and previous Finance Acts introduced important measures. We must ensure that any Government Department that is contemplating a share issue should have a significant element of employee share ownership, preferably in an employee share ownership trust. It should not just sell a few shares and offer no continuing structure.

The Bill had a successful ride in Committee and was well steered. It is a key part of the Government's overall policy on the economy. We want to see as many people as possible participating in Britain's increasing wealth. The Bill achieves that, and I urge hon. Members to vote for its Third Reading.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 258, Noes 207.

Divison No. 299] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*

Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*

Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen MacKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Housing

10.11 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1189), dated 5th June 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th June, be annulled.

Perhaps it will be convenient to take at the same time the motion

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Prescribed Forms and Particulars) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1236) dated 12th June 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 14th June, be annulled.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The notification on the Order Paper that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has not yet completed its consideration of the instrument is not accurate. The Committee completed its consideration today and has placed in the Vote Office a copy of its report, approved by the Committee today, together with the Department's memorandum. We have reported the instrument to the House on the ground of defective drafting.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Chairman of the Select Committee very much for that information. I am sure that it is valuable to the House.

Mr. Soley: The information will be valuable because I want to refer to the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has just raised.

The 24th report of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments made much criticism of the grant order. One should bear in mind the fact that it arises from the Local Government and Housing Act 1989—a measure which, in its own right, caused enormous problems for the House and which was badly drafted. We now have a statutory instrument arising from that Bill—now an Act of Parliament—which is itself badly drafted.

The instrument was drafted by the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who was previously Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and before that Secretary of State for the Environment. I can only assume that he drafted the instrument himself because it was his habit to draft Bills and statutory instruments. When the right hon. Gentleman drafted this instrument, he must have been dwelling on the outcome of the second world war because it is the only way in which one can account for some of the absurdities to which the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has drawn attention.

Some of the defects in the drafting will cause only relatively—I emphasise that word—minor problems to the public and to local authorities. However, there are enough unusual cases to cause considerable concern. What does the claimant do who makes a claim for a grant, but who is then told that the definition—or the interpretation by the local authority—does not accord with what he understands to be the case from the order itself? Presumably he has to go to law. We know from what the Statutory Instruments Committee has said that there is sufficient imprecision about the drafting to almost welcome legal cases. That means that an individual claimant has to take out a case himself with all the time, trouble and expense that that involves.

One of the most disconcerting aspects of the drafting is the reference to "voluntary body" or "voluntary organisation". When we debated this in Committee we all thought that we knew what type of organisation we were talking about. It transpires from a Department of the Environment answer to the Select Committee that "voluntary body" or "voluntary organisation" can include commercial organisations. The answer said that it does not "exclude" commercial organisations, so they must be included. That will cause considerable confusion and difficulty when people are deciding what grant level someone is eligible for.

There will also be problems over the definition of student grants and the difference between earnings and income. That was another point made by the Statutory Instruments Committee. The definition of a deed of covenant is perhaps the most clear-cut legal case. In many instances the deeds of covenant will be legally enforceable and will, therefore, determine what the income or earnings are. In those circumstances, the Department of the Environment seems to take the view that it need simply leave the matter to the discretion of the local authority. How on earth can a local authority have discretion over something decided by a court of law? If a local authority wants to avoid paying a grant, it can use its discretion and refuse to provide it. In such a case, the claimant would have to go to court. He would probably win his case, but the time and expense involved would make it more likely that many claimants would not pursue their request for a grant.

As I said, the statutory instrument arises out of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. In the debates on that Bill the Minister gave assurances about means testing and the fact that the Government were introducing a better system for home improvement grants. I admit to the Minister that it is better as it can provide grants of up to 100 per cent. That is welcome. I was going to say that the Minister has gone badly wrong, but it would be difficult to interpret it as such. In fact, he has gone intentionally wrong by limiting the number of people who can receive such a grant much more drastically than in the past. I do not believe that it is an accident that we had Government speaker after Government speaker during the debate on the Finance Bill in order to prevent us from reaching this debate before 10 o'clock. What we are debating now will affect many hundreds of thousands or possibly millions of people who would previously have received grants to repair their houses but who will no longer receive one or will receive a reduced amount. That is a matter of serious concern.

The statutory instrument is drafted in such a way that the means test will ensure that people on relatively modest incomes and low incomes will have less opportunity for repair and renovation of their housing. People on higher incomes will also have less opportunity.

The Government's own housing conditions survey of 1986 pointed out that 500,000 properties in Britain lack basic amenities, 1 million were unfit—about 5·6 per cent. of the total housing stock—and 1·1 million were in serious disrepair. I again pray in aid my old friends and supporting colleagues, the Association of District Councils. It is a Conservative-controlled body, but it is constantly pointing out that the Government's lack of a

housing strategy is leading to a declining state of repair of the British housing stock. That is why it says that a minimum of £35 billion and a maximum of £50 billion must be spent by the end of the century if the problem is not to escalate. The housing conditions survey, the ADC—a Conservative-controlled body—and other Conservative-controlled organisations, as well as the Labour party and almost every housing organisation in the country, are telling the Government that they have got it wrong. If the Government do not want the housing stock in Britain to continue to decline, they should take the regulations away and draft them properly. They should ensure not only that the regulations do not contain the contradictions to which the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments drew attention but that people can obtain grants so that the state of the housing stock in Britain can be improved.

The way in which the Government have fixed the contributions means that people on low and modest incomes will have to make larger contributions than expected. That means that many people will not take up the grant. That is why I say that the number of people who obtain grants and go ahead with repairs will drop.

The Government should look again at regulation 8 and increase the figure from £20 to a minimum of £40—preferably to £60. Those figures have been calculated not just by me but by many other people. If we set the level at £60, we could prevent the housing stock from slipping into further disrepair. If the figure is below £60, the most that we shall manage to do is to mark time and to ensure that matters do not get any worse. If the figure is left at £20, the housing stock will get worse. Without going into the complicated details of the way in which the system works, I should explain that the £20 acts as a multiplier for the amount that one can obtain.

Let us take the example of a family with a net income of £8,000. Under the old regulations, which expired on 30 June this year, that family would have received a 75 per cent. grant in respect of repair costs of £8,000. From 1 July, the same family will find its grant reduced from 75 per cent. to about 53 per cent. That family will get considerably less than it would have received under the old regime which ended a few weeks ago.

Families with incomes of between £10,000 and £12,800 will receive only 1 per cent. grant in respect of a repair bill of £8,000. Are the Government seriously asking the House and the public to accept that family incomes of between £10,000 and £12,800 are sufficient to enable people to find repair costs—particularly in the south of Britain, where repairs are especially expensive—on the basis of a 1 per cent. grant? That is nonsense and the Government must know it.

The Government must also know that that will lead to a reduction in the number of repairs being done. It is not that the Government want fewer repairs to be done. They want to spend less money, but in doing that they will exacerbate the state of disrepair of the British housing stock, which will not only add to the misery of people in bad housing but will increase the bill in future. The Government's neglect of the railway and sewerage systems and the rest of the infrastructure in Britain has led to a similar decline.

A single parent would get a 100 per cent. grant on a £10,000 repair only if his or her income was below £93 a week, and no assistance whatever if he or she earned more than £191 a week. A single person without a child would receive a 100 per cent. grant only if his or her income was below £50 a week. That is a further indication that the Government are not serious about the disrepair of our housing stock. The £20 figure in regulation 8 needs to be set at £60 if we are to reverse the deterioration of our housing stock.

My next point concerns the savings disregard—the amount of savings that people may have without losing grant. The means test is a big let-down, not only on the Government's proposal in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 but on some of the commitments that they gave both to the House of Lords and to this House. During our debates on the 1989 Act, the Minister suggested that there could be a passport. In other words, if one was getting certain other state benefits and one's savings had already been taken into account, the assumption could be carried over to grants and so on; the savings disregard would be equal. But instead of sticking to that and keeping the figures the same, the Government changed them yet again. We now have a savings disregard of £8,000 for people on income support or family credit; of £16,000 for those on poll tax or housing benefit; and, now, of £5,000 for the purposes of the statutory instrument. That is despite the fact that, in Committee and in the House of Lords, the Government gave a commitment to ensure that there was passporting of a similar type to ensure that the savings disregard was kept as compatible as possible with the other benefits to make it simple.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that the new disregards are more generous, because they have no upper limit and the minimum disregard is £5,000.

Mr. Soley: I know that the minimum is £5,000. But if the Minister is to be consistent with what was said in Committee, he must operate the same limit as those applying to housing and poll tax benefits.

The Minister cannot say that he is going to keep it the same for the various benefits, and then, a year or so later, change it. That is what the Government have done. We were told in Committee—on the Floor of the House—that means testing would be simple and comparable with other benefits. It is not; it is quite complex. Does the Minister argue that it is a simple system now? Perhaps he will address that question in his speech.

Additional premiums are allowed for the disabled and for those over 75. However, that will be affected by the basic means test. It should be remembered that the House of Lords passed that part of the primary legislation only on the basis of Government assurances that means testing would be simple and comparable. The Minister has a duty to both Houses to clarify the matter.

I am also disappointed that the home insulation grant is to be discretionary. The Government made an amazing commitment some time ago, and only a few weeks ago the Secretary of State for the Environment emphasised again, on the Floor of the House, that Britain would reduce its CO_2 emissions. Here was an opportunity to do that, and to increase expenditure on the insulation of homes. That would save energy, reduce fuel prices and often enable people to have more disposable income, thus benefiting them, the country and the environment.

With the poll tax and Government cuts, local authorities will find it difficult to give discretionary grants.

[Mr. Soley]

They will fulfil their commitment on the mandatory grants and then squeeze the discretionary grants as much as possible, not because it is in the interests of local authorities—whether Tory or Labour—but because they have no option. The alternative would be to allow the poll tax to go up again. That is the only way to pay for the grant. So much for the green credentials of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

When we compare British housing stock to that of many European countries on a similar latitude, we find that they spend much more and make a greater effort to insulate homes than we do. As a result, they have better energy savings returns that enable people on lower incomes to spend less on energy. That is of benefit to everyone. The Government's green credentials and their commitment to improve housing have suddenly begun to look a bit shaky.

I also want specifically to know what on earth we are to do about the weird time warp in which the Government have put local authorities and individuals. The old system will come to an end on 31 July, and this instrument will not come into effect for a while. For some months, people who have had emergency work to be done have got reports from surveyors saying that such work must be done immediately because, if it is not, the problem will get worse. I refer to problems such as dry rot and other things that spread rapidly in houses. Those people have gone to their local authorities and asked for a grant. Local authorities have then said, "We shall file your claim, but we cannot do anything about it because we do not know what the rules are, and we shall not know what the rules are for some time."

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On 1 December last year I wrote to the Secretary of State about that matter. The Under-Secretary of State replied refusing to meet me on that point on the basis that his Department had written to my local authority giving an explanation of why changes were taking place in regard to funding for this financial year. When I saw a copy of the minutes of the discussions between the Department and my local authority it became clear that the Government had been dishonest about their intentions about the resources being provided for this financial year. He still refused to meet me to discuss the requirements of and resources for local authorities. Will my hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State why he has refused to meet Opposition Members to discuss investment in local authority contributions to the private sector and upgrading houses in the private sector while he is reducing grants to local authorities on this issue?

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend makes an important point. It might not have escaped his notice that we have had six or seven Ministers with responsibility for housing matters in the past five years. I am beginning to lose count of them. The present Minister, I am told, will not be with the Department much longer. One of the things that strikes me when I raise such issues and examine the answers that are given is the way in which Ministers abuse the parliamentary process by refusing not just to meet hon. Members but to give clear answers to questions. Without straying out of order, the most obvious example arose during the Housing Corporation crisis. Ministers refused to give figures for the next three years, even though they were obviously wrong in the Department of the Environment's expenditure White Paper.

The issue is serious. People are caught in a time warp. A local authority cannot give a grant, but, more important, it is doubly trapped. It might want to give a grant and might consider that a person was entitled to it, but, unless it can approve the work in accordance with the terms of the statutory instrument, it cannot give the go-ahead. Will the Minister allow some retrospection so that local authorities will be able to assess properly audited receipts and people who could not get a local authority grant because there is no legislation covering it can do emergency work, and allow local authorities to use their discretion and give grants, particularly mandatory grants, in such circumstances?

The matter is important. It will affect many people, in particular those who have work which needs to be done urgently and which a surveyor has said must be done urgently. I accept that that would have to be part of the evidence presented to a local authority.

An important matter for many people and for the housing stock generally is who pays. The Government are anxious to squeeze the grant system so that it spends less money, because the only way in which a local authority can pay for housing repairs and renovation is the poll tax. Local authorities will squeeze discretionary grants to keep down the poll tax, and they will give mandatory grants because they have no option. That means that matters such as energy conservation will be pushed aside as being marginal and of no great consequence, whereas they should be much more central to the Government's strategy.

We know that the Government are in financial difficulty, not just in terms of running the economy but in getting themselves out of the poll tax trap. There is no excuse whatsoever for putting on to local authorities the responsibility for getting the Government out of that mess.

The Government need to ensure that we have a grant system that improves the repair and renovation of British housing stock so that it does not continue to decline in the way in which many Conservative Members, as well as many local authorities, have been telling the Minister for years that it is declining. The Government need to do something about that today because the decline will continue until the Minister reverses these policies.

10.34 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): As I said in my earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has reported the instrument to the House on the grounds of defective drafting. Although I propose to deal with this matter as quickly as possible, it is important that the House should recognise that the majority of the Government's vast legislative programme is being dealt with by means of subordinate legislation.

The House should also recognise that the Government, who claimed that they would take legislation off the citizens' backs, are producing more statutory instruments of one sort or another than the previous Labour Government. About 2,500 statutory instruments are being progressed through the House every year because of the way in which the Government are producing more

regulations, rather than fewer. In itself, that is not a bad thing, but it shows that the Government's claim to be taking regulations away is simply not true.

It is also important that the Government should try, to the best of their ability—and they certainly have a great number of resources on which to call—to make legislation as clear as possible. It is worth recalling that this is a negative procedure instrument which would not have been debated but for the Opposition prayer. That seems a less than satisfactory way of dealing with this matter.

Mr. Chope: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the drafting of this instrument, in the areas that have been criticised by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, is absolutely identical to the drafting of the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 which went through without any such comment and criticism from the Committee?

Mr. Cryer: I do not deny the possibility that the Committee has overlooked defects in other instruments. The Committee deals with the vast majority of the 2,500 or more statutory instruments presented to Parliament every year and I have no doubt that some defects are overlooked. Departments often argue that wording which we claim is defective has been used previously, but that is no argument in justification of the existing statutory instrument. If the Minister wants to make a criticism, it is a criticism of past Committees that have overlooked defective wording.

The Committee must take its guidance from the Counsel to you, Mr. Speaker, who is also Counsel to the Committee. If the Counsel or a member of the Committee finds that an instrument is defective in one respect, and it follows another instrument, I should have thought that the Committee was to be commended, not criticised. The Committee is quite open in saying, "Yes, we need all the help that we can get." We must recognise that the Committee meets weekly at 4.15 pm. with just one Counsel and an assistant to help it. We should have more resources, not less."

Many instruments are corrected without ever having been reported to the House because Counsel to the Committee contacts Departments to point out defects. Helpful Departments frequently say, "All right, we will withdraw the instrument—we recognise the defects and we will remedy them." I shall return to that point in a moment.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): I am following my hon. Friend's argument as closely as possible. Is he saying that his Committee has before it on average between 60 and 70 statutory instruments at every meeting?

Mr. Cryer: Yes, that is absolutely correct. For example, after the recess we shall have more than 100 instruments before us. They will have accumulated during the recess. We agreed only today to meet on the first Tuesday we are back so as to avoid a backlog building up. We recognise that it is difficult for the Committee to take all the instruments into account. If it is difficult for the Committee, it is also difficult for the ordinary citizen. A copy of the statutory instrument with which we are dealing today costs £5·15. That does not exactly encourage the dissemination of information affecting citizens. It runs to some 35 pages, including three schedules and many clauses. Without any shadow of doubt it is a complicated piece of legislation equivalent to a primary Act of Parliament. All that the Committee is saying is that several matters require elucidation. That is why we have reported it to the House.

Whether the people who use the instrument will receive the guidance from the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments is in doubt. Perhaps as a gesture and to help people at large the Minister will agree to publish and distribute all the Committee's comments with the instrument. I have no doubt that the Minister will be keen to make a suitable response.

The report lists seven areas in which the drafting is defective. I shall not go through them all. The report is available. It was dealt with by the Committee today. We discussed it so that we could put it in the Vote Office for Members to obtain and read. For example, in the first paragraph of our report we refer to the definition of a voluntary body and a voluntary organisation. Regulation 4(2)(f) in the instrument says:

"This paragraph applies to— . . .

(f) a person who lives with the relevant person in order to care for him or a partner of his and who is engaged by a charitable or voluntary body (other than a public or local authority)".

The Department says that a voluntary body includes an ordinary commercial company or, at least, does not exclude such a company. The Department also says that the expressions

"properly bear their ordinary meaning".

We say that it is impossible to reconcile an ordinary commercial body with a voluntary body or organisation. Those are confusing matters for the people in local authorities who will have to use the instruments. They will have to decide who are qualifying persons. There is a real possibility that where the definition is cloudy it will be referred to a court. That is a defect in Parliament. If we allow shoddy legislation through, whether primary or delegated legislation, which has to be decided in the courts because it is defective, we shall hand over the power of decision-making to the courts. That is not what we were elected for.

Regulation 16(2) refers to

"income derived under regulations 27 and 28".

As no income can be derived under a regulation of a statutory instrument, we have drawn the attention of the House to the matter. The Department has said that it will consider the wording at the first convenient opportunity. That means that it will amend the wording in a further statutory instrument—at least, one hopes that it will—when it finds a statutory instrument which can be linked with this one in the index. That means that people will have to buy another instrument and to know the indexing in order to link it up to find the new definition. That illustrates the difficulties for ordinary people and for local authorities who use the instruments that the Government produce.

How can payments under a legally enforceable deed of covenant be treated under paragraph 13 of schedule 3 as a voluntary payment? The Department has suggested that that is reconcilable, but the Committee believes that it is doubtful that a legally enforceable deed of covenant can be regarded as voluntary. Local authorities will be called upon to decide whether compulsory payments are voluntary, but that is a complete opposite in terms and it will be a difficult task for a local authority to undertake.

[Mr. Cryer]

That might also lead to a challenge in the courts, which would be a waste of everyone's time and money when we could get things right in the first place.

The Minister should consider an amending instrument to remedy the seven poor definitions, which were badly drafted in the original statutory instrument. The Committee has an obligation to report items in any instrument that it regards as badly drafted. Although the seven badly drafted definitions may make up only a small proportion of the instrument and only a small proportion of the users of the instrument will come up against them, it is worth the Department considering an amending instrument to cover those seven items. That instrument should be available free to the purchasers of the primary instrument, for which they will pay £5·15.

I have not mentioned the merits of the instrument because our Committee does not consider the merits of statutory instruments and therefore I have not gone outside the Committee's remit. Of course we want to see housing renovation carried out. That is the purpose of the housing renovation system, particularly as a large part of the stock consists of older dwellings which fall within the definition of those eligible for housing renovation grants. That is important. It is therefore also important that the legislation which defines such eligibility should be clear, succinct and transparently available to the user as well as to Ministers, hon. Members and draftsmen in the Department.

The user should see the statutory instrument not as an obstacle, but as the means of obtaining a benefit which, if it improves the housing stock, is a benefit to the nation. It is not unreasonable to ask the Minister to consider providing an amending instrument to clarify and improve the statutory instrument for free issue with it.

10.47 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I am sure that we are all extremely grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and his Committee for the detailed work they have undertaken. It is vital that the drafting of any legislation is right. I do not think that any of us would pretend that, over the years, all the drafting of housing legislation has been as good as we wanted. I am therefore grateful to the hon. Gentleman and his Committee.

The hon. Gentleman said that the Committee was not against the introduction of such statutory instruments because we need to get on with paying improvement grants, and that is why I shall join my hon. Friends in the Lobby to support the statutory instrument. It is important that the improved scheme operates so that people can see the benefits that derive from it.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) gave one of his normal Armageddon speeches. I just hope that he is more cheerful when he gets home as he is so downbeat when he is at the Dispatch Box. In fairness to the hon. Gentleman, tonight was a little different from the previous debate on housing because, unlike his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), at least he knows what he is talking about.

If, according to the hon. Member for Hammersmith, things are bad now, will he say how bad they were during the lifetime of the last Labour Government? Spending on improvement grants in the last full year of Labour rule was £76 million. In the most recent full year for which we have figures, 1989, £328 million was spent on such grants, representing a 50 per cent. increase above inflation. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to be fair, he will not claim that we wish to reduce the amount spent on improvement grants.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The vastly greater slum clearance and house building programmes operated by the last Labour Government meant that the priority for house renovation was not as great as it is now, when the Government are not clearing slums and building new houses.

Mr. Hughes: As the saying goes, if you believe that you will believe anything. Opposition Members constantly argue, whatever the subject, that the last Labour Government wanted to spend more but could not do so because there was another priority.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): If the hon. Gentleman wishes to be fair, will he accept that the most generous system that the Conservatives operated occurred in 1982, in the run-up to the 1983 general election, when there was a grants bonanza, which was brought to an end immediately the Conservatives won that election?

Mr. Hughes: Elections come and go—*[Interruption.]*—and if the hon. Gentleman will contain himself, another election will happen in due course and we will see what happens in the run-up to that.

In 11 years, we have spent about £4 billion on home improvements. That is the Conservative record and we can be proud of it. The system before us is more generous than the previous one, although there will be two grants subject to a test of resources, being renovation grants and disabled facilities grants. By that means we shall be directing help to those who are least able to pay for the work to be done.

We are discussing a controversial subject. When we debated the changes to the system, when the measure was proceeding through Parliament, various arguments were adduced. Some people seem to find it hard to accept, even though we know it to be the case, that too much of the money spent by the Government in recent years on improvement grants went to people who could have afforded to pay for the work themselves. Many people with higher than average incomes received grants, renovated houses and flats and made a profit on them. I do not complain about that, because it was the system, but we want to direct help to where it is needed.

Many people cannot afford to pay for renovation work, and it is wrong for the hon. Member for Hammersmith to suggest that the grants should be available to everybody. In any event, he forgot to say how much a Labour Government would spend on improvement grants in their first year in office. The hon. Member for Hammersmith is, as usual, stuck to his seat with glue because he will not say. He wants people to believe that there would be a large budget, but he does not want to tell us what it would be because he knows that he would not get his colleagues' approval for it.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): The hon. Gentleman has overlooked the fact that we are not yet the Government, although we will be soon. Will he enlighten us: what does he think the size of the Government's budget for improvement grants will be next year?

Mr. Hughes: During the past 10 years, there has been a large increase in those budgets, and I see no sign that there will be a reduction in them. Speeches from my hon. Friends the Ministers have contained firm commitments to improving the condition of the housing stock. But we want to ensure that that money is spent where it is needed.

Mr. McCartney: My local authority has just completed a period of negotiation with the Government over such matters. There is a 20 per cent. reduction in the level of grant provided for work that the Government say it is absolutely necessary for my local authority to carry out in the next financial year. There has, in the Government's figures, been a 20 per cent. reduction. For my local authority, more than £1 million worth of grant has been lost for possible renovation in the private sector. That does not give any credence to the hon. Gentleman's argument that the Government are promoting development and putting resources into private sector housing through local authority grants.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman comes from the Paul Daniels' school of politics where, hey presto, money can be conjured out of anywhere. The answer to the hon. Gentleman is that it is too early to say. The grants of which I am speaking are mandatory. People on low incomes will be entitled to help with up to 100 per cent. of the cost of the work, not 90 per cent. of the cost as before. Therefore, it is impossible to say how much the budget will be.

If one believed the rhetoric of the hon. Member for Hammersmith, one would assume that a Labour Government would want to ensure that such discretionary grants were mandatory. When the Opposition spokesman winds up, I would be interested to know if that is Labour policy. What will its policy be towards those discretionary grants to improve homes above the basic fitness standard? Such grants should not be mandatory grants from local authorities. Is it the Labour policy that they should, and how much money is the Labour party prepared to put behind that idea to make it a reality?

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Is it not also a fact that there will now be mandatory grants to allow the disabled to have the necessary adaptations to their own homes to enable them to stay in them? Is not that a sign of a caring Government, and is it not a pity that the last Labour Government did not put that policy into practice when they had the chance?

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because, for the first time, grants to disabled people to ensure that they have the facilities that they need will be mandatory. One would have thought from the rhetoric that its Members are using this evening that 11 years ago the Labour party would have thought of that, and would have put it into effect.

When we discussed the matter in Committee and considered the various options before us, we realised that there were a number of ways in which to introduce an improved scheme for home improvements. We could say that there are some spheres in which we want improvements to be made, and that beyond that people should pay for the improvements themselves. We all know the sort of area about which we are talking. We want properties to be bought up, and we do not want any of the houses or flats to be left out. The argument leading to that conclusion suggests that, if dwellings were left out, it could lead to pepper-potting—there would be good houses, and unfit houses. It is an attractive argument, but I am glad that the Government did not pursue it.

I am glad that the Government chose the policy they did because I think that it is important that those people on poor incomes, living in unfit houses, and with no means or reasonable income, should be entitled to a grant paying for the whole cost of the work, as of right.

This is an important scheme. The Government were right to introduce it, and I certainly hope that my hon. Friends will support them in the Lobbies tonight.

10.59 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I do not possess the mastery of statutory instruments of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), but I have grave doubts about some of the principles in the regulations.

The grants fall into two categories: mandatory grants, which, as long as the statutory requirements are met, the council is obliged to pay; and discretionary grants, when the council can decide which type of work to assist and which class of applicant to help. The percentage of such grants can be altered, too.

The retrograde principle behind the new system—it represents a major change—is that all applicants for grants will be means tested. That cannot be good. Applicants will be eligible for grant if their resources, including income and capital, are below certain thresholds. The danger lies in where those thresholds are set; on that depends which people will fail to get a grant—to say nothing of the £20 top-up.

Discretionary grants will be available for works that bring properties up to target standards. Much of the debate has centred on those targets. Mandatory grants are available on top of renovation grants provided to disabled people.

The transmission of resources to where they are most needed is desirable, but the targets in this case should apply to properties, not people. That has not been sufficiently discussed so far. In Wales, where many of the houses were built before 1919, many properties are substandard and the housing stock is in extremely bad shape, although I concede that much good work has been done to bring it up to standard. There is still, however, a long way to go.

The means tests are usually excessively restrictive and degrading, and they always throw up anomalies. The forms are long and intrusive and they represent an obstacle course for people at the bottom of the pile who have to thread their way through them. Many give up at the first hurdle. The test is modelled on the housing benefit scheme, and it may exhibit similar problems.

The proposed scheme is cumbersome and labour-intensive. It is estimated that it will increase local government's workload by at least 15 per cent. due to the administration of applications and the surveying and assessment of properties.

We believe that the £20 top-up is not generous enough. It should be at least doubled. It will certainly not cover the many necessary outgoings—over and above the usual expenses—that a household may face. High interest and mortgage rates have not even been taken into account——

Mr. McCartney: It is likely that more than 300 houses in mining villages in the area of my local authority—they are part of a ribbon development there—will need

[Mr. McCartney]

renovation just to stop them being demolished. At £8,000 a house, that will cost nearly £2·5 million. Another 9,000 houses have been designated by the Government and the local authority as requiring initiatives to prevent them from being demolished. My local authority has had a 20 per cent. reduction in its grant for dealing with those issues. Having recognised the problem, the Government then decide to reduce——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Is the hon. Gentleman making a speech or an intervention? If it is an intervention, I hope that he will conclude it at once.

Mr. McCartney: It is an intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker, but if you wish me to make a speech I shall do so. I always abide by your rulings, Madam Deputy Speaker. Local authorities and the Government have identified the problem. However, the Government have reduced the resources needed by local authorities to deal with it.

Mr. Livsey: The hon. Gentleman makes a telling intervention, which could be described by some as a telling speech. Areas such as those represented by the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members have problems with housing stock. The hon. Gentleman has rightly said that considerable resources are required to tackle those problems. Councils are struggling to put right housing that is falling down around them.

The proposal to disregard £5,000 of savings is not generous enough for people such as the elderly and the disabled who may rely on their life savings to supplement their income. Some people have no prospect of replacing their savings. Perhaps people such as the elderly and the disabled should be totally exempt from the means test. I object in principle to such a test and a cogent case against it can certainly be made for the elderly and the disabled. Its removal would reduce the work load on local authorities and lift a burden from people's shoulders.

The loans test is applied across the board whether or not a person is considered to be a good risk, and many elderly, disabled and other people may find that loans are denied to them. That is unfair. In theory, the scheme has potential for good, especially for the elderly, because it holds out the prospect of a 100 per cent. grant. However, without adequate funds the system, or part of it, may grind to a halt, and I fear that that will happen to the renovation grants scheme.

The scheme will limit the number of people who are eligible for grant and its complex system of means testing will exclude people in need. It is a cynical exercise in cost saving at the expense of poor people. Apart from the problems that face people, many properties are in need of renovation in their own right. The housing stock will continue to deteriorate because assistance will be available for fewer properties. The regulations are inappropriate, mainly because of their element of means testing. The regulations are also unfair and will not tackle a serious social problem.

11.8 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I shall deal first with the questions posed by the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). We welcome the provision for discretionary grants and we shall extend it in legislation. Obviously, I am not prepared to say what a Labour Government would be able to afford in two years. Neither the hon. Gentleman nor the Government know what next year's Budget will be and would not tell us if they did. Over time, we would want the home insulation grant to become mandatory.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) highlighted the position of his constituents in Wigan, and of people in the north-west, as a result of the statutory instrument and the legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), through the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments, made some trenchant criticisms about the sloppy drafting of the measure and its defects. It is all of a piece with this Government and the way in which they deal with housing. It is a long-standing series of incompetent measures, all of which have been compounded by the regulations and orders that have followed. It is sad, although not surprising, that again the Government have missed the opportunity to do something useful.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) cited figures from the 1986 house condition survey and its conclusions on properties lacking in basic amenities or in fitness, or which were in serious disrepair. More than 14 per cent. of the properties covered by the survey fall into one or other of those categories. That is bad enough in itself, and it gives a clear picture of the problems with the housing stock.

My hon. Friend described the effects of the statutory instrument and noted that those on a net income of between £8,000 and £12,800 would suffer a grant reduction of, in the former case, from 75 per cent. to 53 per cent. and, in the latter case, to 1 per cent. on an £8,000 repair.

If we juxtapose those figures with the figures in the 1986 house condition survey, 20 per cent. of the households that need one or other of the categories of major repair will be caught within the trap of this measure. Many households —not large-income, but low-income households—will fall outside the scope of eligibility for assistance with necessary works.

Even the capital cut-off in the measure is at odds with other areas of Government policy. In this case, it becomes operative at £5,000; it is £8,000 for income support and family credit and £6,000—we all know the background to this—for housing benefit and the poll tax. There is a series of different capital cut-off points applying to different areas of benefit. That will inevitably put many more people outside the rules within which they can apply for grant to carry out essential works.

Mr. Chope: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is no cut-off point for the new renovation grants?

Mr. Howarth: I shall check that, but it is not my understanding of the measure. Perhaps the Minister can tell me where it makes that point clear.

Mr. Chope: The £5,000 is a starting point, and it is a more generous starting point than under housing benefit. There is no cut-off point. There is a sliding scale right up the capital range.

Mr. Howarth: That is not my reading of it. I shall check and, if the hon. Gentleman is right, I shall write to him.

Schedule 1 to the reduction of grant regulations allows for an additional premium in certain circumstances. In

particular, these premiums apply to the disabled, to those designated as higher premium pensioners—those over 75—and to certain other disadvantaged people. The regulations allow for an additional premium to be paid to certain categories, which, in effect, increases the home improvement grant payable to the disabled.

All these premiums relate to the basic principle of means testing. Therefore, unless those basic principles are set out fairly, the corresponding premiums will be affected by the anomaly of the basic means test. For that reason, it is important to try to overturn the two requirements identified, but there is an added argument in relation to the knock-on effect that this will have on the disabled and other disadvantaged persons.

Ministers gave particular assurances about the disabled to both Houses of Parliament, and only after assurances in the House of Lords was the primary legislation for the means-testing principle passed. I do not believe that the regulations as laid meet those assurances. For that reason, they are unsatisfactory.

The Government have been making soothing noises to local authorities, telling them that £54 million is available for supplementary bids so that extra work can be carried out. As I understand it, the local authorities in my area alone, Merseyside, would need to take up £14 million of that money. By extrapolation, we see that that money will not be adequate to cover the shortfalls. The Government should again consider the amount that they are soothingly telling local authorities to apply for.

I started by saying that this incompetence built upon inactivity is all of a piece with this Government. My hon. Friends have referred to the sloppy drafting of the regulations. The Statutory Instruments Committee pointed that out at some length and in great detail. The system must be altered soon because it does not meet the country's needs. It will be changed—by a Labour Government—and the sooner the better.

11.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I commend the regulations to the House. They are the basis of a much improved system. There has been some criticism of the drafting of the regulations. As I pointed out, they are drafted in line with the housing benefit regulations. It is easy to criticise them and say that the drafting is inadequate, but I am sure that the Government would be equally criticised if they were to have detailed regulations covering a matter similar to housing benefit and were to have inconsistent language.

The Government have consistency in these regulations. That does not mean that the drafting of regulations can never be improved. The points made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) will be taken into account in further drafts of these and the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987. The criticism of the drafting of these regulations is particularly ill-placed and harsh.

Mr. Rooker: I just left the Chamber and posted the regulations, including the one with the prescribed forms, to Roger Clarke, the manager of the urban renewal section in my constituency. I told him that the Department of the Environment can be quite proud of these regulations, because they will bring any decent urban renewal scheme to a halt.

I should like the Minister to explain to the House how he expects ordinary citizens—landlords, tenants and owner-occupiers—to get round the prescribed form regulations in time for new schemes approved by his Department to start next April. If the Minister cannot give a guarantee that that will happen, it is gross deceit on the part of the Department. The Minister knows what is happening in the centre of Birmingham. If the schemes are not put in and approved by September or October this year, they will not start next year. Thousands of people will be bitterly disappointed because they will have been led up the garden path by the Minister and his colleagues.

Mr. Chope: That was a long intervention as the hon. Gentleman did not take the opportunity to make a speech during the debate. His point is unnecessary scaremongering and is based on a misunderstanding of the true position. The facts are set out clearly in the circular of guidance and in the booklet, two million copies of which have been made available for ordinary people who wish to take advantage of the new and far more generous system of renovation grants.

Throughout the debate there has been a misunderstanding by the Opposition of the rules about capital disregards. Regulation 37 provides for a tariff income to be calculated in respect of capital in excess of £5,000 only. That is more generous than under the housing benefit regulations. There is no cut-off point. Reference has been made to the cut-off points of £8,000 and £16,000, but there is no cut-off point under the regulations. That is why I can say, fairly, that they are more generous.

Mr. Soley: Inasmuch as I originally used the phrase "cut-off", the Minister is correct. It is not a cut-off; it is a taper. This is important, as the Minister will know, because, first, one could use the same base as one does for other capital starting points and, secondly, and more importantly, the regulation tapers off—if the Minister prefers that phrase—the amount until the point where one gets only 1 per cent. towards the grant when one is still on a very low income. I gave the example of a person on £191 a week who would receive only 1 per cent. grant.

Mr. Chope: That would not apply to a person on a very low income or to a person who has very low capital resources. The new system will give 100 per cent. grants to people, which was not possible under the old system. That is why the new system is properly targeted to those in greatest need. Unlike the old system, under which people could receive only a 90 per cent. grant up to a maximum amount for the works, the new system has no limit on the maximum amount of works that can be carried out. Thus, for example, a person on a low income who had low capital might be able to obtain £20,000 as a 100 per cent. grant for works that were carried out. There are many worked examples that show just how generous the new system will be. It is rather odd that the Opposition should try to suggest that the system is other than generous.

Under the new system, there is also minor works assistance which will be available especially for the benefit of the elderly. That will be available to help with insulation work, about which the hon. Member for Hammersmith was concerned. The new system takes account of that. However, it does not—and I do not think it should—give every person 100 per cent. grant, as of right, for insulation work. Under the new system, people can receive grant assistance if they are in particular need, and I should have

[Mr. Chope]

thought that that was a far fairer and more sensible way in which to distribute scarce resources belonging to the taxpayer.

The Labour party has throughout been rather against means testing. Tonight, the only outright opposition to means testing was from the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). However, just in case there are people who still belong to the Labour party who think that the Labour party is against means testing and, by implication, against means testing for renovation grants, I should remind the House that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) told the Institute of Housing conference a few weeks ago that the Labour party still supported means testing and that all it was thinking about was "rejigging the means test". That is the expression that the hon. Gentleman used. He looks puzzled; perhaps he does not read his own speeches. That points to a further area of confusion in the Labour party's policies. It will try to make everybody believe that 100 per cent. grants will be available for everybody without any means test, but it is clear that it recognises that it is much fairer to have a system of means testing.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) made clear during his important contribution to the debate, the Government's record on improving the nation's housing stock is exemplary and stands comparison with the record of any previous Labour Government. My hon. Friend understated the position. He said that there had been a 50 per cent. increase in real terms in the resources put into home renovations last year compared with 10 years ago. In fact, there has been a 100 per cent. increase in real terms in the money put into home improvements. That is why in the legislation we have been able to extend the categories and definitions so that more properties can be defined as unfit. In that way we can further improve the quality of the housing stock.

I predict that it will not be long before Opposition Members suggest that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of unfit properties during the lifetime of the Government. Opposition Members are nodding already. The numbers will have increased because we have widened the criteria and, thereby, improved the standards. That shows the way in which—dare I say it—the Opposition are prepared to resort to a form of cheating in their selective use of statistics.

Since 1979 more than £4 billion has been spent on more than 1·2 million grants to help people improve and renovate homes in the private sector. Spending has increased significantly. One of the most important parts of the new regulations is the major new assistance they provide for the disabled. The elements of the grants for the disabled have been widely recognised and accepted as being helpful to the disabled. They fit in well with the Government's policies on care in the community and enabling people to stay in their own homes. I am sorry that during the debate no Opposition Member has praised the new system and given credit where it is due.

It is worth pointing out that a newspaper that is not normally very generous in its support for Government policies carried an article last month with the heading, "Home improvement grants better". It said:

"A more generous system of home improvement aid to be launched on July 1 features mandatory grants of up to 100 per cent. of repair and renovation costs for both the low-paid and the disabled.

Housing experts have welcomed the new system as a distinct improvement".

I do not know whether that journalist will continue in employment with *The Guardian* after writing that article. If *The Guardian* thinks that the new system is better, it is churlish of the Opposition not to be prepared to accept the major improvements that have been introduced.

I commend the regulations to the House. I hope that hon. Members of both sides of the House will support them in the Lobby. As there are a couple of minutes left, I shall tell the House of a fully worked example which shows how generous the new system is. An elderly couple aged over 60, one of whom is disabled and receives an attendance or mobility allowance and with a net weekly income of £130—totalling about £6,779 a year—would be able to obtain a grant of £18,285 for works costing £20,000. That is generous in anybody's language. I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 131, Noes 182.

Division No. 300] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry

Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

PETITION

Post Office, Porthcawl

11.41 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I beg to ask leave to introduce on behalf of 2,000 of my constituents in Porthcawl a petition that sheweth

That it is proposed to downgrade the Crown Post Office in John Street, Porthcawl in the Borough of Ogwr to that of an Agency Office, and that we, the undersigned, vigorously protest at this proposed downgrading of our local Crown Post Office particularly because Post Office Counters Ltd. cannot guarantee that the Agency Post Office will simply take over the Crown Post Office, and provide for the foreseeable future all of the services currently provided there with staff who are employed on nationally agreed rates of pay and conditions of work. Furthermore, Post Office Counters Ltd. admit the likelihood of the people of Porthcawl losing the experienced, well trained, friendly and efficient staff now in their Crown Post Office whose replacements would not receive the same levels of training as given in Crown Post Offices. Thus the loss of the Crown Post Office and its replacement by an Agency Post Office will not be in the long term interests of the people of Porthcawl.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to intervene in the proposal to downgrade the Porthcawl Crown Post Office to an Agency Office.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Hospital Services (Thurrock and Basildon)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

11.42 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I am grateful for this opportunity to bring to the attention of the House some strong concerns in my constituency about proposals being put forward for the reorganisation of the delivery of acute services by my local health authority. You will be aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, that my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) would also like to make a few comments before my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health responds to the debate.

The proposals essentially involve the delivery of acute services from the two general hospitals in our health authority area, Orsett and Basildon. The proposals are to centralise accident and emergency care, intensive care, coronary care and general medicine at Basildon, and to centralise all day care surgery and planned surgery at Orsett. The proposals give rise to four particular concerns.

The first is that Orsett, which is currently a general hospital that is held in the highest esteem and affection by my constituents, will become a cold surgery hospital rather than a full general hospital because under the health authority's proposals all warm surgery and general medicine will be centralised in Basildon.

Secondly, the centralisation of all accident and emergency services at Basildon will mean that the 88 per cent. of non-emergency attenders at Orsett from my constituency—many thousands of people every year—will have an extra seven or eight miles of hassle and inconvenience travelling to Basildon, often accompanied by either a young or elderly relative with a fairly serious injury. The irony is that the worst rates of social deprivation in the health authority area are, on the whole, in my constituency—yet those are the people who will have an extra seven or eight miles to travel, often facing severe traffic jams on the A13 at the main roundabout just below Basildon. That is causing a great deal of concern.

It is worth noting that only nine district health authorities in England with a similar or greater population than that of Basildon and Thurrock attempt to provide all their accident and emergency services on one site. Of those nine, only four have a population greater than that which will be attained by the borough of Thurrock and the district of Basildon combined by the end of the current decade.

From the A and E statistics, one can make a case for saying that the borough of Thurrock—that is, my constituency and part of that of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay—should be its own district health authority. According to a written answer of 24 May, if one takes a ratio of the number of A and E units and the populations of each of the English district health authorities, one discovers that 119 English district health authorities have a population to A and E unit ratio of less than 129:1, which represents the ratio of the population of the borough of Thurrock set against having one A and E unit still maintained at Orsett.

The third major concern about the proposals is the lack of a full intensive therapy unit at Orsett, given that major planned surgeries will be carried out there under the DHA's proposals. When the proposals were first advanced, many consultants in the district health authority were concerned about that point. It is fair to say that they have been mollified to some degree by some amendments that the DHA has now made to its own proposals, but there will only be a 24-hour intensive therapy unit at Orsett under those proposals. That, again, is a matter for concern.

The fourth major concern is the centralisation of general medical and coronary care at Basildon despite the fact that the five wards with the highest premature death rate for circulatory system diseases are all in my constituency, as are the three highest rates of schaemic heart disease in the district. The three highest rates on a ward by ward basis in the health authority area for this type of heart disease are also in my constituency. Therefore, under the local health authority's proposals the part of the district with the highest percentage of people likely to be needing that care will have to use a hospital that is further away.

The key question is why Basildon and Thurrock district health authority has put forward these proposals. Apparently, it is to save money. Yet Sue Jennings, the acute unit manager for the DHA, has said that if the DHA were to get the extra £1 million tomorrow, which is the amount by which it will be over budget in this financial year, and in all future years henceforth in real terms, she would not want to withdraw the health authority's proposals, but would want to do more planned surgery, such as hip replacements, and to expand other services.

My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay and I have submitted a response to the health authority, which will have arrived there earlier this week, ready for the meeting this Thursday, suggesting that if the proposals of the Basildon and Thurrock health authority are motivated mainly by the desire to get into budget, we feel that a combination of pruning excessive management posts allowing the private sector to utilise spare facilities—hence providing more revenue—and the implementation of the community health council's organisational recommendations, to which I shall turn later, represent a superior methodology for achieving that objective than that proposed by the DHA. Of course, substantial reductions in the number of administrative and clerical staff could also be achieved to that end.

If, on the other hand, the primary objective is to improve service provision, we recommend that the district health authority should agree with the community health council a joint proposal that will find a new consensus among the population and will carry public support, provided that it has the consensus of opinion behind it.

What if the health authority is motivated mainly by the desire to get into budget? My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay and I have examined some aspects of the health authority in some detail. We have examined its management organisation charts. From our experience in business and industry, we believe that 10 posts are superfluous to requirement in the management structure. That is particularly the case in the community care unit. The analysis has been backed up by comments that have been made to us by nurses who work in the unit and by the community health council. We believe that a saving of £300,000 could be made if the 10 posts were axed.

We agree with the community health council that the promotion of 18 staff to neighbourhood managers within the community services unit should be indefinitely postponed. It is our guestimate that that would save a further £75,000.

Between April 1984 and March 1989, the administrative and salary costs for my district health authority rose by 34·8 per cent. Over the same five-year period, the accumulated increase in the retail prices index was only 26·7 per cent. If we compare the numbers of admin staff in the authority with various measurements of patient throughput, we obtain some interesting facts. Using figures that my hon. Friend the Minister gave in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay only last week, in 1985 the number of deaths and discharges in the health authority was 33,300. That rose to 33,710 by 1988—an increase of 1·2 per cent. Over the same period, the number of administrative and clerical staff rose by 6·1 per cent., from 490 to 520. In the period 1988-90, by the health authority's own measurement of throughput, the number of in-patients and day cases at Orsett and Basildon hospitals increased from 38,170 to 39,222—an increase of 2·76 per cent. Yet the number of admin and clerical staff —admittedly, across the whole health authority and not just in the two main hospitals—increased from 520 to 560·72, an increase of 7·8 per cent.

I have used 1985 as the base year—a year well beyond the major boundary changes in district health authorities in the early 1980s. If the number of admin and clerical staff had increased by the same percentage as the throughput in patients from 1985 to 1990, which would give a zero productivity increase, instead of increasing from 490 to 560·72, the number would have increased to only 510.

I am willing to accept that our figures are based on a certain degree of guestimate—neither of us is expert in the matter—but we hazard a guess that 50 posts in the admin and clerical staff could be lost. If those heads went, that would save £400,000. Even with the possibility of some double counting of the management posts to which I referred earlier, it is clear that there are opportunities for considerable savings in the health authority. Certainly, the authority could save more than the £260,000 which the authority said that it would save in the first year under its own proposals. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay intends to talk about that in a little more detail.

If the motivation behind the proposals is not to get into budget, and if that is being used as a smokescreen simply to reorganise as the authority wants to but which it knows will be unpopular with my constituents, it should make new proposals after holding discussions with the community health council and the family practitioner committee. With those two bodies it should formulate a consensus approach that will carry the population with it. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take note —I am sure that I shall visit him with my CHC on the matter—that my CHC has put forward alternative proposals that include keeping a non-emergency casualty unit at Orsett and centralising general medicine and coronary care at Orsett, not Basildon, but keeping a high dependency unit at Basildon to support the centralisation of emergency admissions at Basildon.

My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay and I support the alternative proposals of the community health council because they are realistic and will maintain, if not improve, the service to the entire area, but especially our respective constituents. That improvement will not be achieved through the DHA proposals. As my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay rightly wishes to speak, I do not have time to say any more about the CHC's counter-proposals, except to emphasise that I support them.

I must strongly reiterate to my hon. Friend the Minister that there is considerable local opposition to the DHA proposals. I respect, of course, its desire to get into budget. In the past five years there has been a consistent real terms increase in the amount of funding that it has received. I find it difficult to believe that that total amount of funding is the problem. Whatever the motivation behind the specific DHA proposals, there is considerable local opposition to them. Nearly 20,000 people have now signed the petition that one of my local newspapers, the *Thurrock Gazette*, has organised. My hon. Friend should use his powers to put pressure on the DHA to withdraw its proposals and to assess properly its efficiency and its efforts to get administration under control. It should not reduce service provision to my constituents. It should make cuts in the other areas that I have mentioned rather than in the core services.

It would be much better if my hon. Friend could use his influence to bring pressure to bear on Basildon and Thurrock district health authority to withdraw its proposals. It should work with the CHC and the family practitioner committee to decide upon an acceptable way forward that is within budget.

Some of the controversial DHA proposals are supported by medical opinion—for example, the centralising of emergency services provision at Orsett. The CHC has accepted that medical opinion is right in that respect and as a politician I do not think that it is right that I should argue against that opinion.

There are some aspects of the proposals that the CHC and I can accept, but the complete withdrawal of accident and emergency facilities in the borough of Thurrock, particularly in my end of the borough, is unacceptable. The package of proposals is not acceptable and I hope that my hon. Friend will bring pressure to bear to get them withdrawn.

11.57 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) for allowing me time to speak in his Adjournment debate. I also welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess).

My constituency straddles the two main hospitals of Thurrock and Basildon. Those large district hospitals are relatively close together, so that, on paper, one might reasonably ask why we need two main hospitals to service the area. The Thurrock half of my constituency, however, points to the river and is distinct from the other side of my constituency which is on the other side of Basildon, the town in the middle of it. The people in that part of the constituency relate to the Basildon hospital and think quite differently about themselves. Although the two hospitals are geographically close, there is a major motorway between them that must be crossed. At busy times of the day—increasingly that means all day—the motorway is heavily congested. The people of Thurrock view with great concern the prospect of going to Basildon hospital for accident and emergency treatment.

Many people living in the area of Thurrock district have modest incomes and do not have motor cars. Public transport between that part of Thurrock and Basildon hospital is not good, and it is worrying those people that they will have to go to Basildon for accident and emergency treatment.

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

There has been a great upsurge of concern in the area and I sometimes think that we neglect the fact that the institutions about which we are speaking exist for the people of the area, not for the administrators who wish to make things neat and tidy on paper.

I praise my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock for the work he has done in looking into the problem, including the detailed financial analysis that he has made. Although it was said that the initial savings would be about £1 million—the figure of £800,000 was mentioned—it would seem in the final analysis that the actual savings as a result of this major change of policy would be little more than £250,000. I am sure that that sum would be dissipated when the changes came into effect, through the provision of new beds and the extra facilities that would have to be provided at Basildon hospital. Those expenses would soon gobble up any money that was saved.

I have talked to the nurses on both sides. They assure me that there are far too many chiefs and not enough Indians—that, as my hon. Friend said, there are too many administrators. Thurrock has one of the fastest growing populations in the country, with a 10 per cent. increase a year, which is five times the national average.

In the Thurrock part of the constituency we have Tilbury docks, one of the major docks, where the chances of accidents happening are relatively high. The accident and emergency unit should be retained in Thurrock. We have Shellhaven and Mobil, the two largest oil terminals in the country, for which accident and emergency services are vital. We also have the development of the Thurrock-Dartford bridge to supplement the tunnel, the development of an enormous shopping centre and a new town of almost 8,000 dwellings, the Chafford Hundreds.

For all those reasons, the facilities for accident and emergency treatment should be retained in the Thurrock part of the constituency. We have in the past agreed to amalgamate gynaecological services. We have discussed the prospect of the people of Basildon having to go to Thurrock for what is known as cold surgery, which is a curious term for long-term surgery. We have the prospect of people needing emergency surgery having to go all the way from Thurrock to Basildon. That is not the way to treat people, remembering that this is their health service.

We want to keep the people of Thurrock safe with their own accident and emergency service. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to that request.

12.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I wish at the outset to congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) and for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman)—but particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock—on raising this issue and on expressing clearly the concerns of their constituents about the proposals that have been put forward by the health authority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock has a reputation—it was drawn to my attention soon after taking up my present duties—as an assiduous advocate of his constituents' interests. There could be no better illustration of that than the detailed presentation—my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay will not mind my saying that, for while both my hon. Friends signed the presentation, it reflects the detailed work that has been done by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock—that he has made as background to the representations that he has been making on behalf of his constituents as a result of the concern that they have expressed about the proposals.

My hon. Friend has taken up these matters in private, as well as in the House tonight, and because I regret to say that I doubt whether what I shall say tonight will conclude the matter, I confidently expect my hon. Friend to continue to pursue his campaign in the coming weeks.

As my hon. Friend said, the reason for this debate is that the health authority issued a consultation document this April and is currently out to consultation on the proposals contained in it. I shall not weary the House with a recital of the document's contents, but I should observe at the outset of my speech that if the objections that have so far been maintained by the community health council are maintained throughout the system, the proposal will land on Ministers' desks. Therefore, I hope that both my hon. Friends will appreciate that I am constrained in what I can say about the merits of particular proposals because they seem to be set fair to land on Ministers' desks and I must not prejudge the outcome of that decision-making process. If it comes to that, I am sure that both my hon. Friends will wish to put their views again, and I shall ensure that there is ample opportunity for them to do so.

I must emphasise that the drift of health service management in recent years—this is not unique to the health service—has consistently been to try to delegate decisions further down the line. When, in the health service or anywhere else, one tries to delegate decisions, those at the top of the service must recognise that occasionally the managers to whom decisions are delegated will make decisions with which those at the top may disagree.

In those circumstances, the burden of proof placed on anyone wishing to encourage a Minister to overturn the decisions taken by a delegated manager is, rightly, heavy. My hon. Friends must show not only that if I were in that manager's position I should do as my hon. Friends advocate, but that their arguments are so weighted that they should overturn my natural preference for a delegated system of management and support their propositions.

My hon. Friends have been elegant in expressing the concern about the proposal within their constituencies. But there is no proposal to close Orsett hospital. On the contrary, there is a proposal to change its role in a way that my hon. Friends and their constituents find unsatisfactory, and their reasons for doing so were expressed by my hon. Friends. It is important for everyone to understand that there is common ground between the health authority and my hon. Friends, and their constituents, about the importance of maintaining hospital facilities, both at Basildon and at Orsett, which is not in dispute.

There is an obvious worry that the residents of the Thurrock district will have to travel to the Basildon end of the health authority district. As both my hon. Friends stressed, when considering whether that is an appropriate arrangement, the health authority and, ultimately, perhaps Ministers will have to bear in mind that there is a concentration of disadvantaged areas in the Thurrock end of the district. As my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay stressed, there is also a concentration of industrial plants that might give rise to industrial

accidents. Those factors undoubtedly have to be taken into account, principally by the health authority and, if necessary, by Ministers, when reaching decisions.

Without prejudicing what we as Ministers might conclude if the proposal reached our desks, I shall say a few words about the basic arguments that my hon. Friends advanced against the health authority's proposal. First, there are financial arguments. I am glad that it is common ground between both my hon. Friends and me that the health authority has a clear obligation, which it must discharge, to ensure that its financial affairs are properly managed and its budgets are properly balanced. That is the only basis on which we can achieve a proper distribution of resources throughout the health service, and it is an entirely proper discipline for health service managers at all levels to insist upon.

It is also worth remembering that Basildon and Thurrock health authority has closed the gap between its spending level and the national target defined by RAWP; the gap was 11 per cent. seven years ago, but today the authority is on its RAWP target. That shows that there has been effective management of resources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock emphasised what he felt to be the scope for savings on administrative and clerical staff, suggesting that 50 heads could be saved at a total saving of £400,000. I do not dismiss that argument. If the issue came to Ministers' desks, we would carefully consider it.

My hon. Friends should also recognise that when the health service recruits additional managers, it does so in the belief that the extra management effort contributed by administrative and clerical staff will release resources for better use elsewhere in the service. That can arise in two ways: by clerical staff taking over administrative functions previously carried out by clinicians, with the result that a higher proportion of clinicians' time is available for patient contact; and by ensuring that other resources are more effectively managed and that any management posts created should achieve a considerable improvement in the effective use of resources in the service. It has been one of our purposes since 1979 to ensure that health service resources are more effectively used. One manifestation of that is the extra investment that we have made in management.

The second leg of my hon. Friend's argument was that, whatever the arguments about budgetary balance, the health authority may believe that these changes are necessary anyway. He stressed the advantages of looking for a consensus with the CHC. It undoubtedly has a role to play in this; I welcome the fact that it is involved in constructive dialogue on the way forward for the health authority.

Ultimately I am sure that my hon. Friends will recognise that it is for the managers of the authority to decide how best to provide patient care and proper financial discipline in the health authority's area.

It seems that the case may well come to Ministers. I can assure my hon. Friends that we shall carefully weigh the arguments that they have advanced tonight. We shall provide ample opportunity for them to develop them in private, and I am sure that they will take up that offer. Our objective will be to ensure that the health authority maintains proper financial standards and disciplines; and, much more importantly, that the resources used by the health authority are used to clinical effect in its area.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twelve minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 18 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Short-termism

1. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to make any proposals to counter short-termism in British industry.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): Like my right hon. predecessor, to whom I pay tribute, I recognise the importance of this issue. Companies' ability to invest for the long term is a function of their profitability. The profitability of British industry has returned of late to the highest level for 20 years and business investment has consequently reached record levels.

Mr. Hughes: Can the Minister tell the House that on his appointment he was able to convey to the Prime Minister the magnitude of his task in repairing the damage that has been done to British industry because of short-termism? Does he recognise that it is also a malady which appertains to his own job? Can he again assure the House of his long-term commitment to industry?

Mr. Lilley: I have a long-term commitment to industry —have no fear—although I understand that the time customarily spent in this Department is shorter rather than longer. I shall certainly do all in my power to ensure that British industry continues to be profitable and therefore remains in a position to invest for the long term, as it has increasingly done under the Government.

Mr. Batiste: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his appointment to this important job. Will he consider whether short-termism is largely due to the fact that because of our tax system too much of British savings is channeled to institutions whose fund managers are subject to short-term pressures? Is not the solution to encourage individuals to save more directly in United Kingdom industry?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that he has hit upon an important point which lies behind some of the measures that we have taken in recent years to encourage direct individual saving in industry. Companies benefit from and welcome a large mass of individual direct shareholders and we are glad that there are now 11 million direct shareholders in British industry.

Mr. Gordon Brown: I welcome the Secretary of State to his new post. On countering short-termism, as the right hon. Gentleman has moved from the Treasury, does he agree with the Chancellor on economic and monetary union that

"we are all committed to this goal",

or does he agree with his predecessor, who said in his resignation letter that

"economic and monetary union . . . would be a disaster"?

Does he agree with the Chancellor—*[Interruption.]* This is about the long-term future of British industry——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am no great expert on economic matters, but surely the question relates to short-termism.

Mr. Brown: On the question of the long-term view for this country and for industry, does the Secretary of State agree with the Chancellor that the hard ecu is one possible route to a single currency, or does he hold to the view that a single currency without a single European Government is almost inconceivable—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a very long question.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks, and I am glad to find myself opposite him again. It should be no surprise to him that I entirely endorse the position of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, and indeed the whole Government, on the issue of the hard ecu and EMU. That should be no surprise as, until a few hours ago, I had some responsibility under the Chancellor for that policy.

Airline Competition

2. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to ensure greater competition amongst British airlines to prevent the development of a monopoly by any one airline; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): My right hon. Friend will continue to exercise his powers, where appropriate, under the Fair Trading Act 1973 and other competition legislation. In particular, he will continue to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission those mergers in the airline industry that appear to raise United Kingdom competition or other public interest issues.

However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has specific responsibility for airlines in the United Kingdom. His policy, which I support fully, is to encourage a sound and competitive industry with a variety of airlines while promoting healthy competition in all markets, in the interests of consumers.

Mr. Amos: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Given that competition invariably benefits the consumer through lower fares, more choice and a higher quality service, will he do his best to ensure that the smaller airlines are given every possible assistance and encouragement to resist the predatory and often unfair trading practices of British Airways? Despite British Airways' massive economies of scale, its prices are up to 40 per cent. higher than those of the smaller airlines. It also operates an unhealthy monopoly on the London to Newcastle route.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend identifies an important point. I agree that smaller airlines have an important part to play in maintaining a healthy, competitive airline

industry. I am conscious of the importance of smaller airlines and small airports to the economic development of the regions which I visit in the course of my ministerial duties.

Mr. Lambie: Is the Minister aware that when Mr. Michael Bishop and British Midland Airways applied for licences to fly between Glasgow and London, they stated that, if they were given those licences, they would compete fairly with British Airways in terms of price and service? Now that British Midland is no longer competing with British Airways in terms of price, it is complaining when British Airways gives a better service to passengers on flights between Glasgow and London. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman inform British Midland that, instead of trying to stop the service that British Airways provides for people travelling on that route, it should compete in terms of price? Will the Government break the pricing cartel of British Midland and British Airways?

Mr. Hogg: These are essentially matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but I shall ensure that he is made aware of the hon. Gentleman's views.

Mr. Hill: Why is it almost impossible to have deregulation in the United Kingdom and Europe? America ably achieved deregulation almost overnight. Does not the international aviation industry compete with aviation industries in other countries? Rather than encouraging competition between United Kingdom airlines, we should open the markets to all, resulting in lower fares throughout Europe and the world generally.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I am in favour of considerable competition, but my hon. Friend will appreciate that we must carry many other countries with us on the subject of further deregulation.

Rover Group

3. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to respond to the European Community's recent communication on the sale of the Rover Group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As yet we have not received the formal decision letter from the Commission. When we do, we will reply expeditiously. We have decided, subject to any representations by British Aerospace, to accept the Commission's decision on repayment.

Mr. Jones: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he ask the new Secretary of State whether he will clear up the mess created by his two predecessors and tell the House, as he must tell the Commission in due course, the details of the secret tax incentives given to Rover and British Aerospace for the shabby Rover deal? Will the hon. and learned Gentleman ask the new Secretary of State to condemn his predecessors for their deception of the House and the Commission?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman raised two points. I wish first to say something about my right hon. Friend the previous Secretary of State. In this respect, I speak on behalf of all Ministers and officials who had the privilege of serving under him. We very much regret what happened. My right hon. Friend was held in the highest affection and respect by those who knew him well, and I have a low opinion of those who now try to make personal political capital out of his misfortune. As to the— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us hear the answer to the question.

Mr. Hogg: On the question of taxation, our position has always been that Rover Group and British Aerospace will be treated in precisely the same way as any other taxpayer. There is nothing in the Commission decision that casts doubt on that approach. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) owes the House an apology because he spoke of hidden tax concessions and, despite very careful scrutiny by the Commission, there is no evidence whatever of that.

Sir Hal Miller: I thank my hon. amd learned Friend the Minister for his generous tribute to the previous Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I should like to be associated with that. Will he include in any response to the European Commission the fact that Rover had accumulated an overhang of £1·4 billion under the Varley-Marshall guarantee and had a further £1 billion investment programme? Had it remained in the public sector, there would thus have been potential for almost £2·5 billion in aid, which would have stuck a great deal more in the EEC craw than the minor sums that we are discussing.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right. He might also like to address his mind to two other matters. First, what was done has safeguarded about 190,000 jobs. Secondly, when Rover Group was in public ownership it gobbled up £3·5 billion which could otherwise have been more profitably used.

Mr. Leighton: Although the Minister's Department is called the Department of Trade and Industry, does he agree that Britain is not allowed to have a trade policy because it is decided in Brussels? In view of what happened to Rover Group, it seems that we are not allowed to have an independent industrial policy either. Does the Minister agree that Sir Leon Brittan is now more powerful than he was when he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? Do not the Minister's civil servants tell him every day, "Minister, you cannot do this, that or the other because Brussels will not allow it", and is not that what irked the previous Secretary of State and made him rather vexed?

Mr. Hogg: First, it is a pity that the hon. Gentleman was not here on 28 June 1990 when he might have caught your eye, Mr. Speaker, during the statement made by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Secondly, I understood that Labour was pretending to be a European party, but Labour Back Benchers are showing that they have an extreme dislike of the European Community. It would be interesting to know which represents the proper view in the Labour party.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that people in the west midlands are heartily sick and tired of all the accusations being levelled at Rover Group and British Aerospace? Car workers in the west midlands are anxious to get on with making the cars that are necessary for our economic improvement. In view of what the European Commission may say, will my hon. and learned Friend go ahead and tell it that negotiations between the

companies and the Inland Revenue were entirely their own affair and that the benefits, if any, which might accrue from those negotiations can be set against the enormous amount of investment by British Aerospace and Rover Group in ever more credible products for the market?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is entirely right. I suspect that his constituents were also interested in the express finding by the Commission that a sale price of £150 million was correct and reasonable. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has alleged from time to time that that was an undervaluation.

Mr. Gordon Brown *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman need not shake his head because I have his quotes. It is time that he apologised for being so misleading.

Mr. Henderson: Before the Minister gets too carried away, will he confirm that he expects to have to give a full, written report to the Commission about the tax concessions?

Mr. Hogg: The Commission has made it plain that Rover Group and British Aerospace should be treated like any other taxpayer. That is what we have always proposed to do.

Buy British Campaign

4. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received in favour of a "buy British" campaign.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): My Department has received a number of such representations. We recognise the advantages of purchasing British products when they are competitive in design, quality and price.

Mr. Amess: Is my hon. Friend aware that our hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs will be visiting my constituency of Basildon next Wednesday to launch the "buy British goods from Basildon" campaign? Will he join me in congratulating local businesses on their initiative? Does he agree that the success that I am sure the campaign will enjoy will make a valuable contribution to Britain's balance of payments?

Mr. Forth: I am sure that the sense of delight and honour is shared equally between Basildon and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. I am sure that everyone is looking forward to the visit. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) has made the important point that it is right that individual areas such as his constituency should take the initiative in ensuring that local companies buy from each other wherever that is possible and justifiable. That will stimulate the local economy and the use of British goods by the British industrial sector. All of that will assist the recovery of Britain's claim in that sector, which we all want.

Mr. James Lamond: Has the Minister recently taken the opportunity to shop in C and A, British Home Stores or Littlewoods, and has he tried to find anything British among their stocks of shirts, underwear and suits? Is he aware that it is difficult to buy British, even if one wants to do so? With the possible exception of Marks and Spencer, almost every multiple store makes it easy for our competitors to bring foreign textiles into Britain.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. I can speak only for myself, and I stand before the House in my British-made suit——

Hon. Members: "Hear, hear."

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am glad to hear that good news.

Mr. Forth: It is for each individual to exercise consumer choice and decide whether to buy British goods. If more of us did that, all retail outlets would have to reconsider their sales policies to meet our requirements, but it must be driven by the consumer.

Mr. Grylls: Does my hon. Friend agree that although "buy British" is a well-intentioned campaign, it might be better to advocate "sell British" because the quality is best and the price most competitive? People should not be forced to buy something that is not the best. No doubt my hon. Friend made his judgment on his smart suit because it was the best and had the most competitive price.

Mr. Forth: It is worth recording that more than 90 per cent. of the goods and services bought by the Government are from United Kingdom sources. That shows that it is possible, both at the public level and in private purchasing, to strike a balance between value and cost and patriotism. Those ideals are quite consistent and not in contradiction.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does the Minister acknowledge that the policies that the Government have pursued have brought about the worst manufacturing trade deficit in history? Will he assure the House that the change of Secretary of State will result in new policies at the Department of Trade and Industry which will set us back on the road to success?

Mr. Forth: There is no reason why that should be so. I have every confidence that the new Secretary of State will wish to pursue the excellent policies of his predecessors, and so he should. It is well known to all hon. Members —except, perhaps, the hon. Gentleman—that the Department of Trade and Industry, under successive Secretaries of State, has created an economic and industrial climate in which British industry can fight back against an increasingly competitive world trading position and, indeed, improve Britain's trading position. It is only against the background of our taxation policies, our industrial relations policies and our concentration on improvement of management that we can do that. I am confident that the future will lead us further in that direction.

European Single Market

5. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many of the measures so far agreed for the creation of the single European market have yet to be implemented by the United Kingdom, and what is the comparable figure for other member states.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom, with Denmark, has the best record of implementing single market measures. Of the 95 measures that should by now be in force, only 13 remain to be implemented in the United Kingdom. That figure is twice as good as the average for other member

states. The country with the next best record to that of the United Kingdom is the Federal Republic of Germany. I am arranging for a full list to be printed in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Evans: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his promotion, and I wish him well. I thank him for those figures. Do not they show that we are true and honest leaders in the creation of a single European market? Does he agree that Labour would sell its soul and that of the nation over Europe—this time for a few deutschmarks, but usually for a lot less?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I thank him for his remarks. The United Kingdom was very much the first and strongest supporter of the single European market, has been consistent in implementing its measures, and is the most effective in enforcing them. We continue to take a lead in ensuring that the single European market is carried through to a successful completion. We know that the Opposition's hearts are not in it because they do not support the underlying philosophy of the single market.

Mr. Beith: I welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his new post. Does he believe that the European Commission should be extremely active in promoting adherence to the single European market in all member countries and in bringing to book any country that fails fully to co-operate, or if the Commission does so, will the Secretary of State accuse it of bullying and interference in the affairs of sovereign states?

Mr. Lilley: I believe that member countries should implement measures to which they have agreed. However, I am in favour of the minimum of government at all levels.

Mr. Wells: I join others in congratulating my right hon. Friend on his new appointment. Does he agree that implementation in Europe ought to be followed by enforcement, and that that can be effective only if all the people of a country in which directives are implemented have been consulted as part of the approval process of their national Government and of the Council of Ministers? Does not that provide a clue to the way in which we can help other European countries more quickly to incorporate the directives into their own legislation and to implement them?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes an important and valuable point. It has always been a tradition in this country that laws are passed after consultation and discussion—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh?"]—and we want to see the maximum consultation and discussion about European as well as domestic measures as they pass through the House.

Mr. Cabom: Does the Secretary of State agree or disagree with the view of his predecessor that economic and monetary union will be a disaster—yes or no?

Mr. Lilley: As I told the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), I entirely support the Government's policy on that issue and had a hand in formulating it. One Friday morning a little while ago, I made a speech elaborating my views in an interesting debate initiated by a Labour Member who does not share the views of the Opposition Front Bench and in which we watched the divisions in the Labour party open very wide.

Following is the information

Comparable figures for other member states are

	Number
Denmark	13
Federal Republic of Germany	15
France	21
Ireland	23
Spain	26
Netherlands	27
Luxembourg	30
Belgium	32
Greece	35
Portugal	44
Italy	55

East-West Trade

6. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what meetings he has had with his counterparts in the countries of eastern Europe in the past six months to discuss east-west trade.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): During the past six months, Department of Trade and Industry Ministers have met their trade or industry counterparts from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary and Poland, as well as other Ministers from Bulgaria and Romania. I myself have held meetings in London with Ministers from Czechoslovakia, the USSR and Hungary, and have visited East Germany, Romania and Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister agree that the fact that the previous Secretary of State was caught in a time warp and expressed extreme chauvinist views did nothing to enable him to encourage trade with eastern Europe, particularly with the German Democratic Republic? Does the hon. Gentleman further agree that the recent increase in premiums by the ECGD has not helped? Will he reconsider those premium levels, particularly as they affect trade with the Soviet Union?

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made several successful visits to countries in eastern and central Europe, accompanied by business men who were very grateful for the help that he gave in presenting their case in those countries as a source of potential business. The evidence abounds. Joint ventures are increasing, and there is a growth in trade with countries in eastern and central Europe. The time warp is with the Opposition. They are the ones who want policies that failed in east and central Europe. They want to foist back on the British people interventionism, expensive subsidies and sweeteners, at the taxpayers' expense, which would not be successful. *[Interruption.]* Yes, I use the word "sweeteners". That is exactly what the Labour party wants, at the expense of the British taxpayer, and it would do great damage.

The Export Credits Guarantee Department makes short-term credits available, on various terms, to all the eastern and central European markets. The implementation of the EMS will be reviewed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Forman: I welcome the efforts that have been made by successive Department of Trade and Industry Ministers

to promote east-west trade. Can my hon. Friend give some examples of joint ventures that, so far, have been successful? That is one way, together with equity participation, in which this country could benefit more from trade with eastern and central European countries.

Mr. Redwood: Joint ventures span several industries and activities. There are 60 in Poland and 48 in Hungary, by United Kingdom companies that are known to the Department. There may be others. For example, there is a well-known joint venture in railway equipment in Hungary, which is very successful. A British pub is being established in Hungary. A range of consumer and engineering industries will, I am sure, make a great contribution to United Kingdom economic activity in those countries.

EC Industry Ministers

7. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which meetings of the European Community's Industry Ministers he has not attended in the past year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have attended each of the Industry Council meetings during the past year, with the exception of the 28 May 1990 meeting, which was attended by Sir David Hannay, the United Kingdom permanent representative to the European Communities.

Mr. Steinberg: This question was directed at the previous Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. However, I venture to ask whether the new Secretary of State will give an undertaking not to treat those vital meetings in Europe with the contempt shown by his predecessor. Does the Minister share the views of his predecessor on Europe—that Germany is trying to take over the whole of Europe?

Mr. Hogg: I can suppose only that the hon. Gentleman was not listening. I made the point that I attended all the Industry Council meetings, bar one, during the past year. For completeness of information, may I observe that I attended all five of the Research Council meetings, for which I am also responsible?

Mr. Kirkhope: In his busy schedule, will my hon. and learned Friend have time to consider one of the latest of the Labour party's policy documents, "Looking to the Future", which I understand is in its first edition? It calls for high spending and interventionist policies. Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that those are the very policies that would pull our industry down and leave us looking completely naked whenever we met European Industry Ministers?

Mr. Hogg: Anybody who has subjected the Labour party's policies to analysis knows that they would result in very much higher taxation, greatly increased public expenditure and a great escalation in the rate of inflation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might be helpful to the whole House if hon. Members asked questions of the Secretary of State and his Ministers instead of asking them to agree with their views.

Electronic Equipment

8. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of electronic equipment sold in the United Kingdom comes from overseas.

Mr. Forth: The latest available figures show that 71 per cent. of electronic and information technology equipment sold in the United Kingdom is imported. This figure includes all such equipment, including components. No information is available on finished electronic equipment alone.

Mr. McWilliam: I am grateful to the Minister for his answer. However, what steps is he taking, together with his EEC counterparts, to encourage and develop the component manufacturing industries in Britain and the rest of the EEC, given the large proportion of components of finished electronic equipment that originate from outside Britain and the EEC?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is correct in his analysis that that is a problem we all share. When I say "we" I mean all OECD countries because, with the exception of Japan, we all have a trade deficit in information technology. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that the good news is that the United Kingdom has a large trade surplus with the rest of the Community countries—£900 million last year—in this category of equipment. Therefore, we are positive and optimistic, as we are entitled to be. If the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends persist, as they seem to, in looking on the gloomy and pessimistic side, downgrading the performance of British industry, they must answer for that. We like to recognise success when it occurs.

Mr. Churchill: Will my hon. Friend tell the House on what grounds GEC and Siemens have recently been released from many of the undertakings that they gave less than a year ago in the context of their takeover of Plessey?

Mr. Forth: Regrettably, I cannot answer my hon. Friend's question because it is not part of my responsibility. I can assure him that we shall look carefully at his point and I shall ask my colleagues to give him an answer as quickly as possible.

Rover Group

9. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the net benefit to the taxpayer of the sale of Rover to British Aerospace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The sale of Rover Group for the best available price brought considerable benefits for taxpayers. It relieved them of responsibility for a company which had swallowed up £3·5 billion in the past and which carried the contingent liability of the Varley-Marshall-Joseph assurances. That stood at £1·6 billion in March 1988 and was set to rise significantly over the corporate plan period. The deal also safeguarded over 20,000 jobs, mainly in the west midlands.

Mr. Nellist: What is the chance of the new Secretary of State taking a leaf out of Hercules' book and cleaning out this particular Augean stable, the smell of which has ripened substantially in the past week with the revelation

that eight secret meetings took place between his Department, British Aerospace and the Inland Revenue between March and July 1988 and that £411 million in secret tax concessions was offered as a further sweetener to British Aerospace? What hold does British Aerospace have over his Department, or does the Minister intend to deny that those discussions took place?

Mr. Hogg: This is a continuing effort on behalf of the Labour party to impose on British Aerospace substantially increased burdens. The Commission has reviewed all those matters and reached a considered view. One of the findings was that £150 million was a fair and reasonable price. It also reviewed the tax questions. The time has come for the Labour party to tell the House whether it accepts the Commission's findings. If it does, it must eat an awful lot of humble pie.

Mr. Oppenheim: If there was a hidden subsidy, surely one might expect the Opposition to approve of it, bearing in mind the fact that they are in favour of industrial subsidies and that they gave the British car industry billions of pounds. Is their sudden distaste for subsidies a genuine change of heart, showing that they have embraced the free market, or is it the usual mixture of hypocrisy and opportunism?

Mr. Hogg: Unquestionably the latter.

Mr. Gordon Brown: So that there is no misunderstanding on the matter, will the Minister confirm that he knows that the Commission is not yet satisfied about the tax arrangements governing that deal? Will he further confirm that he knows that it is demanding a written report on the arrangements that are made, and when the report is done, will he agree to place it in the Library so that everyone can see it?

Mr. Hogg: Once again, the hon. Gentleman has not been listening. I have made it absolutely plain to the House that it has always been our intention to ensure that British Aerospace and Rover Group are treated in the same way as any other taxpayer. The Commission is simply seeking an assurance to that effect. The hon. Gentleman has some answering and apologising to do. Why does he persist in alleging undervaluation when he knows perfectly well that the Commission found that it was a fair and reasonable price?

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Harry Greenway. Question 10. *[Interruption.]* Order.

Mr. Cryer: It is the only way we can get in.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are going very slowly at the moment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *rose*——

Mr. Bell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is Question Time for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Will we hear from him again?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Hogg: Terrible bleats are coming from the Opposition. I fancy that they do not like being knocked about.

Manufacturing Industry

10. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives from the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the performance of British manufacturing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Ministers and officials of my Department keep in touch with the CBI on a wide range of business matters. Manufacturing industry is stronger today than at any time in the past. Output, investment, productivity and exports were all at record levels in 1989 and have risen yet further this year.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that exports were up 55 per cent. in volume in 1989 compared with 1981? Do not those figures reflect the efficiency of British industry and the effectiveness of Government policy? Do not they also give the lie to the constant bleating of the Labour party that manufacturing industry is doing less well than it is?

Mr. Hogg: The figures given by my hon. Friend are wholly right, as are his conclusions, but the figures are even better than he suggested. As he will know, in the three months to May this year, exports of manufactures, excluding oil and erratics, were 14 per cent. higher in volume terms than in the same period last year.

Mr. Hoyle: What representations has the Minister received from the CBI about the effect of high interest rates on industry? Will he put on record the fact that although our exports may have grown, imports have grown more rapidly and that by the end of the year we shall have a record deficit in our balance of trade? Is not that a failure by the Government?

Mr. Hogg: As the hon. Gentleman would know if he studied these things, the CBI is bullish about the prospects of the British economy. It is concerned about the high levels of inflation that it enjoyed under a Labour Government, which it would certainly enjoy under a future Labour Government were there ever to be one, and it is firmly behind Government policy to use interest rates as a mechanism for reducing inflationary pressures.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the increasing number of small companies that are going into receivership, partially due to high interest rates being used as the sole weapon against inflation? Does he consider that that further damages our manufacturing base?

Mr. Hogg: A dynamic economy implies that businesses both start and end. I am happy to say that the net increase in businesses has been high. Between the end of 1981 and the end of 1988, business starts exceeded stops by 238,000 or, using the current figures based on VAT registration, 1,600 more new companies start each week than close.

Ms. Quin: Will the Minister confirm that between 1979 and 1987 the annual growth of exports was lower in Britain than in any other European country? Is he prepared to meet industrialists and to discuss further the concerns that they expressed to the Department at the recent conference on short-termism because they were worried about the future of manufacturing in this country?

Mr. Hogg: It is always a pleasure to talk to industrialists and indeed to anyone else who cares to talk to me or my right hon. Friend. I do not understand why the Labour party continues to poor-mouth industry. Why does not the hon. Lady concentrate on economic growth, which between 1981 and 1989 increased at an average of 3·2 per cent., while in a similar period in West Germany it increased by 2·2 per cent. only and in France by 2·1 per cent. only. Labour should concentrate on the main facts, I say.

Departmental Expenditure

11. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much his Department spent in 1989-90, expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product; and what information he has on the comparable figure for the Japanese Ministry of International Trade.

Mr. Lilley: Expenditure by the DTI last year was one quarter per cent. of GDP whereas general expenditure by Japan's Ministry of International Trade proportionate to GDP was one third lower, even though its responsibilities are wider.

Mr. Franks: May I add my voice to those welcoming my right hon. Friend to his new office of state? Do not the figures that he has just given give the lie to the frequent claims by the Opposition and the academics so beloved of the Opposition that the Government do not do sufficient to help British industry? Will he reaffirm the Government's principle that the best way to assist British industry is to leave it to get on with its business unfettered by bureaucrats?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is highly significant that the only evidence that the Opposition can adduce to support their policies is the claim that a distant and rather inscrutable economy is run on the lines that they advocate. On closer inspection, the evidence refutes that, as does the experience of Labour Governments.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the Japanese Government are clever and sophisticated in their handling of industry, and no one in his right mind could accuse the British Government of that? Does he realise that in one city in Japan there are 86 research clubs that are organised by the Ministry of International Trade in Japan, and that that cost the Ministry nothing more than the paper to call the meetings? That is an example of co-operation and leadership between Government and industry which costs nothing and which the British Government should follow.

Mr. Lilley: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman, unlike the Opposition Front Bench, is in favour of a low level of Government expenditure. Japan spends a lower proportion of its GDP on public expenditure than Britain and most European countries; it has a lower level of tax and fewer nationalised industries. As a result of its free enterprise economy, it has harnessed the great skills of the Japanese people very successfully. We have released the energies of the British people by employing the same free market methods.

Mr. David Shaw: Has my right hon. Friend been able to compare the Japanese Government's policies for industry with the proposals in the Labour party's new policy document and the British Government's policies? Does not he consider that the policies of the British Government and of the Japanese Government, in promoting privatisation, competition and free enterprise, are far more successful?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Our policies and those of the Japanese Government have much in common. They are flatly contrary to the socialist policies still advocated by the Opposition, although in a new language and in a new guise. I note that Opposition Members do not seek to object to the fact that their policies remain socialistic in their latest policy document.

Kingfisher/Dixon Takeover Report

13. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much compensation he estimates his Department paying in the wake of the early release of the Kingfisher Dixon takeover report.

Mr. Redwood: I shall continue to consider claims received before the end of this month for losses incurred on the morning of 23 May by those buying Dixon shares, selling Kingfisher shares or dealing in traded options in those securities. I will then be able to estimate more accurately the final cost. Payments will be on the basis of one half of the differences between the price at which the shares or options were bought or sold on the morning of 23 May, and the prices ruling when trading was resumed shortly after 1 pm. I shall take into account corresponding gains from selling Dixons shares or buying Kingfisher shares, or from hedging positions in the options market. The Government have already apologised for that unfortunate event.

Mr. Marshall: In view of the continuing enormous cost to the taxpayer as a result of the repeated incompetence of his Department, will the Minister give the House a categorical assurance that the change of leadership in the DTI will result in no more blunders over City matters? What action has he taken to prevent that from happening again?

Mr. Redwood: The estimate of the maximum possible cost of the error is around £120,000, but I hope that when I see the final claims, it will be lower than that. The House must understand that the calculations are difficult and we cannot be entirely sure of the final outcome. Of course, it is a worrying sum of money and we have apologised for the mistake. I resent the general inference of the hon. Gentleman's question. A great deal of good regulation is performed by our insurance branch and by the Securities and Investments Board and the self-regulatory organisations. The hon. Gentleman should remember that most of the important regulation of City investment businesses has been given by the House, through the Secretary of State, to the SIB and SROs and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his slur on them. With regard to conduct in my Department, there was an inquiry into that and the necessary steps were taken.

Post Office Counters

14. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to announce plans to privatise the Post Office counters service.

Mr. Forth: We have taken no decision to privatise Post Office Counters Ltd. The Post Office has a network of some 20,700 post offices, of which some 19,400 are already operated by self-employed agents.

Mr. Stern: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply, but will he draw on the experience of many other countries, including, increasingly, several countries in eastern Europe, which are trying as widely as possible to break up the monopoly of the sale of Government services, Government-supplied goods and Government licences? Does he agree that the further introduction of competition in that area can only benefit the consumer of those services?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend knows that we are constantly looking for ways in which we can introduce competition in many areas, to the benefit of the consumer. I am sure that he will also recognise that our Post Office is among the best in the world, because of the level of service that it provides, because it operates at a profit and because its tariff is one of the best, certainly in western Europe. My hon. Friend will agree with me on reflection that we must ensure that we always strike the right balance in those matters so that the consumer and the taxpayer gain the maximum benefit.

Mr. Dalyell: Can it conceivably be true that the Minister has a possibility of promotion to the Scottish Office?

Mr. Forth: That question, as the hon. Gentleman knows, must be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but I hope that he does not ask her.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend do something to encourage the Post Office to tell us exactly what is happening in the service? A post office in my constituency has been under threat for 18 months, initially of closure, but now apparently of being placed on an agency basis and another post office is under a cloud. We want a more effective post office system with a broader range of services, whether on an agency basis or a Crown basis. What we do not want is confusion.

Mr. Forth: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. I am surprised and disappointed at what he said. I hope that he will take the opportunity, if he has not done so already, although I am sure that he has, to take up the matter vigorously with the chairman of the Post Office, who is always prepared to consider such matters. I hope equally that my hon. Friend will recognise that the Post Office is constantly striving to achieve the best level of service together with profitability and the minimum burden on the taxpayer. A lot has been achieved in that direction. If my hon. Friend studies the annual report and accounts of the Post Office, which were published this very morning, he will see a healthy picture.

Financial Institutions

15. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has last made of the effectiveness of self-regulation of the financial institutions.

Mr. Redwood: I am generally happy with the arrangements approved by the House in legislation put through in the past 10 years to strengthen the regulatory structures in a variety of City areas. The House has passed the Financial Services Act 1986, the Companies Acts of 1985 and 1989, the Insurance Companies Act 1982 and the insider dealing legislation of 1981. There is a big new system led by the SIB and the SROs in the City.

Mr. McKay: Does the Minister accept that self-regulation has led to a confused regulatory structure? Will he consult the new Secretary of State and take steps to avert any future collapses such as British and Commonwealth Holdings and Dunsdale Securities by changing the former Secretary of State's disastrous policies and by introducing a fair, effective and independent regulatory body?

Mr. Redwood: The regulatory bodies are already fair and independent. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would withdraw that slur on the work of many fine regulators and regulatory bodies in the City. It is also misleading to call it a self-regulatory system. The system was set up under statute, with very clear powers to the regulator, and with a practitioner involvement. The point of having practitioner involvement is that we need people involved in regulation who know the business world, who get the right sort of rumours about what is going on, who know about the products, and who can help the professional regulators, who are independent and fair-minded and are paid to be so by the regulatory bodies.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is continuing public disquiet and bewilderment at the fact that no action yet appears to have been taken following the report of his Department's inspectors on the Harrods case? Does he recall that, when the previous Secretary of State spoke to the House on that report, he referred many aspects to the financial regulatory bodies? When will we have a decision from those bodies about issues such as the Harrods bank and the merchant bank that advised the Fayeds throughout?

Mr. Redwood: The bank is not a matter for me or for my Department. The House of Fraser matter is sub judice, as my hon. Friend knows. There is nothing that I can add to the comments that were made to the House by the previous Secretary of State. In many other respects there has been strong follow-up action when problems have arisen, and the Government's policy is to follow up whenever there is a reasonable chance of successfully doing so.

Departmental Structure

17. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has for the future structure of his Department.

Mr. Lilley: I am proud to have been given responsibility for this great Department of state. I plan to consolidate recent changes in the Department's structure, building on the fine traditions that the DTI and its precursor Departments have established over two centuries in helping markets work and promoting enterprise.

Mr. Haynes: This Minister has had an easy ride in the Treasury. He has now got a difficult job as Secretary of State for the DTI. His predecessor made a bloomer—he really did—on restructuring, when he said that the best thing to do would be to close down the Department. It is

no wonder he has gone. The Secretary of State has to sort out the problems of industry and of the deficit. If he does not sort them out, he will land in the river outside in a concrete suit.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his warm welcome. I know that he is a star on public service television from coast to coast in the United States. I therefore take his warnings and recommendations very seriously indeed. I shall do all in my power to avoid being immersed in concrete.

Exporters (Assistance)

18. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what resources have been provided to date to assist small firms to study the potential of new overseas markets under his Department's export marketing research scheme.

Mr. Redwood: Since the inception of the export marketing research scheme in 1969 some £25 million has been expended in grants. Since 9 May 1990, firms have been eligible for support only if they have fewer than 200 employees. Details of the size of firms using the scheme before then are not available.

Mr. Knapman: I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Minister for that reply. Is he aware that the scheme will be immensely beneficial to dozens of small firms in the Stroud valleys in my constituency? Will he ensure that the scheme gets the maximum publicity?

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for the scheme. He does much good work with businesses in his constituency. I am delighted to hear that they are taking advantage of the scheme. Question Time is another opportunity to publicise an extremely helpful scheme.

Ravenscraig Steelworks

19. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will arrange to meet representatives of the Ravenscraig steelworkers to discuss the future of the plant.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No, Sir. Representatives of the Ravenscraig work force have already met my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Canavan: Now that we have a new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, can we expect a new attitude towards Scottish steelworkers, who were treated with absolute contempt by the previous Secretary of State, who ironically stood by and watched Bob Scholey invest £100 million in Germany rather than in Scotland? In view of British Steel's failure to justify the closure of the hot strip mill and the resultant threat to the Ravenscraig plant, will the Department of Trade and Industry intervene now and tell Scholey that Ravenscraig must be retained in its entirety, in the interests of the Scottish economy and the British steel industry?

Mr. Hogg: The Labour party is in no position to make such requests. Indeed, as far as I understand it, there is no difference in this respect between the policy of the Government and that of the Labour party. As my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pointed out on 20 June, the Labour party appears not to have the slightest intention of wanting to rescue Ravenscraig, to take the power to issue directives to British Steel or to offer it subsidies. If that is the position, there is really no difference between us. Of course, there is another possibility—that the Labour party wishes to nationalise British Steel, in which case, why does not it tell us so?

Civil Aerospace Industry

20. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in what ways his Department is able to assist with the development of Britain's civil aerospace industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department provides financial support for pre-competitive research and demonstration projects and, funds major development programmes in the United Kingdom civil aircraft industry. It also provides non-financial support for the industry in a variety of ways, for example, by working for open markets in international trade.

Mr. Jack: My hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the concerns that are presently felt in west Lancashire about the cut in expenditure on military aircraft projects. He will also be aware of the efforts that my hon. Friends and I from west Lancashire are making to help to win new civil business for British Aerospace. What help can we expect from his Department in those endeavours?

Mr. Hogg: I always listen carefully to what my hon. Friend says and to what is said on this important matter by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, who is in his place. They have a major contribution to make to the future of the British aircraft industry and I look forward to detailed discussions with them.

Community Care

Mr. Speaker: Statement—Mr. Secretary Clarke.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it after the statement.

Mr. Hayes: It relates to the statement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: How can it be related to the statement when we have not heard it yet?

Mr. Hayes: It is, Mr. Speaker. We have a statement on community care and a debate on community care. I suspect that both are exactly the same—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I suspect that both are exactly the same. So that the maximum number of hon. Members might be called, may I suggest that supplementary questions on the statement should be short? That was my point of order.

Mr. Speaker: That is a helpful suggestion. As we have a statement and a debate, in fairness to the House, I shall allow the statement to go on for about half an hour—depending, of course, on the length of the statement. I now call upon——

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago you had to suspend the House because of the disruption caused by the Secretary of State for Health making a statement and taking up time on an Opposition Supply day. He is now doing exactly the same again. He is cutting into the time of a Supply day by making a statement on exactly the subject that we shall be debating. Opposition parties have no rights to fair play in this House apart from your protection, Mr. Speaker. May I ask what you can do to a Minister who persists in doing this time and time again?

Mr. Speaker: In view of what happened the other day, I have made it my business to find out whether there has been agreement that this statement should be made. I understand that there has.

3.33 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the Government's policies for improving care in the community for elderly, disabled, mentally ill and mentally handicapped people. A similar approach is being taken by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales. Their plans will be announced separately in written answers today.

Our policies are aimed at improving social care services by ensuring that they are properly tailored to the needs of individual people. This requires a clear, locally determined set of priorities, and effective collaboration between public, private and voluntary agencies. Our proposals are linked to changes in the financial arrangements for people needing public support in residential care and nursing homes. Local authorities will take over a new responsibility to assess the individual needs of people and to meet the costs of residential or domiciliary care for the particular person in need.

As we have already said, the Government recognise that the local authorities will need adequate resources to enable them to discharge their new responsibilities. The Government will transfer to the local authorities the resources they would otherwise have provided to finance care through social security payments to people in residential and nursing homes. I reaffirm the Government's commitment to the totality of those policies, which have received a wide measure of support.

It has always been clear that the new policies represent a substantial new responsibility for local authorities. Before we implement the new proposals in full, the Government must be satisfied that local authorities can sensibly take on the new duties in a way that is fair both to the people who require services and to their local taxpayers.

Since I announced the Government's proposals last July it has become overwhelmingly clear that many local authorities are not managing their services and their spending so that they deliver good quality services effectively within reasonable spending limits. In many cases—*[Interruption.]*—as even Opposition Members must have noticed—local authorities have imposed excessive levels of community charge on their residents.*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This statement has been foreshadowed in the press. The whole House is anxious to hear what the Secretary of State has to say.

Mr. Clarke: In those circumstances it is only sensible for any additional new burdens on local government in 1991-92 to be kept to an absolute minimum. Local authorities have made it clear that the changes that we propose in community care would lead to many authorities increasing their expenditure and their levels of community charge. This would place a further unacceptable burden on charge payers.

The Government have therefore decided that it would not be right to implement all the new proposals for care in the community simultaneously on 1 April next year. Instead, implementation will go ahead on a phased timetable so that local authorities have longer to come to terms with the need to discharge their duties efficiently and at a cost which their community charge payers can afford.

I intend that as far as possible, the momentum of preparation for the new policy that has already been achieved should be maintained. Therefore, in phase 1, from 1 April next year, I propose to introduce the new inspection units within local authorities, and new complaints procedures. Next year, development work will continue on the new planning arrangements, assessment and case management procedures, and the realignment of commissioning and providing responsibilities within social services departments.

In phase 2, from 1 April 1992, I intend to implement the new planning arrangements for local authorities and health authorities and to continue with the remaining development work. The new system, including the new benefit arrangements, will be fully implemented from 1 April 1993.

The cost of phase 1 of the proposals in 1991-92 has been taken into account in the figures for the local authority settlement which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment expects to announce shortly. Help through special income support payments will continue to be available to people in private or voluntary residential and nursing homes until phase 3 of the revised

programme is implemented. The White Paper proposals on preservation of benefit rights for people already in homes will also be implemented from April 1993.

Three other important developments will also be implemented straight away from 1 April 1991. First, the new specific grant in support of services for the mentally ill will start from next April. I am confident that the grant will encourage closer co-operation between health and local authorities. It will ensure that in future local authorities give higher priority to services for this group. The grant next year will be paid at the rate of 70 per cent. and will support total expenditure of £30 million.

Secondly, the new specific grant for local authority funding of voluntary bodies which provide services for drugs and alcohol misusers, which the House voted to include in the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 three weeks ago, will commence in 1991. It will be paid at the same rate as the mental illness specific grant and support expenditure of £2 million. Like the grant for mentall illness services, this will promote the development of more services for a group which has often been afforded low priority.

Thirdly, the specific grant for training of social services staff will be increased to support expenditure of £35·5 million in 1991-92. That is £7·5 million more than in the current financial year. That will enable us to extend the support at present available to those working with the elderly and children to new groups of staff working with mentally ill, mentally handicapped and physically disabled people. It will also enable us to increase our support for post-qualification training. Together, the expenditure supported by those three grants amounts to about £70 million. That has been taken into account in the 1991 settlement for local authority spending, details of which my right hon. Friend expects to announce shortly.

The new policies for care in the community have been almost universally welcomed and they will undoubtedly be put into effect. We are proceeding on a phased basis because of the problems posed by excessive levels of community charge. I hope that everyone will take advantage of the extra time to ensure that they will be even better prepared for successful implementation over the next three years.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Does the Secretary of State recognise that his statement today will be almost universally greeted with anger for its neglect of the most vulnerable people in our community and its contempt for the broken promises it leaves behind? There will also be contempt for the cowardice with which he attempts to palm off the blame on to local authorities.

Does not the Secretary of State appreciate that nobody who works with elderly or handicapped people will be fooled by his efforts to scapegoat the very local authorities that have been working flat out to implement his plans? Does he not know that the local authority associations have furnished his Department with reams of detailed papers on how much it would cost to set up the assessment systems that he wants, to plug the shortfall on DSS payments that he has left behind and to improve the help in the community for which he has asked?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that none of his officials has ever challenged one of those figures? Which of those estimates is wrong and which one, in his judgment, is not reasonable? If he cannot get the resources from the Treasury, why does he not just put into care in the community the hundreds of millions of pounds he is pouring into his other plans to commercialise the NHS?

What will happen to the old people trapped in homes that charge more than the DSS will pay? Has the Secretary of State forgotten that the remedy proposed by his Government was for the DSS to pay the price of contracts placed by local authorities? Now, no contracts will be placed by local authorities until April 1993. How many elderly people will be put out on the streets by home owners who have given up waiting for the Government to honour their commitments? To those elderly people it will not be the local authorities that are unacceptable—it will be the Government.

Does not the Secretary of State appreciate the irony of his making this statement on the very day that the Prime Minister is billed to make a major statement on the family? How will he explain to more than 1 million carers of elderly parents or handicapped children that, for another two years, the DSS will pay to put granny into a home, but will not pay to provide for help in the carers' homes? Does he not realise the danger that those carers will regard the chatter about the party of the family as so much cant? What instructions will the Secretary of State for Health give hospital managers about how to respond to his own delay on the care in the community proposals? Now that he has put them off for two years, will he put off for two years the flood of closures of geriatric wards around the country?

The House has today heard a shameful statement which breaks a commitment that the Secretary of State has repeatedly made to the House. In a more honourable period in the history of the House, the statement would have ended with his resignation. Will he accept that we are grateful to him for his statement for one reason: he has removed all doubt as to the priority the Government attach to elderly and disabled people—they come at the bottom of the Treasury's spending commitments. I promise the Secretary of State that we shall ensure that that message is understood by all elderly or disabled people who need care in the community, and by everyone who cares for them.

Mr. Clarke: Every time this subject is raised in the House, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) rises to his feet and puts forward with great vigour some opinion or other. I say "some opinion or other" because he has spun like a top on the whole subject ever since we produced the White Paper. He has attacked the policy; he has supported the policy; he has said that we are going too fast; he has said that we are going too slow. When we produced the White Paper he attacked it as "Thatcherism's last hurrah"; today he defends it and criticises me because I am phasing in the introduction of our policy for improving services to the elderly, the disabled, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. He supports the policy vigorously, telling me to go faster. That is because the Labour party has no policy whatever to improve services to these disadvantaged groups.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman tosses out words about the expenditure figures that might be involved. Last week, he was reported as saying that local authorities will require £1,500 million more next year for personal social services policies—a 40 per cent. increase. He gave no explanation of where that money was going to come from. I do not believe for a moment that he had the authority of his

[Mr. Clarke]

shadow Treasury colleagues to put that view forward. What annoyed me and would annoy other people was his total indifference to charge payers—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am answering the question. The hon. Gentleman is wrong—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer".] I am answering the hon. Gentleman's question about figures.

The hon. Gentleman was wrong when he gave the reasons for the postponement. The reason for postponement is to protect the charge payer against the costs of proceeding with the policy so quickly when it will be implemented by people who are as irresponsible about public spending as the hon. Gentleman.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked me about the position of people in homes. The present system will continue for the next two years. The Government are already spending more than £1 billion, through income support, to support people living in residential homes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has uplifted the contribution from income support to such homes, and he is reviewing the system again, with the assistance of a Price Waterhouse inquiry into costs.

The Government have put unprecedented sums of money into the care of elderly, mentally ill, mentally handicapped and disabled people in private homes, and in public and private sector community care. We intend to continue to do so. My statement today is a common-sense way to proceed with that policy in the light of irresponsible behaviour by largely socialist local authorities, up and down the country, who cannot keep their polices within reasonable costs.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept from the many Conservative Members with some experience of care in the community that his announcement today that the Government now accept that the new enhanced care in the community policy requires phasing means that they are at last facing reality? Will he accept that the need out there is vast, and that neither side of the House——

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): When did the Tories realise?

Sir David Price: Many years ago, and I have practised it for the past 26 years. Neither side of the House has the funds or the authority to commit the necessary funds to the problem—we have been raising expectations unrealistically.

What will be the new formula for care in the community within the total grant support formula for local authorities to make it possible to make progress? Making progress is the most that any of us can realistically expect to do.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is a distinguished member of the Social Services Select Committee which only yesterday commended a more phased approach to the policy, and said that it had always had doubts about our proceeding at the pace originally proposed.

I agree with my hon. Friend about the enormous extent of demand which can be met by improved care in the community policies. We have to ensure that the resources and the arrangements for management are put in place properly to meet priority needs, within the ability of the charge payer and the taxpayer to afford them. We have been giving those resources. Local authority personal social services spending is up 47 per cent. in real terms during the lifetime of this Government. We have nothing to be ashamed of in our record. We have to ensure that our new improved policies are put in place in a sensible and paced way.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Secretary of State accept that those private and voluntary bodies that are lethargic or have never taken the Government's programme seriously have nothing to fear from his statement, but those bodies that are anxious to provide community care as the Government think they should, that have shown entrepreneurial skills and already have projects up and running, because the Government gave a commitment on when they could compete for contracts, are left in a no man's land? I give an example: the Vincent Harkness day care centre in Birkenhead is paying £100,000 a year out of its funds because it believed the Government's word. Will an announcement be made about extra funds so that those bodies—private and voluntary—that believed the Government and have projects up and running will not be left stranded and, in the end, bankrupted?

Mr. Clarke: I do not know the voluntary body to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but voluntary bodies that are opening day centres for various groups of clients usually look to income support for most of their income. Most accept that income support cannot meet the entire cost, and they expect to top up the amount with either their charitable funds or funds from the local authority.

The income support arrangements will continue. Those voluntary bodies that rely on income support will get it for two years until the new system is introduced. A body that at the moment has a day care centre up and running without income support must be relying on local authority grant, and a local authority that makes that provision out of aggregate Exchequer grant will continue to do so. No money is flowing to any voluntary body today under the new community care proposals. I have announced a phased timetable which will enable that money to flow in due course when the local authorities can manage the policy sensibly.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's commitment to community care and the phased introduction, which is sensible and timely. I particularly welcome his funding for the mentally ill and his specific assurance that this will bring the care of the mentally ill into higher profile in the public eye and among those who serve them, Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that this will give the lie to those who stated that the introduction of the community charge would ensure that services to the mentally ill would dwindle and vanish? He has given that assurance and ensured that the mentally ill will be properly cared for, in a way that will certainly never happen under a Labour Government.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. There has been speculation in advance of today's statement to the effect that community care for mentally ill people was threatened by the postponement. That is not the case. We recognise the urgent need to develop the community side of services for mentally ill people and to help local

authorities to give it much higher priority in their plans. We are going ahead with the new specific grant. The expenditure that it supports—£30 million in the first year—is almost double local authority spending on residential personal social services for the mentally ill which, according to the last available figure, was £32 million.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Does not the Secretary of State accept that the timing of this afternoon's announcement has more to do with the timing of the next election than anything else? Does he accept that the misery which is being imposed for another two or three years on the millions of people who require care must be added to the list of casualties that are a direct result of the introduction of the community charge——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Poll tax.

Mr. Kirkwood: —or poll tax? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that community care is already in operation in many constituencies? Is he aware also that, if he does not provide the money over the next two years, it will have to be found by reducing existing services?

Mr. Clarke: The policy was proceeding with a general welcome—once the Opposition decided that they had nothing to put in its place and were going to support it—until we reached the problem with the community charge. The hon Gentleman is certainly not the last to say that we have a problem with the overall level of the community charge. It is producing unacceptable burdens on some taxpayers in those local authorities where the level is excessive.

Any hon. Member who proposes seriously to address the worries of his or her constituents about the community charge should look to next year when we are implementing the Children Act 1989 and the Food Safety Act 1990, which are an important part of my Department's responsibilities, and the national curriculum, which is a new responsibility for local authorities. There is nothing wrong with the charge, but there is a great deal wrong with the level of charge that has been imposed in many places. It is common sense not to add to that list of responsibilities next year and to phase in policies such as this one, with enormous implications, in order to ensure that they are introduced as local authorities become better able to deliver their duties while paying proper regard to the ability of their electors to pay for them.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend is aware that there is bound to be a sense of disillusionment among directors of social services at his announcement, which will also demoralise social workers who have been busy preparing to implement his proposals in April in acordance with the assurances that he and the Government have given until recently. Were the directors of social services and the local authority associations consulted about the implications of the delay in implementing the proposals? If so, what was their reaction? Will my right hon. and learned Friend think again about the point made by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), that some community care schemes have been put forward and are on the point of being put into operation in anticipation of local authority funding from next April? Will they be funded from additional resources, or is there a danger of their withering on the vine?

Mr. Clarke: I expect that those who have been working hard in health authorities and local authorities to prepare the new plans will be disappointed. When my hon. Friend gets a chance to study the phasing that I have announced, I hope that he will see that we have done our best to ensure that momentum is maintained and that rapid progress is made on the complaints and inspection procedure next year. If community care plans are ready now, there is no reason why they cannot be implemented without a statutory duty. Undoubtedly, the pace will tend to slow and we shall have to ensure that momentum is maintained.

Of course I am aware of the views of local authorities. Most of the social services authorities felt that they were ready to go ahead and wanted to do so. The Association of District Councils was the only local authority association that thought that we should postpone. The phasing that we have announced will revive some of the people who are disappointed. It follows closely the phasing suggested in the report published yesterday by the Select Committee on Social Services.

As I told the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), the statement will not lead to any reduction in funding for voluntary bodies from any source that is providing it at the moment. We are postponing the transfer from my right hon. Friend's budget to local authorities, and therefore postponing the introduction of the full new policy until 1993. Any increase in expenditure by local authorities next year will follow the pattern set out in the statement that my right hon. Friend will soon make about the local authority spending settlement and the overall level of the average Exchequer grant. Before this change of policy, there was a rapid increase in expenditure on personal social services and a rapid expansion of services. There is no reason why that cannot continue within the resources available, subject to what my right hon. Friend announces tomorrow.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Has the Secretary of State seen the well-argued statement issued today by the Association of Directors of Social Services, making it quite clear that local authorities are both ready and able fully to proceed next April? Is he aware that, by April 1993, six years will have elapsed since Sir Roy Griffiths was commissioned to report on community care? Is not that disgraceful? Is not it also disgraceful that crucial sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, more especially sections 1, 2, and 3, still await implementation four years after they became law?

Mr. Clarke: The directors of social services continue to assure us that from a management point of view they are ready to deliver the new services. The right hon. Gentleman's own party has calmly said that they need £1·5 billion to do so. That is a 40 per cent. increase in their personal social services budgets, a large part of which, I assume, is expected to come from the community charge payer. For the reasons that I have given, that is not acceptable. Local authority spending has increased by 25 per cent. in the last two years alone. We can phase the introduction of community care and continue the rapid progress that has been made in expanding the services provided by local authorities, which have a good record.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Is not there a marked difference between the way that my right hon. and learned Friend is wrestling with the severe

[Dame Jill Knight]

difficulties of finding the necessary cash, and the Opposition's attitude, which appears to be that there is simply no limit to the cash available?

In his statement, my right hon. and learned Friend announced that there would be £7·5 million additional funding for training of social workers dealing with, among others, the elderly. Is he aware that many Conservative Members remain anxious about the plight of the elderly in nursing homes? Can he assure us that our concern will be borne in mind because, if the elderly are thrown out of their nursing homes, will they not have to go into geriatric beds in national health service hospitals?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her opening remarks. The Opposition's attitude is quite clear —they support our policies in full and they cannot understand why we do not go ahead and implement them and put up the community charge to pay for them. That is a summation of their policy.

I understand my hon. Friend's concern for those in residential care and our constant problem in getting the level of income support right. That is being wrestled with by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. He is obtaining further information about the cost of providing a good level of care in residential homes. He has heard my hon. Friend's remarks and he will have to make a judgment about the uprating next year.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the Secretary of State's recognition of some of the aspects of the Select Committee's report. Will he undertake to follow the rest of its advice? When will there be an announcement about Northern Ireland? I welcome the presence of a Minister from the Northern Ireland Office. Is not Northern Ireland part of the community? As there is no community charge in Northern Ireland, will the community care policy be implemented, or is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement that it will be tailor-made for individuals simply another short cut—as Belfast people say, "see more suits"?

Mr. Clarke: I shall study the remainder of the Select Committee's report with care and respond in due course. I thought that I should draw attention to the fact that, on this rare occasion, I had rather more support than I expected in the Select Committee's report. I have discussed the position of Northern Ireland with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I know that he intends to make a statement. I think that he will follow a similar process to mine.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that carers are saving the nation more than £20 billion a year and that a large number of them are quite literally killing themselves by their caring efforts? Will he give special consideration to additional resources for respite arrangements, because if we do not give a great many of those people help, and quite quickly, many of them will collapse and that will cost the state even more?

Mr. Clarke: There is already a flow of additional resources into personal social services. I have already said that, overall, local government spending has risen by 25 per cent. during the past two years. In fact, spending on personal social services tends to rise twice as fast as spending on the generality of local authority services. There is no reason why local authorities should suddenly reverse that trend.

I appreciate what my hon. Friend said about the position of carers. Beyond anything provided by the statutory bodies, it is the families and the friends who carry the main burden of coping with the problems of the elderly and the disabled. Since we took office, the number of home helps has risen by 25 per cent., the number of adult training places for the mentally handicapped has risen by 25 per cent., and there has been a 30 per cent. increase in the number of day centre places for the mentally ill. We intend to maintain that progress, phasing in an even better policy of assessing people for care and delivering it.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): What would the Secretary of State say to patients and their families at the East Fortune geriatric hospital in my constituency, which is threatened with closure in anticipation of further care in the community? If the hospital closure goes ahead, what will happen to those patients who have to wait for two years before suitable accommodation is made available for them in the community?

Mr. Clarke: We are steadily moving away from long-term, long-stay provision in hospital wards. This country probably has finer services for elderly people than can be found anywhere in the world. Modern rehabilitation services have enabled us greatly to reduce the number of long-stay geriatric wards. Those patients are discharged either into residential care or into community care, and alternatives are provided. My ministerial colleagues and I do not approve closures in England unless we are satisfied that adequate and better services are available in place for the patients.

The same policy is followed by my right hon. and hon. Friends in Scotland. I am told by the Minister responsible for health in Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) that no decision has yet been reached on the East Fortune hospital, and I am sure that he will approach a decision on the same basis as I would with my hon. Friends.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), who has such a deep knowledge of these matters, that it is far better to phase in proposals than to rush helter-skelter before the arrangements are properly ready. We should wait until they can be implemented without an intolerable burden on charge payers.

I welcome the specific grant for support services for the mentally ill. Can my right hon. and learned Friend assure me that the elderly people in residential homes will not face a hiatus because of the change in the arrangements that he has made to preserve their funding? That is absolutely crucial.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful that my hon. Friend accepts that it is sensible to proceed at the pace I propose. I am glad that she welcomes the increased provision for mentally ill people. The policy is totally new, because that specific grant—which will support almost double the expenditure that local authorities had previously—will be released to the local authorities by the health authorities, when the two have got together, to produce proper plans for community care of patients who either have been in hospital or might otherwise be in hospital. That is as

important to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), who has large mental hospitals near her constituency, as it is to many others.

I agree that it is important to provide residential care provision for people in homes. It has filled an enormous gap in recent years. We have problems in getting the level of income support right. The transition from the present arrangements to the new arrangements will take place in 1993. We have to ensure that nobody slips in between when that changeover is made.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Is the Secretary of State not aware that, if the implementation of community care will put a large burden on poll tax payers, that is entirely because his Government intend to refuse adequate central funding? Is he not also aware that, whether implementation is in 1991, 1992 or 1993, it will require large resources? Is he suggesting that delay will enable local authorities to make that provision using buttons instead of the resources that his Department should supply?

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect, the hon. Lady does not understand the position of her own party—or perhaps I do not. Labour is not urging on the Government—as the hon. Lady appears to do—that central Government should pay all those costs. The Leader of the Opposition's answer is, "Bung up the community charge—that is how it should be paid for." I do not believe that that is acceptable.

If the hon. Lady believes that Labour's record might be better than ours on central Government financing, I can only say that it certainly was not when Labour was in power. The Government have vastly increased provisions for personal social services, which went up by only about 2·5 per cent. a year in real terms when Labour was in power. That is far below the level of growth in services since a Conservative Government came to power.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that anyone who attacks his extremely sensible decision to phase in these proposals is paying warm tribute to the wisdom of his policies? Unless the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) gives full support to the Government in the coming debate, he will be setting a level of inconsistency that is breathtaking, even by the standards of the Labour party.

Mr. Clarke: Like my hon. Friend, I wait with bated breath. The line today appears to be that the Government have a magnificent policy, the best policy ever devised for elderly, disabled, mentally handicapped and mentally ill people. The hon. Gentleman cannot understand why we do not introduce it tomorrow and just let the community charge wind up, wherever it might be. Our sensible, phased approach will commend itself both to those who look after disadvantaged people in society and to those who face the community charge bill, which has to be in line with increased local government expenditure.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The Government's policies represent a complete sell-out in terms of community care. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has made excuses about the poll tax and phasing, but they do not apply to Scotland. Given that 1·2 million Scots are in need of community care, and that 250,000 of them have severe care needs, why is the Secretary of State for Scotland not here to make a statement? Why is there this bitty, piecemeal approach to community care? The whole House wants community care, but the Government have clearly failed to deliver it.

Mr. Clarke: The Opposition have chosen this subject for debate today, a Supply day. I brought forward the statement from tomorrow because it seemed to be pointless to have a community care debate if nobody knew what we were doing and reliance had to be placed on newspaper reports. If my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales had followed me, we should not have had much of a Supply day.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is announcing the details of his proposals today. I understand that in the near future he will be making a statement on the Floor of the House about the community charge. All related matters can be examined then.

The community charge is not an excuse. If we had followed what is urged upon us by the hon. Member for Livingston, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would have found his community charge payers allying themselves with the Labour party for having pressed the Government to drive it up so high.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that this is an important statement. Because of its importance, I have allowed questions upon it to continue for rather longer than I originally stated. However, there is to be a debate on care in the community. There is also a ten-minute rule motion. I propose to call three hon. Members from each side, then we shall move on to the ten-minute Bill.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his measured approach is greatly to be welcomed? Some would wish that the same had applied to the health proposals. Is my right hon. and learned Friend also aware that his decision to ring-fence the mentally ill budget is equally to be welcomed? He referred to the need for momentum in preparing for community care and for individual needs to be taken into consideration. Will my right hon. and learned Friend take it from me that, in my part of the country, individual assessment has not been carried out and that there is a great need for it, to ensure that we know which individuals should come under community care and which should come under health care? Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that that work is done in good time for implementation in 1993?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He and I agree about the timing of the change, although I realise that he has reservations about other aspects. I strongly agree with him that there is a lot of work to be done in the next two years. Local authorities need to improve their collaboration with the health authorities. There is nothing to stop either of them producing community care plans showing how they intend to co-operate when they are ready.

We need to have a good training programme to ensure that people are able to handle personal assessment which, as my hon. Friend rightly says, needs to be done properly by those who are responsible for it. Therefore I join him in believing that the next two years could be used to great

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advantage to maintain momentum and to ensure that when the policy is introduced in 1993 it works better than it might otherwise have done.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does not the Secretary of State realise that some constituencies face very great problems, particularly the St. Helens area which is part of the St. Helens district health authority? Rainhill hospital in that area has been proposed for closure and it has been offered for sale to the public at large before the patients have even left it. The best part of 1,200 people will have to be decanted into the community.

In view of the phasing in of the community care proposals, could not special arrangements be made for areas such as St. Helens, so that where a problem already exists, the needs of those who have already been decanted and of those who would have been taken into long-stay hospitals lead to special facilities and grants being provided, so that they can be cared for during the next two years? It is not fair to sell off such institutions and leave nothing in their place. I remind the Secretary of State that we have the lowest number of geriatric beds per head of population anywhere on Merseyside, and we need help now.

Mr. Clarke: It can be a good, caring policy to sell off a hospital ahead of its final closure. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] If the Opposition had ever got to power recently, they would have been faced with the problem that old and decrepit Victorian hospitals cannot be closed and alternative facilities provided if we have to wait for the sale price. If there is a sale date some years ahead, one can advance some of the money, provide better care for the patients and residents and then proceed with the closure and recover the money already expended. That is a proper way of going on.

We have introduced a generous new capital loans scheme to meet the same problem. Areas with particular problems can borrow money out of our capital allocations which they use to provide better facilities to replace the old rundown ones. They can repay the loan when they are able to sell the redundant buildings.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in deploring the irresponsible and inflammatory rhetoric of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in talking about grannies on the street and old people being thrown out of their homes? Does he agree that, given that there is a review of costs in progress and that income support will be reviewed regularly between now and 1993, the only thing likely to result in grannies being ejected from their homes is the scaremongering and deliberate spread of misinformation that we have heard from the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Livingston is never knowingly undersold. He works up such fiery rhetoric on every occasion. Sometimes he flatly contradicts the position he has taken on previous occasions and, as my hon. Friend rightly pointed out, he sometimes causes alarm and damage.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): On 25 June, when the Secretary of State obviously knew what the levels of poll tax would be in England and Wales, he wrote to Mencap to say that he had not been convinced by the arguments for delay and was convinced that he and his colleagues would be arguing for resources for community care. What has happened since that time to make him change his mind?

Mr. Clarke: I am always in listening mode when developing policy. I pay most attention to those who are complaining about the excessive levels of community charge they are facing. It is also the case that organisations such as Mencap share the views of many others that it would be advantageous to phase in the policy. Once the dust has settled—I do not think that the hon. Member for Livingston will raise much of it—he will find that most people working in this area will accept that the policy can be improved by phasing it in.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the two-year delay will place an additional burden on income support? Can he give an assurance to those who live in Sussex and other parts of the south of England where income support is insufficient already, that it will be increased sufficiently to make up the difference?

Mr. Clarke: The new grants I have announced will be an increased burden for the general taxpayer. My statement included announcements of increased expenditure to be taken account of in local authority settlements. I accept that this is likely to lead to an increase in income support, but we cannot anticipate exactly how much. The care element of that income support will be transferred to local authorities at whatever level it has reached in April 1993.

I agree with my hon. Friend that an important issue to be addressed over the next two years, particularly by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, is reviewing the levels of income support to ensure that they reflect changes in cost, about which more information is being sought. This is always a difficult matter. No Government have ever claimed that income support can always meet the full charges, let alone the full cost, of every residential care home.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Apart from lacking resources, my local authority was ready in every way for the implementation of the policy and it had not anticipated the prevarication of the Secretary of State. We are concerned not about apportioning blame but about the fact that many old people may find their lives shortened because of the hiatus that has been created. I trust that no hon. Member on either side of the House is in favour of that sort of involuntary euthanasia. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman pay attention to the patients he has now put in an impossible position? They are often the most disadvantaged in the community.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman's reference to involuntary euthanasia, or however he described it, is breathtaking. I have announced increased provision for care in the community and three new specific grants totalling £70 million; I have not announced a reduction in service or provision. I accept that the hon. Gentleman's local authority may have been in a position to go ahead. I have no idea what view it would have taken on how much it would spend or how much its community charge payers would be asked to meet. Many people in Bolton will appreciate the need to get the new system under control and to get the community charge properly managed before

we go ahead with the full policy. To suggest that I have announced something that will kill old people is to take political rhetoric to absurd extremes.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have received notice of one point of order from a Front-Bench spokesman, but before taking it, may I repeat that I am not responsible for the timing of statements, although I understand that there was an agreement on this one? Today is an Opposition day, and some hon. Members who have been rising will be called in that debate; others will be remembered.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the circumstances, I intend to be extremely brief.

The Secretary of State for Health has made a statement dealing with the position in England and Wales. I presume that Scotland again is being treated by the Secretary of State for Scotland as something of an afterthought to be fobbed off with a written answer.

I understand that in Scotland, too, financial confusion about the poll tax is the root cause of the Government's retreat. The position in Scotland, whatever it may be elsewhere, is that local authorities are willing and ready to go and organised and determined. I know from personal contact today that the announcement that has been made will be a bitter disappointment. Scots will want to know why the most vulnerable in our society will, in effect, be victims of the Government's own poll tax blunders.

There is no obvious opportunity, despite what the Secretary of State for Health has said, to question the Secretary of State for Scotland between now and when the House rises. A statement will be made by the Scottish Office on overall head totals of the revenue support grant settlement, but that will not enable us to consider in detail the policy behind community care. I simply want, through you, Mr. Speaker, to express my disappointment and dismay that a major matter of policy is being passed without an opportunity for scrutiny on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Secretary of State for Wales has proffered not an oral statement to the House but a wretched written answer on the important matter of care in the community.

I seek your guidance, Sir, because, besides not making a statement to the House, the Secretary of State for Wales has attacked the local authorities of Wales, and he has used an unjust and disgraceful means to do so.

Wales has a higher proportion of disabled people than other areas of Britain because so many of our people worked in our coal mines, foundries and steelworks. Disabled and elderly people and carers have been treated shabbily. I ask how you, Sir, may bring the Secretary of State for Wales to the House to make an important statement on the most vulnerable members of our community.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take it, but this is Opposition time.

Mr. O'Brien: I am aware of that, but not one hon. Member from the Yorkshire region was called. There are many chronically sick and disabled people in Yorkshire. We should have been given an opportunity to make our point.

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that there are many disappointed hon. Members, and I regret that the hon. Gentleman is one of them. As I have already said, I am not responsible for the timing of statements or of the Opposition day. I must do my best to ensure a fair balance. I have already said that some hon. Members who have not been called will be called in the coming debate. It would have been unfair to call them on the statement as well.

The matter raised by the Front-Bench spokesmen is not a matter for me. I have allowed complaints to be made and they have been heard by the Government. There will be other opportunities before we rise, such as the debate on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill and the summer Adjournment motion.

Abolition of Fox-Hunting

4.24 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make the hunting of foxes with hounds illegal.

Given the depth of feeling on the subject, I am quite surprised that this appears to be the first time such a Bill has been attempted since the last war.

In my lapel is a badge depicting a badger. I wear it to remind me of the Protection of Badger Setts Bill which was introduced through the ten-minute Bill procedure. That Bill aimed to protect badgers' homes against the activities of those subhuman perverts who gain pleasure from baiting badgers with dogs. Because of a stroke of fortune and some deft footwork on my part, the Bill received an unopposed Second Reading and was debated fully in Committee. There were no representatives of the badger baiters on the Standing Committee, but there were Members of Parliament who represented the interests of fox hunters. Because of the fragile nature of the procedure that I am trying again to adopt today, I was forced to make a number of significant concessions. I shall not rehearse the arguments and the concessions, but they turned out to be a vain attempt on my part and on the part of the supporters of the Bill to buy off the opposition of the fox hunters.

We failed to satisfy the hunters because they demanded an absolute right to interfere with a badger sett in pursuit of their so-called sport. The end result was that the fox hunters killed the badger setts Bill and in doing so probably condemned many more badgers to death at the hands of those sick characters who bait badgers.

In Committee I was accused of using the badger setts Bill as part of a strategy to deal with fox hunting. I denied that then, and I deny it here in the House this afternoon. I said in Committee that I would approach fox hunting head on at an appropriate time and I am trying to do that. That is why I am seeking leave to introduce a Bill to make the hunting of foxes with hounds illegal.

Fox hunting was memorably described by Oscar Wilde as,

"the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable.".

Perhaps the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who is a prominent hunter, is the exception that proves the rule. He is certainly not unspeakable and, although a fox might be uneatable, the carcass of the hon. Member for Crawley would provide many a jolly banquet.

The great majority of people in Britain oppose fox hunting. It is not an issue of town versus country as it is often caricatured by supporters of fox hunting. In a 1987 Gallup poll based on a large sample, 68 per cent. of people canvassed said that they would support laws forbidding fox hunting. I might add that 73 per cent. of people supported the banning of stag hunting, which was the subject of another ten-minute Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), and, in the same poll, 72 per cent. supported an end to hare coursing. None of those barbaric and cruel activities have been banned, precisely because of the behind-the-scenes pull of the hunting lobby. It is significant in the House, but it is behind the scenes. I believe that on a free vote, the House would be able to end all such activities with a massive majority.

I remind the House that the Labour party promised to do just that in our 1987 election manifesto. Unfortunately, we lost the election; we shall win the next one. This afternoon, I am not authorised to commit the Labour party to such a promise. I only wish that I were, but, knowing the opinions of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and the feelings in the Labour party, I feel quite certain that the same undertaking to end all forms of organised hunting with hounds will be repeated by the Labour party at the next general election. If only small furry creatures had the vote, Labour would never be out of office.

I confess that I do not understand the psychology of those who derive pleasure from hunting small terrified creatures to death. The hon. Member for Crawley, to whom I referred earlier, is an affable sort of fellow. I can not understand why affable fellows like him can do that sort of thing. There is a great gap in understanding.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, East): He is a fool.

Mr. Banks: I would not describe the hon. Member for Crawley in such a disgraceful fashion. However, there is a gap between us which I cannot bridge.

The great Samuel Johnson wrote:

"It is very strange, and very melancholy, that the paucity of human pleasures should persuade us ever to call hunting one of them."

People who go fox hunting actually say that they enjoy it.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Mr. Johnson could never have got on a horse.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) says that hunters enjoy riding horses. I can understand that. I enjoy that pleasure myself from time to time when I go donkey riding on the sands at Blackpool at party conference time. However, for the life of me I cannot understand how hunting small furry creatures adds to the pleasure of riding through the countryside on the back of a magnificent horse.

For hon. Members who do not know the details, fox hunting starts in November with hunts usually twice a week. Hunters tell us, and I hear this so often, that they are quite glad when the fox gets away. If that is the case, they still do a great deal to ensure that it does not get away. All the escape routes around the earth are blocked and that includes badger setts which brings us back to the point that I made at the beginning of my speech.

The hounds flush out a fox and the entire hideous circus which accompanies the fox hunt sets off in pursuit. The fox is not a natural prey species and it has therefore not evolved physically for prolonged pursuit. It naturally soon becomes exhausted. One small terrified animal is pursued by a pack of hounds plus a bunch of red-coated wallies on horseback and a column of ghouls in motor vehicles. That hardly seems like an even match to me. After an hour of so, not surprisingly the fox is exhausted and is either savaged to death by the hounds or, if it is very unlucky, upon finding an unblocked subterranean refuge, it falls victim to the terrier and spade brigade which follows every hunt.

Because fox hunters face a mounting barrage of opposition in the House and elsewhere, they know that they have no moral standing. There is a moral bankruptcy to their arguments. Therefore they are resorting to spurious arguments and cite conservation as a defence for their so-called sport. For example, we hear the accusation

made about foxes that they kill livestock and are pests. Many supporters of fox hunting make that claim. The fox is a carnivorous predator and a scavenger. That is precisely how nature made it. However, the great majority of foxes live largely on beetles, frogs, rabbits, wild birds and carrion and they are the biggest destroyers of rats and mice.

Although foxes do not constitute a pest, if they were pests surely far more efficient and humane methods would be available to trap or shoot them if that were necessary. Of the estimated 300,000 foxes killed each year, fox hunting accounts for about 7,500 adult foxes and cub hunting for a further 8,500. That is hardly a major contribution to fox control even if such controls were needed.

All the attempts at rationalisation by the fox hunters will not hide the unpleasant fact that they are indulging in a primitive blood lust. That is what fox hunting is all about. It also causes much damage to the countryside and hunts are often resented by rural residents. So much for the town versus country argument.

William Cowper described fox hunting as:

"Detested sport,
That owes its pleasure to another's pain."

I believe that the days are now surely numbered for that detested sport. I seek the leave of the House to introduce my Bill in the certain knowledge that substantive legislation is not now far off. It is the turn of the fox hunters to be hunted and I suggest that they will not enjoy the experience.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Michael Foot, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Ms. Dawn Primarolo, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Andrew Bowden, Mr. Steve Norris, Ms. Diane Abbott, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Alan Meale and Mr. James Lamond.

Abolition of Fox-hunting

Mr. Tony Banks accordingly presented a Bill to make the hunting of foxes with hounds illegal; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 July and to be printed. [Bill 188.]

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has introduced has received a unanimous First Reading and that not a single voice was raised in opposition to it, may we suspend the normal procedures and practice of the House and immediately proceed to Second Reading, Third Reading, and all stages to ensure that it is passed this afternoon?

Mr. Speaker: As far as I know, the Bill has not even been printed yet. The hon. Gentleman has had leave to bring it in.

Opposition Day

[19th Allotted Day]

Community Care

[Relevant reports of the Social Services Committee: second report, Session 1989-90, Community Care: Future funding of Private and Voluntary Residential Care (House of Commons Paper No. 257); third report, Session 1989-90, Community Care: Funding for local authorities (House of Commons Paper No. 277); fifth report, Session 1989-90, Community Care: Carers (House of Commons Paper No. 410); sixth report, Session 1989-90, Community Care: Choice for Service Users (House of Commons Paper No. 444); eighth report, Session 1989-90, Community Care: Planning and Co-operation (House of Commons Paper 580-I) and the Government's reply to the second report of Session 1989-90 (Cm. 1100).]

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. In view of the late start, I appeal not only to Back-Bench Members, whom I hope will limit their contributions to 10 minutes, although I have no authority to impose that rule, but also to Front-Bench Members to have some consideration for those who are waiting to speak.

4.35 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House recalls the repeated assurances of the Secretary of State for Health that provisions to strengthen the local authority role in community care would take effect in April 1991 and that adequate resources would be transferred through the revenue support grant to support the new responsibilities of local authorities; records its concern at the statement last week by the Leader of the House that implementation now depends on the availability of resources; is aware of the desperate need of growing numbers of elderly and disabled people in the community for more help in their home and of the carers who look after them for more support; notes that the solution adopted by Her Majesty's Government to meet the shortfall in Department of Social Security payments for claimants in private residential care depends on local authority contracts being in place next April; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to proceed with implementation of the full community care programme in April 1991 and to ensure adequate funding to enable local authorities to improve on the social service support for elderly and disabled citizens in the community.

I anticipate that some objection will be taken to the motion.

It is now almost four years since the Audit Commission began the present chain of reform in community care, with a report that recommended to the House:

"If nothing changes the outlook is bleak."

At that time in 1986, fewer than 700,000 people in Britain were over 85. It is now more than two years since Sir Roy Griffiths presented to the Department of Health his report entitled "Community Care", with a sub-title that now reads rather ironically, "Agenda for Action". Sir Roy Griffiths recommended:

"Merely to tinker with the present system would not address the central issues."

It took Ministers in the Department of Health longer to respond to Sir Roy Griffiths's report than it took him to write it. Nevertheless, last autumn the Secretary of State

[Mr. Robin Cook]

presented a White Paper to the House. In that White Paper the Secretary of State observed that progress on community care

"has been slower than the Government would like."

Today, after his announcement to the House, we are left with the conclusion that progress is to be even slower than the Government promised. We have now to wait until April 1993 for the central changes that were recommended by Sir Roy Griffiths in 1988.

By April 1993 almost 1 million people in Britain will be over 85. During the seven years that it has taken the Government to get their act together since the publication of the Audit Commission report, the number of people over 85 will have increased by more than one third. Every day of delay brings social service departments across Britain another 30 elderly people who need whole-body bathing. That is the urgency of the problem and the urgency of the human need that has to be measured against the timetable that was announced by the Secretary of State today.

It is only three weeks since the Secretary of State wrote to the coalition of community care campaigners on 25 June. The Secretary of State said:

"I am not at the moment convinced by the arguments made for delay."

Plainly a moment is a long time in politics. Is the Secretary of State really convinced by those arguments now? Should we perhaps send round Dominic Lawson to inquire into his private thoughts after lunch? If he is convinced, when was he convinced, and what was it that convinced him? The Secretary of State has told the House that he has been convinced by what he referred to in a reply to one of my hon. Friends as the problem of the poll tax, which, it would appear, we are to believe the Secretary of State has noticed only since 25 June.

The Secretary of State cannot get away with pretending —as he has pretended so far this afternoon—that the problem of the poll tax has been invented by the local authorities, as if they thought it up. The local authorities had the poll tax thought up for them by the Government. The Government imposed the poll tax on the local authorities. The Government chose the poll tax deliberately because they wanted to impose the most painful and unpopular tax that they could think up to stop local authorities spending money.

The problem with the poll tax is that if local authorities are stopped spending money, they are also stopped improving their local services. I predict that the Secretary of State for Health will be only the first of many Ministers who will have to come to the House and admit that the real price of the poll tax is worse public services.

In the light of the Secretary of State's statement, I must ask, whatever happened to local accountability? Whatever happened to the principle that the poll tax would enhance the accountability of local authorities to their electors, thus making it possible for the Government to take a more relaxed view of local authority expenditure?

Mr. Thomason, the chair of the Association of District Councils, has put a figure on the impact of the community care programme on the poll tax. He has priced it at £15 per poll tax payer. It seems perfectly rational and reasonable to ask local electors to choose whether they are prepared to pay an additional £15 a year so that the old people in their community can be properly looked after and so that they themselves, when they are old, can be looked after properly. If local electors are prepared to make that choice, what possible logic is there in the Government saying that they will deny the electors the opportunity of making that choice?

There is a gaping hole in the logic that the Secretary of State advanced to the House this afternoon—that delay is necessary because of problems with the poll tax. Local authorities will have to add the cost of community care on to the poll tax only if they do not get the resources to pay for community care from central Government. The Secretary of State always denied that this would happen. In my 16 years as a Member of this House and in 11 years shadowing the Government, I have never been involved in debating an issue on which Ministers were so generous with their promises of resources. Only three weeks ago, when we were debating the Lords amendments, the Minister for Health assured the House:

"we have always said that adequate resources will be available".—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1990; Vol. 175, c. 440.]

Indeed, she had said that—I am glad to receive her agreement on that point—as did Lord Henley and Baronness Hooper in another place. Indeed, so did the Secretary of State because his letter of 25 June continued:

"On the issue of resources, Virginia Bottomley and I have constantly reiterated our commitment to ensuring that resources will be adequate. I repeat that assurance now.

I hope this is reassuring."

It is perhaps unfortunate that the Secretary of State did not add to that sentence the phrase "for the moment" that he used earlier in the letter, and conclude, "I hope this is reassuring for the moment."

What happened after 25 June? What happened to render inoperable the assurance in the letter of 25 June and the assurance that the Minister gave the House on 27 June? It is not that the Government were suddenly struck by the problem of the poll tax and noticed that it was high in many local authority areas. No—the Department of Health had a meeting with the Treasury, and when the Treasury saw the size of the cheques that it was supposed to sign, it bounced the Secretary of State.

When we last debated the matter three weeks ago, it was in connection with the Lords amendment relating to ring-fencing the grants for community care. You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our case for ring-fencing was that it would force Ministers out into the open. It would oblige them to come clean about how much or how little they were prepared to put on the table to pay for community care. If ever there was a case for ring-fencing, that case has been made by the shameful and shifty way in which those Ministers are now sliding out of the commitments that are only three weeks old.

Against that landscape of speeches strewn with broken promises, we are now asked to believe that this roll of bounced cheques cannot find the resources to improve the provision of social services before the general election, but that once polling day is out of the way the Government will buckle down and find the resources. Anyone who is capable of falling for that one really forfeits his right to the franchise——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Here he is.

Mr. Cook: Yes, indeed, here he is. I shall give way to the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on this occasion, but I am conscious of the strictures of Mr. Speaker, so this must be the last time that I give way.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman keeps asking Ministers to come clean, so will he come clean and say how much a future Labour Government would put on the table? If there is a total of £24 billion-worth of unpaid voluntary care, will a Labour Government pick up the whole of that bill, half of it or a quarter? Will the hon. Gentleman now come clean and give us a figure?

Mr. Cook: No party could commit itself to replicating the £24 billion-worth of effort that is made by informal carers in our community. Indeed, I have not met a carer who has asked the Government to take over the entirety of the effort made by those informal carers. They have asked for a reasonable degree of support from the state for the efforts that they make. That £24 billion-worth of effort on their part is likely to fall through the floor unless we provide the respite care, training, help and relief that they need. That is what the hon. Gentleman's Government are proposing to postpone for two years.

Mr. Thurnham: That is no answer.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Yes, it is the answer.

Mr. Cook: What is now clear is that the Government never intended to transfer to the local authorities any resources other than the money that is at present spent by the Department of Social Security. The big problem with that is that the money now spent by the DSS is not adequate for it to do even the job that it purports to fulfil.

The people who will not forget today's statement are those who will be reminded of it every month for the next two years when they receive a bill that they cannot pay for their residential private care. Many people will not be able to pay those bills even when they are stripped of the £10·05 that they receive for personal allowances; and when, as a result of surrendering those personal allowances, people cannot buy toothpaste, postage stamps or a newspaper, they still will not be able to pay the bill for the home.

It is all the more remarkable that the Secretary of State has allowed himself to be convinced on this issue because this is the one issue on which the Government have been defeated since the last general election. That defeat in March forced Ministers to come up with a lifeline for those people in homes where the DSS charge does not meet the charge of the home. That lifeline is section 9 of the Social Security Act 1990. It received Royal Assent on Friday, but became a dead letter this Wednesday. That section enables the Department of Social Security from next April to track local authority contracts with private homes and thereby reflect the real charges in the real world. There will now be no local authority contracts next April. There will not be any until April 1993.

However, April 1993 will be too late for the people who cannot pay their bills this month. The average length of residence in a nursing home is less than three years. Most of the residents who need support now will be dead before April 1993. It will be too late for the relatives who are seeing their savings disappear, because those savings will have vanished before April 1993. The average shortfall in meeting nursing home charges is currently £60 per week. By April 1993, that will mean an accumulated bill of £7,000. April 1993 will also be too late for many proprietors, an increasing number of whom will solve the problem by clearing out the residents who are dependent on the DSS to pay the bill.

April 1993 will also be too late for many charities. This morning I received a letter from the Anchor housing association for the elderly which provides residential care for 1,300 elderly people. This year, Anchor has made a loss of over £500,000 as a result of the failure of the DSS to match what Anchor charges, even on its non-profit making basis. Anchor can bear that loss this year. It cannot bear that same loss in each of the next two years. It said to me:

"We will not force any residents on the DSS level . . . to leave but we will have to ration the number of people without private means and paying only the DSS rate . . . to say 50 per cent. of all new residents we house. As a charity this is a strategy of last resort but we may have no choice".

It is perverse that the House is making charities unable to afford to accept people supported by DSS payments, the poorest people in our community.

Today's statement makes a mockery of the vote that the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) and I forced in the House last March. We forced the Government to recognise the problem to which they are shutting their minds once again.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the solution given to us a few months ago was that there would be some immediate relief —which has been provided—and further reviews and that, in the light of the reforms, the Government would consider whether assessment procedures were adequate? Does he agree that the independent inquiry is absolutely necessary before we know which costs are reasonable? Does he accept that there is no doom and gloom in the statement today but only a responsible fulfilment of that promise?

Mr. Cook: I remind the hon. Lady that the reason why she and several of her hon. Friends voted with the Opposition in March was precisely that they did not trust the language "annual review of the charges". She referred to the Price Waterhouse independent inquiry. If Conservative Members say that the inquiry will solve the problem of coming up with a new national recommended rate, and, to take the area represented by the Minister of State, if that rate is set at a level to solve the problem in Surrey, the inquiry will have to recommend a new national rate which will be wildly extravagant in other areas. It will cost the Treasury vastly more to solve the problem than it would if the Government implemented the changes in April next year and allowed their preferred method to be introduced

The other people who will pay the price for the delay are elderly people who are in not residential but community care and the carers who cannot put off caring for those people for another two years and cannot wait until help is at hand. Already, some of their organisations have expressed their views on the prospect of delay. The director of the Carers National Association said:

"Our members feel angry, cheated and betrayed . . . The Government has demonstrated that when it comes to us or the poll tax, we are not priority, because they know we cannot stop doing what we are doing."

Rather extraordinarily, in replying to a question on the statement, the Secretary of State said that Mencap would welcome the phasing that he had announced. I have before

[Mr. Cook]

me a letter of 11 July addressed to him. I do not know whether it has yet percolated through to his inner office. It says:

"The promise of care in the community has been the lifeline for these parents and carers. Now this promise is not to be honoured because of Government fears that the estimated costs of implementing community care reforms would add 30p per week to poll tax bills . . . And so for less than the price of a cup of tea a week, community care is to be sold down the river."

It does not seem to me that Mencap welcomes the phasing that has been announced to the House today.

The language of both the organisations to which I referred may be more intemperate than the Secretary of State's. They may lack the cultivated urbanity of the Secretary of State. That is because they have to talk directly with their members, who wake every morning to the task of constant nursing care if, indeed, they slept through the night. Such people include a couple described by the Spastics Society in a circular which it sent to several hon. Members, but which appears to have missed the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), who until the last election was director of the Spastics Society. In that letter the society described a couple in their 60s who care for their 40-year-old son who has cerebral palsy and very challenging behaviour. He cannot walk; he needs constant care; he cannot bathe himself; he constantly soils himself. The father has recently undergone heart surgery, the mother is being treated for cancer. It is doubtful whether they will last the two years until the care in the community package is implemented. The letter says:

"Both parents . . . are desperate for a break, but have not been able to obtain any respite care for their son for over 5 years. His mother says she has got to the point where she has contemplated drowning him because the situation seems so hopeless."

I believe that that couple deserve hope. They deserve it before 1993. The Opposition will vote tonight to restore that hope to them.

4.55 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'continues to support the Government's policy towards care in the community as set out in the White Paper, Caring for People, as an effective means of securing and delivering services on behalf of those people in need of social care; and endorses the approach towards implementation which the Government has adopted.'

We all echo the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) towards the end of his speech about the need to give added support to all those who care for elderly, disabled, mentally ill or mentally handicapped people.

This is a most unusual debate. As I said in my answers on the statement, we are no longer debating the merits of the Government's policy proposals. The Opposition have decided to give them their wholehearted support. They press us to implement the proposals at the pace which we originally intended and which, indeed, was my intention when the Bill was taken through the House.

So the House accepts that the Government's policies for care in the community set us on a path which is likely to lead us to enhance the support that we give both to people who suffer a disability of some kind and to those who care for a member of their family or a friend who is in need. What divides us is that the Opposition have decided that it is right to go ahead in 1991 despite all the reasons that we have given of cost, difficulty of preparation and the impact of the community charge.

The hon. Gentleman asked me when I was driven to the conclusion that we should examine the timetable on which we were proceeding. It was in the aftermath of the local authorities' announcements of their community charge levels. My constituents and those of most hon. Members were surprised and taken aback by the level of the community charge. That above all worried them. We all appreciate that, in the light of those community charge levels, we must take stock of the pace at which we can allow local government expenditure to continue to rise, the extent to which the pace of progress in many desirable policies must be matched with the ability of the local taxpayer to afford it, and the pace at which we continue to put new burdens and responsibilities on local authorities.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a second.

In general, the first reaction of my hon. Friends was to accept, although with great disappointment in many cases, the common sense of what we propose. I feel sure that the common sense will be apparent to many in local government and to many community charge payers throughout the country when they put it in the context of all the other increases in local government spending and other new duties on local councils.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I give way to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), because he sought to intervene earlier.

Mr. Nellist: The Secretary of State has just repeated a point that he made in his statement. He said that the local authorities are not ready for the new responsibilities. Is he aware that, on Monday, I received a letter from the director of social services in Coventry, saying that, if Coventry were given Government resources, it would be ready? Is he further aware of a survey by the Association of Directors of Social Services which showed that 95 out of 96 directors of social services said that, given the resources, they would be ready by April 1991? Is not the only problem not the local authorities but the fact that central Government funding is not available? That is what is needed to give carers and those who would benefit from care in the community the necessary support without adding to the intolerable burden of the poll tax.

Mr. Clarke: I accept that the overwhelming majority of directors of social services felt that they were ready to implement the new policies. I have no basis on which to challenge that. I accept that most of the voluntary organisations were ready to go ahead, and I correct what I said about Mencap earlier, when I was in error. I misunderstood the cue that I thought I was being given by the question. I now clearly recall that Mencap wanted to go ahead, and Sir Brian Rix, with whom I have had many conversations about this policy over the years, made some angry statements when he first heard of the speculation about delay.

I understand the disappointment, because one fact on which both sides of the House agree is that we look forward to the day when we can move from the present income support arrangements to the transfer of resources and the development of steadily improved care in the community. We are improving it now, with ever-growing levels of local authority spending, but there is a need to phase the introduction of all the new duties and responsibilities for local authorities. Many people, including Select Committee members, feel that there is a good management and social policy reason for moving forward more steadily than either the directors of social services or Ministers were first inclined to accept.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead) *rose*——

Mr. Worthington *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I want to give a short speech; I cannot give way all the time. I have just answered one intervention and if I immediately give way again, I shall not get on. I shall give way but not too often, otherwise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will quite correctly pull me up.

Let us put in context the pace at which we are increasing spending and services. Total local government spending has gone up by 25 per cent. in the past two years alone. That is the background to the present problem in local authority financing. As I said, personal social services spending by local authorities tends to go up about twice as fast as the generality of their expenditure. Personal social services current spending in local authorities in real terms has gone up 21 per cent. between 1984-85 and 1989-90 —nearly double the increases for all local authority expenditure, which was 11 per cent.

During the Government's period of office, local authority personal social services expenditure on community care has risen 34 per cent. in real terms. That rise is flowing through into all kinds of increased provision of service, including 25 per cent. more home helps and meal services for the disabled up by 13 per cent. Such increases will presumably continue, and I have no doubt that there will be increased resources in future.

My announcement today is not an announcement of any reduction in resources. Tomorrow's statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on the totality of aggregate Exchequer grant to local authorities will no doubt determine the pace of events for spending next year. It is wrong to say that it is the policy of any political party that all social services expenditure will be met out of central taxation, not local taxation.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): No one has said that.

Mr. Clarke: In his intervention a moment ago, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East implied that the expenditure would not affect the community charge payer, and the only problem was that central Government would not put in all the money. No party is offering to put all the money in. The way in which we are transferring responsibility to local authorities means that they will eventually decide how much is spent on the policy in the light of whatever grant they receive from central Government. The community charge will be determined by the difference between the standard spending assessment established by the Government of the day and the level of spending on which they choose to embark.

I think that the hon. Member for Livingston said that the community charge would go up by only £15—but no one knows what the figure will be. That is his assessment, based on one set of local authority figures, of the amount by which the charge is likely to go up, in the first year alone, for care in the community policies. We all know that assessments of local authority spending are notoriously difficult to make. We also know that authorities such as Lancashire, Suffolk and Derbyshire are inclined to take no notice of such assessments, and are free to put the community charge level wherever they want.

Given that we all share the same concern for disadvantaged people, I submit that it is impossible for us to turn a deaf ear to the concerns of charge payers, many of whom are not well off. It is not right for the hon. Member for Livingston to say that another £15 next year for one policy alone should blithely be assumed as acceptable. I am not sure whether it is an accurate figure for the hon. Gentleman to put forward——

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I am about to refer to the hon. Gentleman, so I shall definitely give way when I have finished my point.

Earlier, I referred to the hon. Gentleman's reported comments about the likely level of expenditure next year if our proposals were implemented without phasing. I admit that the press cutting that I have is from the *Morning Star*, but the hon. Gentleman was also quoted in other newspapers. In the *Morning Star* he is quoted as saying:

"Local councils will need an extra £1·5 billion over the next three years if they are to take over responsibility for the elderly and mentally ill from next April."

The hon. Gentleman then quoted figures showing that the report was a little inconsistent. The figure to which he referred was for one year. He was solemnly suggesting that £1·5 billion should be added to personal social services expenditure—an increase of 40 per cent.—in one year. He has not explained—he did not do so to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) when he intervened—how much of that would come from the taxpayer and by how much the community charge would go up in local authorities across the country if we followed his advice.

People caring for the disabled and elderly would find themselves at the receiving end of excessive community charge levels if we recklessly continued on the basis of the figures suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Cook: I shall put two points to the Secretary of State. First, as he quotes those figures, may I point out that he does not need to read the *Morning Star* to obtain them; he can merely summon his own officials, who have those figures in copious detail in the document submitted to them by the settlement working group which negotiates with the local authority associations. Those figures show that local authorities put the estimate of care in the community at £829 million in the coming year—£400 million of which would come from the transfer of DSS money.

I repeat the question that I put to the Secretary of State at the end of his statement, to which he did not reply in his supplementary, and which he has had a long time to think about. Will he confirm that at no stage since those figures were submitted almost two months ago have his officials

[Mr. Cook]

queried a single one of the estimates? If he does not regard those estimates as acceptable, with which figure does he disagree and which one does he find excessive?

Secondly, I shall correct the record before the figure of £15 enters history as my invention. The figure of £15 came from Mr. Thomason, chair of the Association of District Councils who, until the Secretary of State addressed the House, I had believed was a member of the Conservative party.

I shall repeat the other question that I posed to the Secretary of State: if the figure is £15 or more, why does he have to make the decision about how much should go on the poll tax of every authority in Britain? Why, on the principle of local accountability about which we have heard so much from the Government, cannot the Government leave that to be resolved by the local electorate?

Mr. Clarke: My officials in the Government have never accepted as bound to be paid out the estimates that the hon. Gentleman is defending. I know that they are the local authority estimates—that is why I know that they are for one year, not three years, as he was reported as having said in the newspaper. It is a one-year increase, which he, as a shadow Minister, is extraordinarily accepting at face value and endorsing. He is telling the House that we should go ahead, which will cost another £1·5 billion. The implication of what he said is clearly that that money should be found.

As I said, £1,500 million is presumably the local authorities' best estimate of the amount by which they intend to increase their spending on personal social services alone. It is a total guestimate. We do not know where it will be spent, but the history of local government spending leads most of us to suspect that the figure is as likely to be an underestimate as an overestimate. We have no idea where the local authorities, in current hands and under current control, intend the money to go.

If the hon. Gentleman were ever a member of a Government, he would know that this is the process that we have been going through in discussing the consequences of this year's community charge levels. He takes a blinkered view. We are talking about personal social services, and he cheerily says that, next year alone, an extra £1·5 billion must go on personal social services expenditure by local government. As I said in my response to questions, next year local authorities are taking on new duties under the Children Act 1989 and the Food Safety Act 1990, and they have important new duties in relation to education.

The totality of that expenditure and the community charge will be a crushing burden on taxpayers throughout the country. It is no good the hon. Member for Livingston talking about accountability. I certainly have been using the language of accountability when arguing about the level of community charge in my county, as have most of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The Opposition refute any idea of local authority accountability for this. They are in favour of high spending and high taxation by local government. They face the difficulty that they have no idea in what form the bill should be presented to local taxpayers. They do not have a tax of their own, and they have no idea how this immense burden to the taxpayer—paying for burgeoning local government—will be parcelled up and shared out.

The hon. Member for Livingston is one of those who refuses to pay his local tax: he is a refusenick on the community charge. For that reason, I can only describe his attitude as cavalier and irresponsible when he attacks us for a policy that he supports and cheerily says that we should underwrite a bill which is fairly uncertain but is perhaps of the order of an extra £1·5 billion. The combination of his support of our policy and his criticism of its pace and his belief that we should simply go ahead without regard for any of the other consequences is quite incredible to the electorate and totally irresponsible on the part of the Labour party.

Mr. Worthington: On the issue of accountability, whether rightly or wrongly, the Secretary of State for Scotland has said that, after one year of the poll tax, the local authorities in Scotland are now accountable. That is one excuse for not introducing the policy; the lack of readiness of social work departments is said to be another, but they want to go ahead. As the Secretary of State believes that local authorities are now accountable, and as local authorities want to go ahead, why can we have the poll tax but not community care a year ahead?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East made it clear that he wishes to go ahead. When he produces a hugely increased community charge bill for his electors, he will say that the reason is that not enough central Government money has been put in.

The hon. Member for Livingston adopts the same approach, and appears to be promising vast amounts of central Government money next year for personal social services alone. We all know that the hon. Member for Livingston has no authority from his Front-Bench colleagues to promise that money. I do not believe for one moment that the Labour party would put that sum of money in, or anything like it.

The hon. Gentleman sees that there is a debate, sees a way to attack, his beard bristles in that engaging way, and up he gets to say that £1·5 billion is needed next year by local authorities for one small part of the policy area for which he has shadow responsibility. That is not a sensible way to proceed, and it is no way to demonstrate real care and concern for the client groups which are looking for continued development of policy along the lines that we have already seen, and for the evolution of that policy into a proper policy for care in the community.

I repeat what I said when I replied to questions on my statement: my announcement today did not contain any reductions in resources. There is no announcement of any cuts in social services provision. No one is withdrawing the entitlement to income support of those in residential care homes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is looking at the basis on which we must adjust income support in the next few years, until we are able to introduce the policy in full.

The hon. Member for Livingston talks about how my right hon. Friend might resolve some of the problems to do with a proper level of income support. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) has been harrying the Government to improve the present arrangements and has succeeded in getting the level up. We have increased expenditure on that front by £145

million, as a result of our defeat in the House, when we added £45 million. We also have the Price Waterhouse study on costs.

We can also go in for local variations. Sections of the Social Security Act 1990 pave the way for local variations based on local authority policy in future, but we do not have to wait for section 9. My right hon. Friend can already consider what evidence exists to justify a local variation system, but, as he has often explained, it is extremely difficult to get an effective local variation system in place. We are proceeding with a pattern of services in which I expect to see continued development and growth of support for all these disadvantaged groups, better preparation for and advantage taken of the time for the introduction of the new policy, and then the change to care in the community in 1993.

Mr. Frank Field: The Secretary of State is saying that nothing has changed as a result of the statement today. The point that I made about the statement was that a large number of organisations believed that the Government's word was their bond, and they have acted upon that. Perhaps the Secretary of State for Social Security has now told the right hon. and learned Gentleman that the answer that he gave was incorrect: people in day care facilities do not get help from income support.

A number of organisations which the Government, given their rhetoric, ought to applaud—those which have got up and shown entrepreneurial skills—believed that the Government were going to bring in the proposal by next year and have put their money where the Government's mouth is. They have got projects not merely on the drawing board but up and running, but they now face closure unless the Government come up with new money for them.

The Government believe in targeting. Will the Secretary of State give a commitment that he will go away and try to seek resources which can be targeted on the projects which are running because the Government said that the scheme would start next year?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that I said, first, that I did not know of the particular voluntary body in Birkenhead. Then I picked up on the hon. Gentleman's sedentary remark——

Mr. Frank Field: They are all over the country.

Mr. Clarke: They are not all over the country. The hon. Gentleman must allow me to answer his intervention. If centres provide only day facilities and have no residents, they cannot obtain income support and cannot have been expecting to do so in future—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman will not allow me to reply. He makes a case which frankly does not stand up, and he is trying to sustain it during my answer. We are not withdrawing any funds at the moment. If people are planning projects——

Mr. Field: The Government promised to pay.

Mr. Clarke: There was no such promise. That is total nonsense—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman must allow me to reply.

If a flow of funds is going to a voluntary body of any kind at the moment, I have not said anything that will end that. If a body was anticipating a flow of money next year, presumably it was anticipating a decision to be taken by the local authority, which it has not yet taken, which it cannot have yet taken and which was not backed by any promise made by the Government—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman made a bad point and is trying to barrack me throughout the answer. There has been no withdrawal of funds and no promise of funds next year. The hon. Gentleman has merely described a body which, no doubt with worthy intentions, has anticipated a decision by the local authority next year to give it added support. It is ridiculous to suggest that the country is full of people banking on some promise that we made to pay, because no such promise was made—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) must not sustain this constant barracking from a sedentary position.

Mr. Field: Some people believed the Government's word.

Mr. Clarke: It would be a ridiculous method of debating if both sides regarded themselves as entitled to speak at the same time throughout the debate.

No money has been withdrawn from any voluntary body. No plans have been drawn up for expenditure by any local authority next year. If the voluntary body was expecting expenditure by the local authority next year, it must look to the local authority to meet it. I do not accept the validity of the hon. Gentleman's point. Hon. Members say that nothing has changed—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Members decide that it is as well to conduct this debate among themselves, it is because they are reduced to making a case against the phasing which they cannot sustain, and they are doing so in an absurd fashion.

Various things have changed. We have announced additional resources for the care of the mentally ill, the beginnings of a specific grant for voluntary bodies giving help to people suffering from alcohol abuse and drug abuse, and greatly enhanced grants for training. Our announcement is a substantial advance for mentally ill people. The expenditure that we propose to support by the new specific grant is almost double existing expenditure by local authorities on residential care. We have given this specific grant because history shows that local authorities tend to give a low priority to mentally ill people compared with other groups that they are accustomed to supporting through social services.

We believe that there should be much closer collaboration between health authorities and local authorities providing for mentally ill people. We are therefore introducing, at a generous level, a specific grant which will oblige them to collaborate to unlock the resources which they will then spend on improving the community end of care for mentally ill people.

On alcohol and drug abuse, I acknowledge that the amount of spending that will be supported in the first year by the new specific grant is quite small—£2 million—but we were contemplating the new specific grant coming in to replace the income support income that voluntary bodies usually have. As there is no transfer of income support but also no ending of income support, income support revenue will still go to the voluntary bodies until the changeover in 1993. The £2 million which we now propose in support is in addition to existing expenditure. It will be new money. It is a benchmark for that specific grant, which will obviously have to be enlarged significantly in 1993 once the income support revenue for the voluntary bodies comes to an end.

[Mr. Clarke]

I shall leave the issue of training to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who will speak at the end of the debate. The increased expenditure on the training of social workers which we have announced will mean a significant increase in the training activity of local authorities. That is an important part of how we must use the next three years. I expect local authorities to continue to expand and develop personal social services of all kinds over the next year or two, taking account of available resources and the ability of their local taxpayers to afford the pace of advance.

I believe that the collaboration between health authorities, local authorities and voluntary bodies in preparing for the new policy will continue. We shall see them getting closer and taking advantage of the work that they have already done. If they follow the phased steps which I have announced, the momentum will be maintained in the policy, and in 1993 we will see a much improved policy of care in the community for all the disadvantaged groups whom the House wishes to help.

5.21 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I never thought that I would hear the Secretary of State make a disingenuous speech, but we have just heard a disingenuous speech and a disingenuous statement. I am surprised at his attempt to make out that the proposed changes will improve provision for disabled people and their carers. He must know that that will not happen. In fact, it will do the opposite.

The Secretary of State had the brass nerve to say that he was annoyed at the response by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and his policies. Disabled people and their carers feel more than annoyed. My hon. Friend used the words "angry, cheated and betrayed"—not his words or my words, but the words of the Carers National Association. That is how disabled people and their carers feel. They feel let down by the Government. The Secretary of State made out that there were wonderful improvements and craftily implied that there would be a small, marginal improvement because funds for the mentally ill were ring-fenced and the rest of it, conveniently omitting to say that all the other funds for which we asked will not be ring-fenced. This delay means putting back schemes that many local authorities have already drawn up.

The announcement by the Secretary of State is a serious setback for disabled people and their carers. He is a skilful debater, but no amount of rationalising can obscure the fact that the Government have let disabled people down badly. We all know that the poll tax has backfired on the Tory Government. Instead of blaming local authorities, the electorate is blaming the Government, rightly, for the poll tax. To win votes—which is what this manoeuvre is all about—the improvements put in hand by local authorities are being deferred. The poll tax—the Government's baby—is the real reason for deferring important schemes.

Disabled people have become the sacrificial victims of the poll tax. That is a simple equation. I do not know how the Secretary of State sees that political morality, but it is appalling to conduct the affairs of state in such a way that the rights and interests of severely disabled people and their carers are sacrificed. The Opposition would not do that, nor would some Conservative Back Benchers who are waiting to speak—their priorities would be to put disabled people and their carers first.

Mr. Wareing: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ashley: I am sorry, but I have only 10 minutes to speak.

Under this Government, disabled people have gone to the bottom of the queue. Community care reform means a higher poll tax because the Government plan to hand over responsibility without sufficient cash. Despite all the manoeuvring by the Secretary of State, that is the bottom line of the debate. There is inadequate central funding for community care. We cannot blame things on the poll tax or on town halls; it is the Government's responsibility and their failure. That is what the debate is all about. The Secretary of State, seasoned debater though he is, cannot get round that basic fact, and that is why the public and disabled people will blame the Government. The Government cannot circumvent that reality. It is ironic that community care charges were introduced, not because of the plight of disabled people or of their carers but because of the rising costs of claims for income support for people in residential homes. I do not believe that anyone will dispute that. It is doubly ironic that cash considerations are forcing this decision. That is the reason for this damaging delay. We are coming full circle.

The Secretary of State says one thing about his projects, plans and policies; but clear, eloquent statements are being made by not only my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston, whose speech I admired, but organisations representing disabled people that are working at the coal face as it were, and know at first hand how people are suffering. I think that I can claim that all of them—I am open to challenge—are appalled at the Government's actions. I do not see how any responsible Minister can find a hint of evidence to support the Government. I should not say to the people who are working with crippled, blind, deaf, spastic or mentally handicapped people that they are wrong. They unanimously condemn the Government. *[Interruption.]* It does not matter what the Government Whip says to the Secretary of State. All organisations representing disabled people are saying that. I shall sit down if I am challenged on that point and the Minister or the Whip can name one organisation that backs the Government, but I see that I need not give way.

If the changes are delayed, will the guidance still be published in September and will health authorities still be required to commit funds for community care projects? Delay is bound to mean that people in hard-pressed local authorities and the national health service will simply turn their attention to other matters. Like Ministers, they are busy people and delay means that they will carry out bypass operations and other projects that are dear to the hearts of voters. As a result of the Secretary of State's announcement, thousands of disabled people will be pushed aside. I regret that.

The care problems of disabled people cannot be solved overnight. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, we have waited six years for changes and now they have been put further back. The Government's failure is politically embarrassing for the Secretary of State, but to many disabled people and their carers the proposals are not simply an embarrassment, but a disaster. Ministers should be ashamed of themselves.

5.30 pm

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): I have not spoken in the House before about community care but I have a special interest in it. For the first three years of its life I was a legal commissioner with the Mental Health Act Commission and during that time I played a small part in the drafting of those parts of the biennial report and the code of practice dealing specifically with community care for the mentally ill.

I support the Secretary of State's proposals. Even if he had not spoken about the community charge, I should have urged a transitional introduction of community care in the way that he suggested. One of my reasons is that during my time with the commission we were concerned, especially in the early days, about demands from the progressive wing—the psychiatrists, psychologists and some Opposition Members who are active in these matters —to put pressure on the authorities to empty the mental hospitals and return freedoms and rights to the patients. They thought that that could be done only by emptying our hospitals and making people go back into the community, whether ready or not. In the first year or two it was part of our task to bring quite clearly to the minds of those concerned that that was not necessarily always appropriate and that the proper provisions were not available on the ground to deal with the problem.

The community, in the sense of us all and not just those concerned with mental health or disabled people, is not ready to accept many people into the community and to treat them with the sympathy and understanding that they deserve. I regret to say that then and even now there are clear signs that the education of the public in such matters is not sufficiently developed.

During our discussions we met many people from the social services departments of local authorities. I pay tribute to many of them, especially directors, who were keen to play a much greater role in community care, not only for the mentally ill but more generally for other groups. Their keenness to do so did not hide the fact that they were often ill-equipped to provide the necessary facilities. Opposition Members may think that I am about to mention resources, which of course play a part. We did not conclude that the majority of the problems stemmed from lack of resources. Many of them stemmed from the fact that organisations, the number of people who had been trained to the right level in mental health care, and the number of approved social workers in place were quite inadequate. Sometimes in their keenness to be of help, social services directors ran away with the idea that they could manage when they could not. That is why I welcome in our proposals the assistance with greater training of those who in due course will carry out community care.

The people whom I have mentioned were in a great hurry and were not well equipped. As a result of the work carried out by the commission and other interested people, the progress towards community care for the mentally ill was slowed—I do not use the word delayed—so that we could take account of the needs. It is right to apply the same concept to other areas of community care. That is why I welcome the proposals.

Little has been said about the great work that is being carried out by other people who are interested and work in community care. Not only district health authorities, local authorities and the Government are concerned, because voluntary and charitable organisations are keen to accept responsibility in an area in which they have a great deal of expertise. I should be sorry to see that expertise lost. I have already mentioned the community as a whole. Of course, we need more education and more help. People in families with someone who is disabled in some way will appreciate the extra resources which, whether the Opposition like it or not, have been provided by the Government for greater community care.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): They are provided by local authorities.

Mr. Kirkhope: No, by the Government.

My mother-in-law recently broke her hip and has just left hospital. I can speak highly of the assistance that she received from the voluntary sector and from the local authority social services department. She is grateful for that assistance and many other elderly and disabled people have good reason to be grateful for what they receive. However, it is a matter not just of gratitude but of our responsibility to such people. Plainly, the Government accept that responsibility in the implementation of the community care proposals and they are ready and willing to discharge it.

5.36 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I listened with some interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope). I do not know how he can justify his conclusion because, although large sums of money are involved—we should not treat large sums lightly—those sums demonstrate beyond peradventure that out in the community there is an existing unmeasured and unmet need. The Government propose to postpone the resources required to meet that need which inevitably will mean that they will be ignoring the need during the period of postponement. None of us should ever forget that.

The Secretary of State's statement was deeply disappointing. The Government's decision and the reason for it have obvious political overtones and implications. However, I wish to concentrate on the implications of the delay for the management of the implementation of community care, which already has a sorry history. The original Griffiths study commenced more than 10 years ago. Community care was marched to the top of the agenda and the professions geared themselves to face the consequences of fundamental change in the new approach to community care. That was welcome then and continues to be welcome now on all sides.

A long time afterwards, in spring 1988, the Griffiths consultation paper was published. Community care was again marched up and then down the hill. Then there was a long and worrying hiatus between 1988 and 1989, and finally in the winter of 1989 the White Paper was published. Expectations were again raised and people were led to believe that that was the final version of the scheme that the Government would implement. Like the proverbial grand old Duke of York, the Secretary of State has once again marched everyone back down the hill with today's announcement.

Whether the Secretary of State thinks that community care is good, bad or indifferent, his approach is a totally stupid way to govern. Local authorities and care professionals do not know whether they are coming or going. It is quite disingenuous for the Secretary of State to

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

say that his announcement will change nothing. Whether he likes it or not, people have sensibly been making professional arrangements to take advantage of the scheme in April 1991. Now, all those plans have crumbled into dust in their hands. The Secretary of State may say that it is merely phasing-in, but in fact it is a two-year or more delay. That is significant in the time scale that we are discussing, especially bearing in mind the few years that some elderly people live in residential homes before they die. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is making a severe and fundamental change.

The Government have not taken into account the real costs of such a sudden change of direction. My local authority has, quite properly, made painful sacrifices in an attempt to use its present resources to anticipate the changes and so meet the previous target date of April 1991. That work has now been wasted; it will have to be set aside and begun again in two years. The delay will mean that a great deal of work, such as case management pilot projects and assessment procedures, in which my local authority has engaged diligently and thoroughly, has now gone out of the window. That is a shame because the results of that work and what could have been achieved by April 1991, had the Government allowed the policy to proceed, were encouraging.

Irrespective of what we think of "Working for Patients", "Providing Better Health" and "Caring for People", which embrace the health board changes, and whatever we think of the general practitioner contract changes, which embrace a systematic survey of the health needs of the elderly, they could have been introduced and administered much better as an integrated package. My local social work authority has found that general practitioners in rural areas are now referring greater numbers of elderly people who require occupational therapy. It could cope with that much more easily if it had the advantage of the care in the community package that was due to be implemented next April. It now has to go back to the drawing board to find a way to meet that additional demand on resources, without the initial assistance that was expected from the implementation of the package. If I had longer, I could illustrate the confusion and the disruption that will be caused, and I am sure that other hon. Members could do the same.

There is another problem to which the Government have paid no attention. Although the changes are not so fundamental in Scotland, the changes to the child care services law in England and Wales will be imposed on local authorities in Scotland not, as the Secretary of State said, in April, but in two or three years' time. The social work department in my constituency will have to cope with the fundamental changes in community care at the same time as trying to cope with the changes in child care services. That works against the Government's argument in favour of delaying the policy.

I can cite a case similar to that cited by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). It is a Borders region authority problem. It has inherited a home that was recently closed by a religious order. It is situated in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), and it was closed for valid reasons. However, the local authority now has to cater for another 54 people. It was in the process of setting up a community care package for all those people between now and April 1991, and it does not know what the dickens it can do now that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has delayed the care in the community policy. I am sure that the local authority will, in the end, make sensible and proper provision, but it will now have to be at the expense of existing services.

The key to community care is the importance of the individual assessment, which measures individual needs. We cannot have the real benefit of community care until the Government properly fund and support that part of the community care package. I accept that large sums of money are involved, but the way to unlock funds for community care is to give local authorities a single budget and the flexibility to provide the domiciliary support to take people out of institutions. That would generate money that is currently locked up in inappropriate care in institutions. The Secretary of State cannot say that no changes have been made to his plans because the crucial key that will open the door to the resources needed and to treatment in the community has been thrown away and lost for another two years. That is deeply worrying and the right hon. and learned Gentleman deserves all the criticism that he has received from hon. Members.

I welcome the earmarked fund that the right hon. and learned Gentleman announced this afternoon. It is a positive step in dealing with mental illness. Can it be deployed in providing residential care for the demented elderly? I refer to not just the frail elderly, but to those who are demented and require a much higher and more consistent package of care. They need higher staff ratios and must be cared for in residential establishments. It would help if residential accommodation for the demented elderly could be paid for under the scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I can confirm that psychiatric services would be included.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful for that small mercy. I should also like to know when the Price Waterhouse report will be published, as that will be important.

Community care has been organised since the mid-1980s, and that is to be welcomed. However, I say with all the sincerity that I can muster that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's announcement today will simply shave off from existing services the money that local authorities need to provide community care now. That is not in anyone's interests and it will mean misery for a large number of our most vulnerable citizens. It is another direct consequence of the hated poll tax, which should have never reached the statute book and which, I hope, will be withdrawn at an early stage.

5.46 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am always pleased to participate in any debate in which the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) also participates. He and I have devoted many years and a great deal of time to the quality of life and the interests of the most vulnerable groups in society. However, on this occasion I have not reached the same conclusion as he did about my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's statement. In fact, in a quiet way I warmly endorse the phasing in of community care. My right hon. and

learned Friend knows that, over the years, I have warned that we have been proceeding at too fast a rate and that many people would suffer as a result.

I wish to pick up one or two points made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). I refer him to the Select Committee's report on community care, "Planning and Co-operation". The report states:

"We call upon the Government to ensure that, in the event of a delay"—

or the phasing in that was announced this afternoon—

"sufficient money is allocated to local authorities to enable them to purchase services from those new community care projects which have been set up this year in the expectation that their costs would be met by local authorities in the coming year . . . If there is to be a delay, we recommend"

that the Department of Health requires

"that local authorities use the intervening period to prepare joint health and social services community care plans for their area."

That is still lacking, and I do not think that it could have been achieved if the policy had been implemented, as originally planned, on 1 April 1991.

The report also recommended that sufficient money be allocated

"to train staff in assessment and case management."

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) and I know from our work on the Select Committee that there are inadequate numbers of people yet able to undertake that task. It also recommended that sufficient money be made available

"to put in place workable collaborative structures with health authorities and other local authority departments such as housing departments and with voluntary organisations; and to draw up contractual agreements with statutory bodies and with voluntary organisations."

I have no doubt that my right hon. and learned Friend will study with great care not only that report but the other reports on community care recently published by the Select Committee. I do not think that all is doom, as has been prophesied by one or two hon. Members during the debate.

I wish briefly to mention the Select Committee's report, Session 1984-85, on community care for the adult mentally handicapped and mentally ill. The Committee pointed out that the policy of community care

"means more than reducing the number of hospital beds".

The report went on that it means instead

"the creation of a whole variety of alternative facilities, supportive services for people and their families who have little contact with statutory services. . . and the redeployment of thousands of staff and the switch of capital resources."

Perhaps it is also appropriate to quote the 1986 Audit Commission report, to which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred. It pointed out that the reduction in NHS provision for the mentally ill had run ahead of the build-up of community services. The commission also highlighted geographical variations in standards, the need for bridging finance, the organisational confusion between statutory agencies, and inadequate service staffing.

For all those reasons—and many are still relevant today—I warmly support my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to phase in community care. That will produce a better community care policy, improved facilities, and more understanding.

The 1985-86 report of the Social Services Select Committee on the prison medical service expressed grave concern about the number of discharged mentally ill patients who ended up in prison because of the failure of community care and the lack of hospital beds for psychiatric cases. Prison is not the place for individuals who have offended because of mental illness. Community care is not a panacea for all the evils that are with us today, and it should never be considered as such. It is the approach of management that can pay real dividends for the patient. In too many cases, it is based on a pecuniary policy introduced by health authorities to save on the cost of long-stay psychiatric and geriatric facilities.

In my own constituency, the people of Macclesfield have been raped and pillaged by the avaricious activities of Mersey regional health authority and its aggressive bulldog of a chairman, Sir Donald Wilson. The birthright of the people of Macclesfield has been stolen from under their very noses by a politically appointed, unelected manager who too often has appeared more interested in achieving capital receipts than in providing health care and services for my constituents.

The Macclesfield infirmary branch, which houses a geriatric ward, was closed down and sold for £3·5 million to Sainsbury to build a superstore. The Mary Dendy hospital has been sold off to Messrs. Barratt for houses, so that the mentally handicapped do not now have the same range of facilities that they did when that hospital existed. Part of Parkside hospital for the mentally ill in my constituency—a fantastic area of peace and tranquility in the heart of Macclesfield—has been sold off to McAlpine for houses against the wishes of an overwhelming majority of the people of my constituency. I say that with some regret, but I am concerned about what is happening to the facilities for vulnerable people in my constituency.

I have served for many years on the Social Services Select Committee, and my experience has been that in too many cases health authorities have discharged too many patients, too soon—and for the wrong reasons—into a community that is unprepared, unwilling, and, in some cases, unable to accept them.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Winterton: No, I shall not give way, because I have a lot to say. I feel deeply on this subject, and I want to call on my experience and knowledge gained in recent years.

Why do not we follow the example of the Dutch? I recently led the Select Committee on a valuable visit to Denmark and to the Netherlands. We visited a large community for mentally handicapped people in Noordwijk, which is close to Amsterdam. That village community has 1,000 mentally handicapped residents—850 of whom live on the main site and 150 in group homes nearby. A small number of them are severely handicapped. Residents live not in the old conventional Victorian hospital which is so typical and which we say that we need to get rid of, but in about 30 houses around a large site, each containing about 25 residents. They live in proper apartments of between eight and nine people. The site is well landscaped and contains a swimming pool, horticultural plots, a supermarket where residents pay for their goods by Giro bank card, a hairdresser, a clothes store, and a new activity centre with impressive education and recreational facilities. It also includes hydrotherapy and—dare I use this word in the House—a "snoozlroom", which is amazing in aiding the rehabilitation and calm of some of the mentally handicapped who require that sort of treatment.

[Mr. Winterton]

That village community has its own doctor, dentist and physiotherapy service. There are also nurses' homes on the site and a creche for the children of the staff. There are more than 1,000 staff. Not all are full time, but 650 are nursing staff. There is a nurse training school as well.

That village community is using the fantastic facilities that exist and is not selling them off for houses or other forms of development. It is using them for the progressive treatment of mentally handicapped people. My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) also visited that community, and he was as impressed as I was with the facilities. I am concerned for the future——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Winterton: I shall give way to my right hon. and learned Friend uniquely.

Mr. Clarke: I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to put in a word for Sir Donald Wilson, whom he described as raping and pillaging Macclesfield. He must realise that the 19th century large mental hospitals are being sold to produce money for capital investment in a successful region. Mersey is developing its policies for the mentally ill and will do so with the aid of the new grant. It is one of the most successful regions in the country in reducing its waiting list for non-urgent operations, and it has recorded many other achievements. Will my hon. Friend moderate his language and his attacks on one of our most successful health authorities?

Mr. Winterton: I will not alter a single word of my comments about the actions of Mersey regional health authority in my constituency. I am fully supported by an overwhelming number of my constituents, including those who deal with the vulnerable groups of mentally handicapped people and others.

My concern for the future—and I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend is still present to hear this—is heightened by his somewhat unfortunate action in refusing to ring-fence local authority funds for all community care, to prevent that provision being chipped away at, siphoned off or downright plundered to boost budgets to provide more high-profile and electorally advantageous services.

Is it correct that my right hon. and learned Friend will be meeting only about 70 per cent. of the costs to local authorities of looking after mentally ill people who are discharged from hospital? If that is the case, it is a fraud. He owes it to these people to advance 100 per cent. of the cost. I am delighted that the resources for the mentally ill have been ring-fenced, but the amount given is important and should represent 100 per cent. of the cost.

We are gambling with the welfare and lives of the weakest and the most vulnerable people whose care is our responsibility. We cannot and must not turn a blind eye to the fact that we have failed so far to ensure that we have put in place the appropriate infrastructure and support that is necessary if that policy is even to stand a chance of working.

A group of people who include the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh, and other members of the Select Committee, are deeply concerned about the carers. They are a vital part of the success of community care. Of the 6 million carers in Great Britain, 3·7 million carry the main caring responsibility; 1·4 million devote at least 20 hours a week to caring, with more than half of them spending at least 50 hours a week on their caring duties. That staggering resource should be nurtured and supported in a planned, proper and systematic manner. I may well rile my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) when I say that its continuation and extension cannot and must not in future be left to chance. If community care is to work, positive steps must be taken to ensure that local authority social services departments are obliged to make it a prime objective to bring together and disseminate information about the statutory and voluntary services in their areas that would be of assistance to carers and their dependants.

Furthermore, local authorities must consult carers and their representatives regularly about their community care plans; high priority must be given to developing domiciliary support services for carers; greater resources must be made available for training; many more respite facilities must also be made available. Failing that, many of these carers will collapse. Those whom they look after will then automatically become the responsibility of the social services departments.

This is a critical debate. Sadly, party politics and political sparring have formed far too large a part of it. We are seeking to do our best for these most vulnerable groups. Through my work on the Select Committee and elsewhere, I shall continue to seek to represent their best interests and improve their quality of life, come hell or high water, come pressure from Government Whips, come pressure from any other source. I believe that the House has a duty to safeguard the future of these people.

6.1 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Before the debate began I was extremely angry both about the community charge and about the lack of implementation of care in the community. I did not think that I could be angrier, but the laughter of the Secretary of State and of other Conservative Members when the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) described what was happening to the health service in his constituency has made me angrier than ever. So has the statement that the Secretary of State made today.

One thing that his statement has made clear to us is that one of the purposes of the so-called community charge is to destroy all sense of community and to turn the most vulnerable sections of society against one another. The Secretary of State said that people must be protected from having too great a burden of community charge laid upon them and that therefore the implementation of the provisions relating to care in the community must be delayed. However, it is the poorest and the most overcrowded families who suffer the most from this unfair tax. They have to pay far more than those who live in big, spacious properties.

It is these same poor people who have to pick up the pieces of the shattered welfare state that is under attack by the Government. They have to do the extra unpaid work of caring for people in the community. They have no assistance. The result of more and more cuts is that they receive less and less help. If he was really concerned about their problems, the Secretary of State could relieve their burden by abolishing the community charge.

There is a hospital for the mentally ill in my constituency. Proposals are afoot to close St. Clement's hospital and sell the land and buildings. The Secretary of State says that he never allows such a hospital to be sold off without ensuring that even better provision is made for the mentally ill patients in the community. I hope that he will do that when the closure of St. Clement's is considered.

There is no provision for severely mentally ill and severely disabled people in the community. If the Secretary of State's Department always makes sure that there is good provision for these people in the community when hospitals are closed, how does he explain the fact that people are living on the streets in cardboard boxes? Mentally ill patients are being discharged from hospitals every day, their possessions in a plastic bag, and given a list of hostels where they can look for accommodation, even though everybody knows that those hostels are already full. They therefore end up on the streets, and their condition gets worse and worse.

If the community charge is cut, due to cuts in public expenditure, that will lead to more money in the pockets of the rich, but public expenditure cuts will lead to misery, uncertainty and suffering for the most disadvantaged people. After a lifetime of work, when they become old, frail, sick or disabled, having been squeezed dry in order to profit others, little provision is to be made for them. They are thrown on the scrap heap. They are told, "Wait a few years; you can go swing your hook in the meantime."

I have tried to discover the scale of the problem in Tower Hamlets. In particular, I have tried to find out how many young severely disabled people need care in the community, and what it will cost. I have received no answers during the last three months, although I know personally of six cases. Two of them are severely disabled young men, paralysed from the neck down as a result of injuries in rugby matches.

I digress in order to say that something ought to be done about the rules of that dangerous game. Protective clothing should be worn, similar to that which is worn by those who play American football. That might prevent terrible accidents, leading to total paralysis and the ruin of young men's lives. Those injuries are not uncommon. When my son was a young boy, I spent endless time in the accident and emergency department of my local hospital because of injuries that he and his friends suffered in rugby games.

There are four young disabled people in Charles Key lodge who would like to live in the community with support. There is a frail elderly lady whose husband can no longer look after her on his own, and other people who suffer from multiple sclerosis. All those people, as well as mentally ill and handicapped patients, will be very expensive to look after. Rehabilitation programmes in national health service hospitals need to be funded to enable them to prepare for life in the community. However, money for that purpose has not been provided. We need central funding that is ring-fenced so that they can be properly looked after in the community.

From the cases that I have examined, it seems that one of the problems is the demarcation line between the national health service and social services. That applies to both funding and the work that is done. If someone is paralysed and needs a catheter and help for bowel functions, the question is whether that is to be regarded as medical help or dealt with by a carer who has been trained just for that purpose. That question has not been answered. It has resulted in help for individuals who are waiting for release from hospital being delayed.

I have referred before to the case of Corporal Bill Blackburn, but I have been unable to talk about him for more than a few seconds. His case graphically illustrates what is happening but what should not be happening. Corporal Bill Blackburn was injured three years ago in a rugby accident. He is tetraplegic and paralysed from the neck down. That young man, who is not yet 30, was admitted to the Odstock spinal injuries unit near Salisbury three years ago. Two years ago, he was admitted to the Queen Elizabeth military hospital on the premise that he would soon be able to live in a specially adapted flat that we had obtained for him in the area where his mother lives, on the Isle of Dogs. We used pressure to obtain that flat for him.

A dispute arose over who would be responsible for funding his care in the community. The health authority offered a district nurse, but the service could not guarantee that he would be taken out of bed before 11 am. He was also told that he would have to be put back in bed before 7 pm. That is no life for a young man. He rejected that proposal and asked whether alternative arrangements could be made, with three carers taking it in turns to look after him. While a number of case conferences took place, Corporal Blackburn got on with his rehabilitation programme. In April 1989 he went to New York, where he won medals in sports for the disabled.

He says that he does not want or need sympathy—that all he wants to do is to get on with his life. He has waited for three years to get into his flat so that he can again live a full life. However, the conflict between the NHS and the local authority social services continues.

He was given a discharge date of November 1989, but it was not kept because of the disputes over money and who should do which job. After pressure from me, the director of social services went to the military hospital to see Bill Blackburn and promised him that he would definitely be discharged by the end of January 1990. Because it was the director of social services who made that promise, Bill spent money on a washing machine and fitting his flat with blinds. He really believed that this time he would be discharged. It was not to be. I have a letter from the social services department which says that, if the Government cannot be made to understand the problems for local authorities of funding these cases, which cost perhaps upwards of £30,000 a year, some even double that, the legislation will be meaningless.

The local authority says that it cannot find the money to look after Bill Blackburn without a financial contribution from the health authority. The health authority said that the health service contribution has to be in relation to the provision of health care skills and that it does not accept that it is a district health authority responsibility to contribute directly towards Mr. Blackburn's social care needs.

It requires the judgment of Solomon to decide which are social care needs and which are health care needs. It gives the local authority an opportunity to yo-yo backwards and forwards and continue arguing, while Bill Blackburn is still in the military hospital. The Secretary of State's statement today just adds to that yo-yo effect.

Bill told me recently that he hides his head when the consultant goes around the hospital because he knows that he will be asked whether there is any news from Tower

[Ms. Mildred Gordon]

Hamlets council. There is no news. He knows that the bed has been needed for years to help the rehabilitation of others who have had accidents or who are severely disabled. He does not want to settle for life in an institution, and why should he have to do so when he is a young man? It would not be right and proper for him. Surely the proposals for care in the community should be able to be used to help someone like Bill live a full life, yet they are not working.

The Secretary of State and his team must suffer either from a lack of imagination or from a lack of conscience when they can come here and blandly make proposals which will postpone help for all such people. Perhaps they do not realise the heartbreak involved. I challenge the Secretary of State to go down to the Queen Elizabeth military hospital to see Bill Blackburn and explain his policies and tell Bill when he will be able to use his flat on the Isle of Dogs.

6.12 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Member for Bow and Popular (Ms. Gordon) is calling for extra spending but she seems to forget how relatively low the level of spending was when the Labour party was last in power. In 1979 spending on community care services was just over £1 billion. The latest figure is well over £3 billion—an increase of 68 per cent. in real terms over eight years. She should bear that in mind.

Ms. Gordon: The hon. Gentleman must realise that many hospital wards and beds have been closed since then and there is far more need for care in the community than there was when the hospital service was more full and efficient.

Mr. Thurnham: More hospitals closed under the previous Labour Government than under this Government.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) said that he thought that people with disabilities would be disappointed with the Government. I think that they will be disappointed with the Opposition. I would have thought that we could have had a full-day's debate on something as important as care in the community and I am disappointed that it is only a half-day debate. The Opposition's motion calls upon Her Majesty's Government to "ensure adequate funding". When I asked the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)—I am grateful that he gave way to me—about what level of funding the Labour party would provide if it were in power, he was not able to give me an answer. I should like to take him to the kiosk at the side of the Chamber and buy him a tin of humbugs because that is what it is. The motion calls on the Government to provide funding, but the Opposition cannot provide an answer when asked about their proposals.

People with disabilities will be disappointed that the Opposition have not come forward with proper policies. However, we can see their difficulty. The Leader of the Opposition has gone on record as saying that 15 out of 16 working taxpayers would not pay anything extra if his party were in power. I understand that the hon. Member for Livingston will not pay his community charge. Therefore, there would be no resources to put into extra community care. That is why the hon. Member for Livingston cannot provide an answer and why he has to talk in vague terms about adequate funding. All he could say was that he would want to provide a reasonable amount. The Government have increased spending on community care substantially. We have done more than the Labour party is offering to do.

The Government are right to phase in community care because it would be wrong to go for a big-bang approach. The chief executive of Bolton local authority has sent me a fax saying that Bolton is willing and ready to take on implementation of the Act, provided there is the necessary financial support. However, it has overspent on the budget for Network homes by about £500,000. The cost of providing for those in Network homes is far too high. The figures I have show an average cost per resident of about £22,000 a year. In a voluntary home a few miles away with what I believe to be a higher standard of care, the cost is £12,000 a year. The existing resources are not being used efficiently. Before calling for extra resources we must see that existing resources are used more efficiently. I call on the Government to issue strict guidelines to local authorities to use the phasing-in period to involve voluntary groups much more fully.

I received a letter today from Fidelity Simpson, the parliamentary adviser to the Spinal Injuries Association. She said:

"The delay gives local authorities ample opportunity to fully consult with organisations of disabled people in their area and we urge the Government to stress this in their guidance on planning. The Social Services Inspectorate Report on the Disabled Persons Act issued in January 1990 highlights how 'service developments for physically disabled people are often given a lower priority than service developments for other groups of service users.' It goes on to recommend that 'social services authorities should progress the direct involvement of disabled people in the strategic and operational planning of services at elected member and officer levels'."

That is excellent. It shows that one voluntary group sees this time as an opportunity to become more involved. I call on both Bolton local authority and other local authorities to involve voluntary groups to a much greater extent.

The Bolton Handicap Action Group has set up a charitable trust and wants to play a part. It should be helped to do so. If voluntary groups have not had enough help in the past, they should be given more help to organise themselves to provide a service which can be done much more efficiently and effectively than by local authorities which are riddled with high overheads and restrictive practices and are concerned far more with bureaucracy than providing care for individuals.

In my constituency there is a severely disabled young man by the name of Paul Hargreaves. He desperately wants more care. His mother has told me repeatedly that she cannot go on any longer. However, the local authority has failed to provide care for him. It has to reconsider its priorities and provide help where it is needed. If necessary, we should look carefully at the proposals to allow local authorities to give cash for care. We were not able to secure an amendment on that the other day, but we should devolve packages of care whereby people in need can have money to buy in care services far more efficiently than they could be provided by local authorities. I call on local authorities to use this phasing-in time to improve the standard of care and the way in which they organise it.

6.18 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The idea of care in the community is one to which all hon. Members subscribe. People who need not remain hospitalised in long-term institutions must be given the opportunity to live independently in the community.

We can all agree at least on that point, but what separates the Opposition from the Government is the context in which we place the idea of care in the community. For us, it must be pursued for its own sake. It represents a substantial and qualitative leap forward for thousands of citizens who do not receive the quality of care that should be theirs of right. The Opposition regard care in the community as an end in itself, albeit one with massive resource implications for the Government and the taxpayer. The Government regard it not as an end but as a means to an end that has little to do with improving the quality of services for people in need, as a means of cutting the cost of the national health service and as a cheaper alternative to other options.

The Government further regard care in the community as a means by which the private sector can be allowed inside the national health service to pick off, one by one, the nice little earners that they have identified. I do not doubt for a minute that the Government's friends in the private sector will be able to provide private care under the new community care proposals, but in the main they will put profit first and patients second. Despite the rhetoric of Conservative Members, that is a fundamental reality which they will not be able to overcome. They cannot deny that the Government are promoting the private sector through their care in the community policies.

I consulted the excellent magazine *Labour Research* for 1987, which showed that there were 100,000 elderly and mentally and physically handicapped people in private nursing and residential homes in the United Kingdom. Yesterday, I telephoned the Library to ask how the statistics had changed in the intervening period. It told me that in March 1989, according to the review of private health care, there were not 100,000 but 231,800 elderly, chronically sick and physically disabled people in private nursing and residential homes. That figure does not include mentally handicapped people, so it is actually even higher. Hon. Members know from constituency experience that since March 1989 the number of private residential and nursing homes has mushroomed further. The intention of the Government is to encourage the private sector to provide for mentally and physically handicapped and elderly people.

The reality is that thousands of the most vulnerable people in our community are being shipped out of the national health service, which has looked after them for most of their lives, and handed to private providers, the motivation of most of whom is to make money from their predicament. Does not the realisation that that is happening send a shiver of apprehension down the spines of those Conservative Members who still have a conscience? If it does not, it should be doing precisely that.

Mr. Raison *rose*——

Mr. McAllion: The right hon. Gentleman will have to forgive me—I do not have time to give way.

A report was recently issued by the director of social work on Tayside regional council. It questions the ethics of the Government's encouragement of health boards to use private contractors and to make an alternative provision for the chronically sick and elderly in their hospitals. He writes:

"Given the vulnerability of the client groups affected by these arrangements, the question of whether they can give informed consent to these changes must be in doubt, and questions have been raised about whether the quality of care they will receive will be equal to that available in a hospital environment. This latter issue was raised recently when general practitioners in one Scottish Region objected to providing services free of charge to the many nursing home residents who previously had received medical and nursing care in Health Service hospitals."

Surely the report is right to question the ethics of a deal struck between the Government, health boards and private contractors—a deal that is essentially about money—the consequence of which is to transfer vulnerable patients into potentially exposed circumstances in which the quality of care that they receive can be significantly reduced. Does not it give hon. Members pause for thought that we have just passed legislation that makes it much more likely that many more vulnerable people will be transferred into such potentially exposed circumstances?

One of the most revealing documents on the Government's attitude to care in the community is the recent Scottish Office consultation paper on specific grants for mental illness. The basic concept behind it is good: first, that the current level of community-based services for people with mental illnesses is far too low; and, secondly, that something must be done to improve those services. No one would argue with that, but on reading into the document a different picture emerges. Page 1 states:

"The policy aim is twofold: to reduce the numbers of mentally ill people requiring admission to hospital . . . and to enable mentally ill people to leave hospital."

Page 2, under the heading,

"types of project eligible for assistance",

states that the

"main criterion for judging applications"

is the

"extent to which the proposed project could assist in providing for, or supporting community living . . . and in so doing help to reduce the need for hospital admissions or facilitate the discharge of persons from hospital."

It would appear that the true purpose behind the provision of specific grants on mentall illness is simply to empty hospitals. The director of social work in Tayside region described it as placing

"excessive emphasis on hospital discharge programmes."

I can understand the Government's reasons for introducing care in the community. It reduces costs in the health service, transfers the financial burden from the Government to local authorities and, possibly more important, reduces the requirement for beds in psychiatric hospitals, particularly those located in prime development sites, thereby making it easier for the Government to sell them and to acquire a capital receipt.

Has that anything to do with helping mentally ill people? Are they a priority in the Government's policies? The answer to those questions must be a resounding no. If they had been a priority, the Government would have adopted a different approach. First, they would have assessed the need for community-based services. Secondly, they would have targeted resources to increase annually the level of such services that could be provided. Thirdly, they would have geared hospital discharge programmes to the community-based services that are available for those leaving hospitals.

[Mr. McAllion]

The fact that the Government have made a priority of the hospital discharge programmes and geared funding to maximise the emptying of those hospitals reveals the true nature of their commitment to care in the community. They put buildings, costs, revenue and profits before people who depend on services.

This afternoon, the Secretary of State made the absurd suggestion that local authorities had not prepared plans to implement the care in the community proposals, which excused the delays that he announced. That is sheer nonsense. The plans that have been made by councils are ready for implementation. I have three lengthy reports from Tayside regional council on the plans that it has developed to implement it. Its convenor of social work, Councillor Jim Mudie, who is the convenor of the social work committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, was quoted this morning in the Scottish press as saying that councils in Scotland are ready and willing to meet the Government's original deadline of 1 April next year. What is lacking is the Government's resolution to make available the resources that would make it possible to keep to their timetable. They realise that if they do not provide the resources to proceed in April 1991 it will have an impact on poll tax levels in a general election year.

Ultimately, that means that the Government have decided their priorities. They had to choose between implementing their care in the community policies and backing off and trying to save their political skins in an election year. The fact that they chose the latter speaks much of the Government's attitude over the past three or four years and explains why they will not be the Government after the next general election.

6.29 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): As a wholehearted supporter of the Government's policy on community care, I was disappointed to learn that we cannot go ahead on 1 April 1991 in the way intended. I found most offensive the rather unpleasant way in which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was suggesting that elderly, frail and disabled people will be decanted into the streets. That is simply not true; it will not happen. I find it deeply offensive that the old and the frail should be cynically manipulated and used as a political football.

Sir Roy Griffiths, the author of the splendid report which led to the legislation, said a few weeks ago:

"There is a serious situation out there which needs tackling."

He said that if there was a delay, he

"would like to see a lot of justification".

I agree wholeheartedly.

I was pleased to learn that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and his ministerial team will not be postponing their excellent proposals, but will be phasing them in sensibly. I and many professionals in the caring community were concerned that the proposals would be put on ice. There were worrying reports in the newspapers that the delay would save the community charge payer £15 a year, or 30p a week. If that had been the reason for the decision, it would have been immoral nonsense.

Sir Roy Griffiths stressed the need for justification and said that there will never be precisely enough money for community care. It is an untapped resource. The Select Committee said that carers save the community £24 billion a year. We owe them a debt, and they will not be forgotten.

It is quite sensible and proper that local authorities do not implement the proposals with a big bang, because the Government would be held hostage by left-wing authorities—*[Laughter.]* It is all very well for hon. Gentlemen to laugh, but left-wing authorities would not cut their women's units, their gay units, their police monitoring units or their civic newspapers; they would cut care in the community. They would bring in the television cameras to show elderly people being thrown out of homes to gain some political advantage.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): What about ring fencing?

Mr. Hayes: I have always supported ring fencing, as has Sir Roy Griffiths.

I was pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend has met his road to Damascus today as he announced a new specific grant to support services for the mentally ill to ensure a higher priority for those services; a new, specific grant for the funding of voluntary bodies providing services for drug and alcohol misusers who were given low priority in the past; a new specific grant of £35·5 million for training social services staff; more support for those working with the elderly, children, the mentally handicapped and the physically disabled; and more support for post-qualification training courses.

It is a welcome change of policy, which could be called creeping ring fencing. The Government clearly appreciate that, as we are about to spend £800 million or £1 billion of taxpayers' and charge payers' money, we must ensure that it is properly spent.

The House has agreed to legislation suggesting that we should be kind to small, terrified, furry animals, so I shall be particularly kind to the hon. Member for Livingston. He suggested that disabled people would be severely disadvantaged. Has he forgotten my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security's 20-point plan specifically to help the disabled? Has he forgotten the carers' premium? Admittedly it is only £10, but it is a start and recognition of the valuable work that they do. Are we totally to ignore the Government's record on the abolition of the invalidity trap and the increase in public expenditure on social services of something like 37 per cent. in real terms since 1979? We would be foolish to forget all that.

I regret the cynical manipulation by the Opposition of the elderly and those most at risk. I stress that the decision that had to be made will not be a cheap decision or a soft option. I refer my hon. Friend the Minister for Health to one of the most important parts of the Griffiths report —that which deals with residential care and nursing homes and the difficulties that many people face. A few weeks ago we had a debate about the many people on income support who are out of pocket by £40 a week in residential care and by up to £80 a week for nursing care. That is totally unsatisfactory, but between now and 1993 local authorities will gradually move people from voluntary homes to other homes, resulting in the Department of Social Security picking up an extremely large bill. Unless the Government set their mind to that problem, they will face an even larger bill.

I regret that that decision had to be made, but the justification shows that unfortunately it was absolutely necessary.

6.37 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): In a couple of minutes, before the Front-Bench spokesmen wind up the debate, I should like to pick up one point which has not been mentioned in the debate. In addition to the Government's concern about the politics of the poll tax, there is a more sinister reason behind the Secretary of State's announcement that the proposals are being deferred.

The Government have caved in to extensive lobbying from the private care sector. Those involved in private care are deeply alarmed that the assessment of individual cases may well result in the redirection of individuals away from private institutional care. They realise that the legislation will well and truly put the brakes on the private care bonanza under the present Government, in which vast numbers of businesses have made a huge amount of money out of people's need for care. That has not been mentioned so far in the debate.

The Secretary of State spoke about new money for local authorities, but we should examine the gross misuse of existing resources through the income support system. We know that vast numbers of people unnecessarily end up in private institutional care without any assessment whatsoever. They are placed there to serve the interests of the private care business. The Government have announced that the legislation will be deferred for two or three years, but it should be stressed that a huge amount of public money will continue to be grossly misused and wasted on institutional care instead of preventive care.

It is important to note that the Association of County Councils' briefing paper states:

"It will cost at least as much to continue with the existing system as to move to the new community care regime."

Conservative-controlled councils have also said that. If we look at the matter from a financial point of view, deferral makes no sense. The continuation of open-ended income support payments for institutional care, whether or not people need it, is absolute nonsense and a gross misuse of public money.

Public resources are being misdirected towards private institutional care businesses at the expense of genuine community care which should be directed towards keeping people in their own homes. We should consider the human cost of deferral: by his statement today, the Secretary of State is imprisoning in institutional care people who do not need that care, and he is doing so at huge public cost. Vast numbers of people in institutional care are getting deeper into debt as a result of inadequate income support payments, and that will continue over the next few years.

Has the Secretary of State discussed with the Secretary of State for Social Security what deferral means in terms of public expenditure on social security payments? The Government's actions make no sense. It is clear that there is a need for a Minister for community care—something that the Labour party proposes—who does not consider one narrow interest of one Department, but who considers the roles of all the Departments across the board and also considers the needs of people in the community rather than in institutional care.

6.40 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In this all too brief debate in Labour party time, a number of interesting and important points have been made. There were many disappointments, the most important of which was the statement which the Secretary of State made earlier and his defence of it during this debate. I also found it disappointing—this is the first community care debate that I can recall in which I must say this—that every Conservative Member found it necessary to support everything that the Secretary of State did. One assumes that someone must have whispered the date of the general election in their ears because there can be little other justification for the Secretary of State's pathetic performance this afternoon.

The Secretary of State reduced the role of Minister into a spectator sport. I hope that Conservative Members will not regard "spectator" as too offensive a word. However, that is a clear description of his role. Instead of fighting for his Department and for the objectives that he set, he has surrendered completely and care in the community in Britain is all the poorer for that.

The Secretary of State would not upset the Hush Puppies of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Indeed, we almost expect the Chief Secretary to enter the Chamber any minute to pat the Secretary of State on the head. He would be one of the few people who would do that. If it was the intention of Conservative Members to improve the Secretary of State's image, they should be aware that his relationship with carers is similar to that between the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) and the British-German friendship society.

As my colleagues have said, we are dealing with promises that were made clearly by the Government not just in the White Paper or in response to the Griffiths report, which the Secretary of State failed to mention, but as recently as 24 June. The Secretary of State quoted figures like confetti today, but he did not give us his figures, his thinking or his reasons for one of the most spectacular U-turns in the history of social services.

The Secretary of State lambasted the local authorities, but ignored the assistance that they have given to his Department time after time. He referred to the figure of £1·5 billion, but conveniently overlooked several things: the fact that the local authorities' quotation was £1·02 billion; that they were bearing in mind that their estimate of £826 million for community care included £500 million in the social security budget which the Secretary of State had told us until today would be transferred to the local authorities in any case. No one would welcome the gross exaggeration about the local authority figures which the Secretary of State put before the House today.

In this retreat, it is clear that the real reason behind the Government's thinking is that they have created a monster in the shape of the poll tax. There should be no doubt, if the Government's previous rhetoric must be believed, that they have panicked in the face of an approaching general election and the vulnerable in our community, the physically disabled, the elderly, the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and their carers will have to pay for that panic.

The Secretary of State said that he has thought about these matters and that he is worried about the community charge. Where did this sudden proposal for phasing-in come from? Why did not it appear in the White Paper or

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

in earlier statements to the House? Why did the Secretary of State not once in Committee tell my right hon. and hon. Friends that things would be phased in like this or that we would have a timetable? Why did he not once say that the Government were going to disown Sir Roy Griffiths's main recommendation? That is what the Secretary of State's statement today really means.

Conservative Members have said that they welcome the delay and postponement. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) could quote only one local voluntary organisation. I repeat the challenge of my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley): can the Secretary of State tell us of one voluntary organisation—the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, the Spastics Society, the Care in the Community Scottish group and many others—that would support the delay? The opposite is the case. Voluntary organisations have made their views known to hon. Members and they will be as shocked as Opposition Members at the Secretary of State's announcement this afternoon.

The Secretary of State referred to the need for co-ordination between the national health service and local authorities. In the light of his statement this afternoon, the morale of GPs and that in local authorities, in the health service and social services and social work departments must be at a new low. None of that is good news for co-operation and nothing that we have heard from the Secretary of State this afternoon is good for the patient.

The provisions relating to community care were the only part of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill that anyone wanted. The Government have rushed ahead with the parts that no one wants and now tell us that they are going to delay the implementation of the small features of the Bill that were practicable. The deputy Prime Minister told us that the implementation would take place according to the availability of resources. We have heard that before. We heard it in connection with the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, and if the Government really believe what they say about the consumer, choice and representation and if they are really listening to 6·5 million disabled people and their carers, they would have implemented all the provisions of that Act by now. Who can believe the Government's intentions when they refer to 1993 with regard to community care when the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 has been on the statute book for four years and not all its provisions have been implemented?

Conservative Members accused my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and others of exaggerating the problems of the elderly and of income support and the care gap in private residential homes. If they do not think that there is a problem now, they should listen carefully to the directors of social services. I cannot understand why they think that there is no problem now. We saw on television just the other night some of the problems that already exist. The directors of social services are warning hon. Members that people will increasingly go to their surgeries because of the demographic time bomb and because of the problem of income support. We know that the elderly are already suffering because of the lack of planning. Conservative Members ignore that at their peril.

This all too brief debate has failed to consider in the detail that we would wish the Government's real strategy for community care. The Prime Minister seems to believe in seminars to study characteristics. Why does not she call a seminar to study the real characteristics of the elderly, the disabled, people suffering from Alzheimer's disease and their carers? Why does not she consider how they can be properly supported in their own homes? The Prime Minister lectures us, today of all days, when we have had such a pathetic response to the problems of community care within our society. Nothing could be more devastating to millions of families than the Government's proposals for community care.

In that spirit, I invite hon. Members to support the motion. I invite the British public in due course not just to dismiss a Secretary of State who can produce such lethargic proposals but to throw out with him the Government who have made such lethargy possible.

6.51 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Let me make it quite clear that we are not discussing abandoning the policy of community care or of cancelling the policy of community care; we are discussing carrying forward our policies in a practical, sensible and responsible manner. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made it only too clear that next April we shall begin with the new provision for the mentally ill. Many hon. Members have referred to the importance of proper community care provision for the mentally ill.

My hon. Friends the Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) and the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) referred to the need for the mentally ill to have proper provision made for them when they are established in the community. We are not satisfied that sufficient work on that matter has already been undertaken by local authorities. Local authority expenditure on the mentally ill amounts to about 3 per cent. Nor are we satisfied that the proper provision that the public need to satisfy them as well as those who need care has been arranged. That is why the specific grant allowing spending of £30 million will be established from next April, thus ensuring—this should satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield—that no individual will leave a long-term mental hospital without a proper care package and without a named individual being responsible for his or her care as he or she goes out into the community.

Again, my right hon. and learned Friend announced that we intend to make headway with particular assistance for those who suffer from drug or alcohol misuse, thus ensuring that resources are provided for the voluntary sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) referred to the importance of the voluntary sector. It has done excellent pioneering work, and headway will most certainly be made.

Many hon. Members have referred to the importance of carers, and the White Paper and the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 particularly refer to the importance of carers. We are funding caring organisations to the tune of about £100,000 this year. They are deeply involved in our consultation on guidance and

the implementation of their important work. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) asked when the guidance will be made available. I give him the clear assurance that the guidance will be available in the autumn. As he will know, we have already issued draft guidance on plans, assessment, inspection and several other matters. We have been consulting widely with local authorities, and that guidance will further inform our plans as we take forward the important work.

Many hon. Members have rightly and properly drawn attention to the very great change that we are seeking to create. We know full well that health authorities and family health service authorities are busy taking on their new responsibilities, thereby putting them in a good position to provide for the health care of their resident populations. District health authorities, family health services authorities and general practitioners, through the new contract, can be active partners in the provision of care in the community.

The Select Committee, in its most recent report, suggested, perhaps with some justification, that the tight timetable means that it will be difficult for local authorities to implement care in the community policies to the standards that we all would want. That allows a further period for local authorities, voluntary organisations and the private sector to implement, to carry forward, to consult and to co-ordinate, so that in April 1993, when they take on the full responsibility—when the social security money is transferred to local authorities, when there is no longer the safety valve of social security payments to provide for those who need residential care—they will be able properly and effectively to undertake their responsibilities.

We in the Department, the social services inspectorate and local authorities have a great deal of work to undertake in the two years. We shall be continuing our training and seminars. We shall be issuing a newsletter on implementation to make sure that we can continue to develop and promote further the momentum of an important policy. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made it clear that the amount of money to be available for training local authorities will increase to about 25 per cent. next year. Training money will be available not only for the elderly and for children but for the mentally ill, the physically disabled and the mentally handicapped. I hope that my hon. Friends will believe that this is not a cancellation or an end to the policy. This is a moment so that we can spend more time actually preparing and ensuring that we make the headway that we should properly and rightly make. It will be hard work. We need to ensure that all the necessary steps are taken.

Several hon. Members referred to the provision of social security payments. As was well said by my right hon. and learned Friend, our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has set up a study. There have already been extra resources to the degree of £145 million to provide additional assistance to the likes of Florence Smith and others about whom we heard during the detailed debate earlier in the year.

Care in the community policy will take time to implement fully and effectively. Over the past 10 years—*[Interruption.]* Over the past 11 years we have seen dramatic advances. We have seen a phenomenal increase in provision in terms of adult training centres for the mentally handicapped—11,000 more places, which is a 25 per cent. increase. We have seen a great increase in the number of day centre places for the mentally ill—30 per cent. more; another 1,500 places. We have seen a tremendous increase in the number of social workers—I may need to declare a vested interest. There are 5,000 more social workers—an extra 23 per cent. There are an extra 12,000 more home helps—25 per cent. more and, again, many more community psychiatric nurses. We have seen a dramatic increase in personal social services spending to the degree of 47 per cent.

That is the record of a Government who have been investing in the community and developing community care services. We believe in the policy. We now have the legislation on the statute book. We believe that there are urgent tasks to be undertaken. We believe in quality. We believe in safeguarding the interests of the frail and the vulnerable. That is why the complaints procedures and the inspection units will go ahead from next April, together with the other specific grants in areas of special and important need, to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred.

It is essential that nobody should for a moment forget the challenge that is ahead of us—to ensure that over the next decade we can achieve these community care policies. I urge hon. Members most sincerely and strongly to reject the motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 224, Noes 335.

Division No. 301] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*

George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McAllion and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman

Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodland and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House continues to support the Government's policy towards care in the community as set out in the White Paper, Caring for People, as an effective means of securing and delivering services on behalf of those people in need of social care; and endorses the approach towards implementation which the Government had adopted.

Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill

(By Order)

Lords amendments further considered.

7.15 pm

Mr. Alex Eadie (Midlothian): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I shall take points of order in a moment. Perhaps it would be helpful to remind the House that this debate started on 25 June this year. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was called, started to move the Lords amendments and, most unusually, if he will allow me to say so, was interrupted before he uttered more than half a sentence. That was for a good reason—the Chair had to deal with points of order. So I shall, of course, take points of order. When we have disposed of the points of order the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes will have the Floor, if he wishes to catch my eye.

Mr. Eadie: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. You will observe that on the Order Paper there is a notice of motion in the name of the Prime Minister. Before we begin what some of us have regarded for over two years as an important debate, it would be helpful if you could clarify the procedure. You will notice that the motion says that

"at this day's sitting, the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour."

That motion has been tabled in the name of the Prime Minister, despite the fact that this is a private Bill. We are worried about this and we seek your assistance.

It would appear that the motion is not what one would call a timetable motion. As First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means, could you explain how the Prime Minister has become involved in this private business? We are probably about to have what could be called an endurance test, never mind a timetable motion, in the sense that the debate could continue after 10 o'clock. As this is private business, some of us are puzzled about how the Prime Minister, the Private Bill Office, and the First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means have become involved in making the debate some sort of endurance test in which whoever survives the longest will win. I suggest that that is hardly the way to do business in the House. My hon. Friends and, I presume, some Conservative Members would like to know what the procedure is and how it was arrived at before we kick off the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can certainly clarify that point for the hon. Gentleman. As he rightly assessed, the motion is tabled in the name of the Prime Minister. It has nothing to do with the Chairman of Ways and Means. That means that at 10 o'clock, or an appropriate moment after 10 o'clock, the Whip will move the motion if he so desires. The House will come to a decision on that forthwith. If it decides in favour of the motion, the debate will be allowed to continue until any hour. I hope that I have clarified the procedure for the whole House. It is perfectly normal procedure, to which we are well accustomed in the House.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that in several debates we discussed whether this is a hybrid Bill. The Chair has always ruled that it is not, and that it has proceeded in the correct manner. Will you suspend the House to enable your good self to have a look at "Erskine May" for guidance? It states that you have the power to rule that it is a hybrid Bill. As there is ample evidence of Government involvement in the Bill, I ask you to consult the Clerk and "Erskine May" and to rule that it is a hybrid Bill. If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, suspended the House for 10 minutes, I could furnish that evidence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, and indeed the whole House, will recall that that matter has been raised on a number of occasions during the Bill's passage, and there have been several rulings stating that the Bill is not hybrid, and is perfectly in order. I have nothing to add to the numerous rulings that have been given in the past.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I brought two matters to the Speaker's attention earlier today and said that, if a ruling had not been given before 7 pm, I would raise them again at the commencement of this business. My first point of order involves clause 3 and their Lordships' amendments relating to it. I submitted papers showing that the Bill's drafting, as subject to the Lords amendments, was wrong and that it would be a simple matter involving the loss of no more than six months for the Bill to return to the House of Lords for that defect to be put right.

My second point of order arose under clause 18, and was briefly drawn to your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during our earlier discussions—the EC directive 85/337. In view of the almost certain challenge, which cannot possibly be in the interests of the Bill's promoter, I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether there are proper channels within private Bill procedures whereby a roll-over could be agreed so that the Bill would comply with the directive. That procedure was confirmed by the report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure on 20 July 1988. That review was reaffirmed by the then Leader of the House on 20 April last year.

Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rule on those two points of order?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does it relate to the same point?

Mr. Skinner: Yes. Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I may help you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This matter has been to the Speaker's Counsel. What happened, in a nutshell, was that the Bill was not amended in this House and went to the House of Lords. A series of amendments was passed in the Committee on Unopposed Bills in the House of Lords which we shall debate later today. The amendment to which the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) referred was to change "85" to "85E". That sounds insignificant to the layman and hon. Members, but it involves the compulsory purchase of people's property. The reference "85E" relates to one of the mining codes used in the Mines (Working Facilities and Support) Act 1923. The Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845, which was used for the

Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, contains no such thing as "85E". It contains sections from 77 to 85, but no others.

In the other place, one of the advisers decided to make the Bill workable by using the 1923 Act, which includes sections 77 to 85, and 78A, 79A, 79B and 85A to E. He has added them on, but used the wrong Act. The result is that representations have been made to Speaker's Counsel. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may know him, but I have not met him before.

I have correspondence in which Speaker's Counsel says that there is an argument about the Bill. He uses words—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman. I am listening with interest to what he says, but I am sure that he realises that it would be inappropriate to attempt to quote an alleged view of an official of the House.

Mr. Skinner: It is not alleged: I am going to read it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman realises that it would be unfair to do that.

Mr. Skinner: It is in the public domain.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am trying to be helpful to the hon. Gentleman. Everything that he and the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) have said so far will be perfectly in order in the debates on Lords amendments, but they are not matters for the Chair or points of order for me.

Mr. Skinner: Let me get this straight. We are talking about hon. Members in the House being gagged and stopped from using information which if it is not declared to the public at large will result in people losing their property rights. The matter arises from legal representations that have been made by British Coal, and others with an interest in the matter, obtaining rights to excavate minerals. Where the Bill refers to "section 78" of the 1845 Act, as amended by the 1923 Act, the wrong Act has been used, and representations have been made about that.

I shall quote exactly what Speaker's Counsel has said because it is germane to what we shall discuss——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This matter will be perfectly legitimate when we debate the Lords amendments. The hon. Gentleman has risen on a point of order, and I am not clear what the point of order for the Chair is.

Mr. Skinner: It is clear: are we going to pass an Act here that has been amended at a late stage, about which Speaker's Counsel declares, in answer to Paul Thompson:

"If it were possible at this stage to make more precise the drafting of that part of clause 3(2)(b) I should not hesitate to recommend that it be done."

It can be done—we have merely to send the Bill back to the House of Lords——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman catches the eye of the occupant of the Chair during the debate, he can make that point, but it is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have two points of order, one of which continues one aspect of the point of order made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). If we did not make a decision about the issue raised by my hon. Friend, in the knowledge that the Bill is defective, we should be doing Parliament and the law a profound disservice. Occasionally, Parliament makes mistakes in legislation, but they are invariably found after a Bill has become law. For Parliament deliberately to approve a statute in the knowledge that it is defective would be a precedent that I hope no hon. Member would support. I hope that that point can be considered in the next few minutes before we embark on the debate on the amendments, when the pass may have been sold.

I shall make my second point of order briefly and, I hope, allow people time to consider the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. It refers to clause 3(1) and clause 3(2)(b), which both contain the words "the railway". There may be an error, if not in the first "the", in the second "the", which appears in clause 3(2)(b). It seems that we are deeming something to be "the railway" when we should deem it to be "a railway". That point is not as substantial as the major point of my hon. Friend, but it suggests another small reason why their Lordships should reconsider the issue. If their Lordships were given that opportunity, it might allow a proper environmental assessment to be carried out that would be consistent with the policies of both Government and Opposition, and of Europe, to which the Government and the Opposition owe some obligation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Of course, I shall take points of order, but I repeat that we are already well launched into the debate. It would be better if we debated matters relating to the amendments after we have heard from the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, rather than discussing them as points of order. They are perfectly legitimate issues to raise in the debate on the Lords amendments, when we get to it.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand your position and I certainly would not want to challenge it, but a defective amendment has been made in another place which does not legally fit the statute that we are attempting to pass. That would never have happened if amendments to the Bill had been proposed in this place, as hon. Members tabling amendments would have been advised by the Clerks, who do a first class job, on whether to proceed. It seems extraordinary that we are expected to accept a defective amendment, which, if it is carried, will mean defective legislation emerging from this House, which is supposed to legislate for the country—without any redress except a vote against other amendments which may be perfectly in order. That is an incredible thing for hon. Members to be asked to do. Under the circumstances, I ask that the sitting be suspended until you can be advised whether it is correct for us to go ahead and deliberately pass defective legislation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

7.30 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the other points of order are on the same matter, it might be tidier if I took them all together.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you arrange to bring

[Mr. John Cummings]

either the Solicitor-General or the Attorney-General to the House to give an appraisal of the points made by my hon. Friends tonight?

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Are the amendments in order or are they defective?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it on the same point of order?

Mr. Cryer: No, it is different.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is nothing that I can add on these points of order to what I have already said. All these matters can be raised in the debate, as hon. Members know. I was doubtful whether the debate on the amendments would be so wide-ranging. It is evident to me that these points of order are legitimate points to make in the debate. The House will recall that when we last discussed the matter there was a clear ruling from the Chair that, if the House so desired, it would be possible to vote separately on each Lords amendment. I hope that that is of some assistance to the House.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Ever since the Bill came to the House there has been an awful smell. I listened to what my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) said and now the stink is even worse. There has been interference and support from the Government, from the Prime Minister down. I remember several occasions when Ministers were whipped in here to vote for a private Bill. It is a shocking state of affairs, and you should listen seriously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to what hon. Members on both sides of the House are saying about whether it is right, proper and within the rules to debate the Bill before these matters are sorted out.

It is obvious that there is a problem with the Lords amendments and that is our argument. The smell in the House stinks something awful, and we want it cleared up. We are not happy with what is happening. I am not challenging your ruling, but at the same time I do not accept it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is nothing that I can add to what I have already said. The sooner that we get on to the debate, the more likely it is that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), if he catches the eye of the Chair, will be able to develop his argument.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will appreciate that the first Lords amendment alters clause 3 and substitutes 85E for 85. It refers to the Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845.

On a previous occasion, when we debated the Adelphi Estate Bill, a question arose about old Acts being made available. Subsequent to that discussion in the House, when it was reasonably pointed out that old Acts registered and stored in the Library are delicate and should be handled with great care, not fumbled about on the Benches here, the promoters of the Bill provided an extract from the relevant legislation.

I have been to the Vote Office and no extracts of the 1845 Act have been made available. There is a copy of the Act in the Library, and it is old and delicate. We should take care of such documents and call upon the promoters to provide adequate information.

Moreover, Standing Order No. 34 on private business states:

> "In the case of a railway, tramsway or tramroad bill and of a bill relating to any waterway, road, bridge, tunnel, ferry, harbour, dock or pier, a copy of the deposited plan, section and book of reference (if any)"

should be provided. Perhaps "book or reference" has a defined meaning relating to some specific engineering detail, but we believe that under Standing Order No. 34 a book of reference must perforce relate to the Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845, because that is a point of reference for the amendments. Therefore, we should not proceed unless and until the promoters are prepared to provide extracts which I think they should do as a matter of course for every private Bill when we have to refer to ancient Acts. If they do not, we shall be running to the Library; the staff will let the Acts out with great reluctance and it is probable that damage will occur to priceless documents. It would be a good precedent to follow, and I suspect that it would broaden Standing Order No. 34 for private business, which would mean that promoters will be required to provide the information and that "book of reference" will include previous Acts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point. He made a similar point of order on 25 June, which has given me the opportunity to look into it. He has largely answered his own point. He said that the onus should be on the promoters. That may be an argument on which hon. Members have strong views. It is not a matter for the Chair. It is the job of the House to ensure that the Bill and the amendments to it are available in the Vote Office. That is in accordance with our usual practice, and the Bill and the amendments are so available.

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to the fact that my constituency is probably more affected by this Bill than any other? Yet for two long years I have tried to make a speech on the Bill and have never once been called. I understand the enthusiasm of some of my hon. Friends who have worked in the industry, but I ask you not to accept a closure motion after two hours when all that we have had have been points of order, and when some of us have been trying to make speeches, have voted on every occasion but have never been lucky enough to catch your eye.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman, as that is an exceedingly helpful point of order. Given his long experience, long service and the esteem in which he is held by hon. Members on both sides of the House, I hope that his hon. Friends will now desist from their points of order so that I can call the hon. Gentleman to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to the point of order made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that there has been considerable concern about motives and about Government involvement in the Bill. The House is now being told that the Bill is acknowledged to be technically defective by Mr. Knorpel, Counsel to the Speaker. He acknowledged that, at this stage, it can be put right only in the House of Lords.

Would you consider suspending the sitting so that Counsel to Mr. Speaker can be consulted on whether the defective amendments should be rejected to give the House of Lords the opportunity to make them technically correct?

Given the deep-felt anxiety of the Opposition and people who are affected by this proposition, there is a danger that the Officers of the House and Counsel to Mr. Speaker will eventually be seen as parties to a Government fiddle. That is damaging and dangerous to the reputation of Officers of the House and to the House as a whole. I should be grateful if you would seriously consider suspending the sitting so that Counsel to Mr. Speaker can be consulted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the House will not drag Counsel to Mr. Speaker—an official of the House—into the debate. We are dealing with Lords amendments only. If hon. Members feel that they can make remarks in order on the Lords amendments, so be it. I hope that we shall quickly proceed to discuss those amendments.

Mr. Dobson: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is not a matter of dragging the reputation of Counsel to Mr. Speaker before the House. He has been asked to advise and he has advised, in writing, that the Bill is defective and that the House cannot put right those defects. The House of Commons produces enough defective legislation unknowingly, and it would be preposterous to produce it knowingly, given the view of Counsel to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Member feels that way, the sooner we get on to the Lords amendments so that these matters can be discussed, the better.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) to cast aspersions on the voting record of hon. Members on the Bill? The Bill would have been killed off on Second Reading if more than 49 Labour Members had stayed to vote.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall take the points of order that hon. Members wish to raise, but I hope that I have not already dealt with them. I remind hon. Members of the heartfelt plea of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) to have an opportunity to speak in the debate.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you consider suspending the sitting until we get an assurance from the Government? In the latter part of the sittings of the Committee on the Bill, its Chairman, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), said:

"Before the Committee came to make a formal decision on, first, the amendment proposed by the British Coal Corporation and, secondly, the Preamble itself, we agreed that if the bill were allowed to proceed, this would be subject to conditions . . . which . . . were agreed to unanimously."

One such condition was that the Bill's promoters should leave figures in the Library, to be checked from time to time. The Committee agreed:

"that the issues raised before it were sufficiently important that they justified making this Special Report to the House, to draw the attention of . . . the Government to what we believe would be the potentially disastrous effects of large-scale coal imports. In our view it is the Government's duty to take whatever steps are necessary, in the overall national interest, to protect the indigenous coal-mining industry."

The Committee made a special report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My difficulty is that the hon. Member is not putting a point of order to the Chair. He is putting a point which could be legitimate and in order when we come to the Lords amendments. I have not yet heard a point of order for the Chair.

7.45 pm

Mr. Lofthouse: My point of order for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that you should consider suspending the sitting until the Government have given the assurance demanded by the Committee. At no time has that assurance been given. The Lords amendments should not be debated until the Government have given the assurance that the Committee demanded in its special report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member makes my point for me. If we debate the Lords amendments, we may get answers to these points, which are legitimate matters to raise in the debate on the Lords amendments.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to return to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It is not an issue that can be dealt with by coming to the substance of the Bill and voting. My hon. Friend drew attention to the special responsibility of Mr. Speaker for private legislation. As the House knows, private legislation goes through a different procedure. It must be examined by Mr. Speaker, who gives his certificate, and for that purpose he is advised by his Counsel. My hon. Friend said that the House should have available to it the opinion of Counsel to Mr. Speaker—my hon. Friend has read it, so it is obviously not a confidential document.

As I understand it, when the Bill was introduced, Mr. Speaker gave his decision, which had to be accepted. The Bill then went to the House of Lords which has made amendments. Counsel to Mr. Speaker is dissatisfied, on legal grounds, with the formulation of the amendments. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you act for Mr. Speaker in his absence by chairing the House, but only Mr. Speaker can deal with the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. Counsel to Mr. Speaker said that the Bill had come back from the Lords technically defective. We may have different views about the merits of the Bill, but that is a matter for debate. In those circumstances, only Mr. Speaker can rule on the extent to which he takes into account the views of Counsel, who has warned the House that the Bill is defective, since when Mr. Speaker has not given his judgment on the matter. The issue is the juridical role of the Speaker.

The problem cannot be disposed of simply by voting for or against leaving out section 85 and inserting section 85E. There is a wholly reasonable proposal on how to proceed, and I have known this to happen during my years here. When a matter of substance arises, Mr. Speaker should be invited to give it his attention, in which case consideration of the Bill is postponed. I personally do not think that the debate on this Bill could be postponed for 10 minutes or so while the matter was considered. Mr. Speaker would have to give his considered attention, with the advice of the Clerks, to the advice that he had received from his

[Mr. Tony Benn]

Counsel. If Mr. Speaker believed that his Counsel had identified a defect in a Bill that had come from another place, he would have to make a new ruling.

These are not political points. They are matters for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am inviting you, with great respect, to say that the points made have sufficient substance to merit the matter being referred to Mr. Speaker and that further consideration of the Bill should be deferred until that has been done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am glad that the right hon. Member has raised the issue in that manner, because I can readily clarify it. Mr. Speaker has, of course, considered the Lords amendments with considerable care. I assure the House that he is satisfied that there is nothing out of order in them; the Lords amendments which are on the amendment paper for discussion this evening are in order.

Mr. Benn: I am grateful for that assurance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it is the first time that we have heard it. Surely if Mr. Speaker disagrees with his Counsel, which he is perfectly entitled to do, the House is entitled to know the reasons for that disagreement. Surely, in the event of such recommendations by his Counsel, Mr. Speaker would be required to issue a new certificate to the effect that the Bill remains a private one within the provisions of the Standing Orders.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That depends on the interpretation of the words and, of course, Mr. Speaker is given advice on these matters. He is quite clear that our proceedings are in order and that the Lords amendments should be considered. That is plain and there is nothing further that I can add. We have had a good run on points of order. I have allowed every hon. Member who rose at the start of them to raise his point of order and I have dealt with them. To echo the point of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw, it would be much more sensible to get on with the debate in which we may get some enlightenment on these points.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to know whether the Bill as it stands and the amendments should be sent back to the Committee. You will recall that originally the Bill came to the House together with the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill. Both Bills were to be considered together but they were eventually separated. Both went into Committee but only the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill was continued. I understand that the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill was dropped because of the poor quality of drafting. It appears that the technical drafting in this Bill is also poor. Will you rule whether the Bill should be referred back to the Committee so that it can consider whether the Bill should be dropped?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not possible to move back. We are dealing with Lords amendments and the sooner we get on with them the better.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have ruled that the matters that have been raised in points of order can be discussed during the debate on the amendments. You told my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that clauses 77 to 85 of the Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845, which are matters for dispute, left it open to us to discuss whether the original 1845 Act was being referred to or whether it was that Act as subsequently amended. The additions are much wider in the first case than in the second.

I raised a point of order on 25 June which is reported at column 83 of the *Official Report*. I asked whether we would take the amendments one by one, not just in terms of votes but in terms of their being moved and dealt with. I was told that it would be appropriate to raise that matter later. It would be appropriate for us now to discuss the amendments separately, because your earlier ruling to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover showed that a wide debate may be possible on the first amendment, or at least on the first two, applying to these ports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have nothing to add to what I have already said to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and other hon. Members. If the hon. Gentleman checks *Hansard* for 25 June he will see that the House decided when we started the debate that all the Lords amendments would be taken together. That is the normal procedure for Lords amendments to private Bills. However, the Chair said that separate Divisions on the amendments would be permitted. There is nothing further that I can add. The ruling was made clear on 25 June and the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), with his long experience in the House, will remember how helpful he was in that regard.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Since then we have had a range of points of order which revealed new problems, and we have had a ruling which reveals that discussions in connection with amendments Nos. 1 and 2 can be wide. Because of those changed circumstances, is not it appropriate to readjust the position because we have had barely half a sentence from the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) who moved the amendment?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are rapidly approaching the time when we can have another half a sentence from the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. We have had a good run on these points of order. It is my job to protect not only this debate but the other business before the House.

Clause 3

INCORPORATION OF GENERAL ENACTMENTS

Lords amendment: In page 3, line 10, leave out '85' and insert '85E'.

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [25 June]. That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The House will recall that I moved the amendment on 25 June. The purpose of clause 3 is to apply to the work sought to be constructed the provisions of two clauses Acts that were enacted in the 19th century. Those Acts contain model clauses that could be incorporated into private Bills, thereby avoiding the need to set out such provisions in full in individual private Acts.

One of the motives for that was to reduce the length of private Acts with consequent savings in time and money,

not only for the promoters of private Bills but for Parliament, which no longer had to take time to study identical clauses time after time.

I listened carefully to the points of order. For many years it has been the practice of Associated British Ports to incorporate inter alia sections 77 to 85E of the Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845. Section 77 provides that when buying land for the carrying out of works, promoters such as Associated British Ports are not entitled to the minerals except those that it is necessary to remove for the construction of the works. The company may not work minerals unless they are expressly purchased in addition to the land.

Hon. Members have spoken about sections 78 to 85E, which is headed "Minerals under railways". Those sections contain a code under which ABP would be entitled to prevent the owners of any minerals lying under or near the works from endangering the stability of the works by extracting any such minerals. Should Associated British Ports exercise that right, the code provides for it to compensate mine and royalty owners who are affected. That code was inserted in the 1845 Act by the Mines (Working Facilities and Support) Act 1923, to which the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred in his point of order. That replaced a more restrictive code set out in sections 78 to 85 of the 1845 Act as originally enacted. It would still be possible to incorporate the previous code but ABP has never done so.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brown: My next sentence may help my hon. Friend.

When the Bill was drafted, the letter E was not included, but it is the view of the House of Lords, which the promoters are prepared to accept, that it should be added, otherwise the latter part of the code in sections 85A to 85E inclusive would be omitted and those sections, which allow for variation of the code by agreement and which contain various drafting and procedural provisions, are necessary to facilitate implementation of the code. They also confer valuable protection on mine owners, in particular a release from all common law obligations for support for the land on which the works stand.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Unless I have defective hearing, I have not heard my hon. Friend utter the word railway. He has studiously avoided using the word, although everything that he has said has referred to railways. Will he explain to the House how on earth by any stretch of the imagination the port can be described as a railway, which is what is dealt with in the clause?

Mr. Brown: If what my hon. Friend says is the case, every Act of Parliament that has been enacted with the provision that we are seeking to write into the Bill by way of the Lords amendment is similarly defective. I can reassure my hon. Friend. The promoters of the Bill and their parliamentary agents advise me that section 15 of the 1923 Act referred to railway companies because it was amending a railway code. I do not think that my hon. Friend's observation has anything to do with the Lords amendment.

There is little doubt on the matter among those who have advised Mr. Speaker—and there have been references to Speaker's Counsel. I have a copy of the letter to which the hon. Member for Bolsover referred. The hon. Gentleman did not cite the following sentence:

"I cannot, however, imagine that a court or arbitrator, reading its provisions and those affecting 78 to 85 together, would have any difficulty in perceiving and giving effect to its intentions."

8 pm

Mr. Benn: The hon. Gentleman cited legislation and codes that were originally drawn up for railway matters, which was common in the 19th century when railways were being built. He then moved on to the question of mineral rights. The railway legislation was passed before the rights to the ownership of coal were nationalised by the Conservative Government during the war. Long before the pits were nationalised, the coal royalties were taken over by the Government. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is inviting the House to agree to a broader interpretation than even the promoters wanted, by adding 85E in such a way as to give Associated British Ports the right compulsorily to take over the mineral rights to any coal that is discovered under its workings.

Those coal royalties belong to the Government of the day, so that raises, once again, the question whether it is a hybrid Bill—but I shall not pursue that now. On what basis does the hon. Gentleman justify the Lords proposal? Since the legislation that he cited came into force, the control of the rights to coal found under the earth passed to the Government of the day, and that has been the positon for more than 50 years.

Mr. Brown: I do not think that much of what the right hon. Gentleman said is relevant. I am introducing the amendments because the other place requested that they be made. When the Bill first came before the House, it was not felt that the amendments were necessary. However, I have a duty to lay the Lords amendments before the House. It is for the House to accept or reject them. The House is free to reject them for the reasons given by the right hon. Gentleman.

As the Lords Chairman and his colleagues have requested that the promoters insert the amendments in the Bill, I and the promoters felt that it was only right to place them before the House. However, the House is free not to accept them——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I must make progress and I want to deal——

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I earlier raised a point of order about the promoters not providing information, and you rightly said that it was a matter for the promoters because our Standing Orders are defective in that respect. Serious points have been raised, and it is outside the conventions of the House for the hon. Member who represents the promoters not even to give an explanation of why the promoters have so lamentably failed to make information readily available.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If we allow the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) to continue, the hopes nourished by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) may well be satisfied.

Mr. Brown: Other minor and technical amendments need to be made, again at the request of the other place.

[Mr. Brown]

They relate to clause 18. Since the Bill was deposited in November 1987, the general law has been changed by a new general development order, the order of 1987 having been replaced by that of 1988. It will be appreciated that references to a piece of general legislation that has now been revoked would be incorrect when replacement legislation is in force.

The amendments are beneficial to the opponents of the Bill. They constitute a minor piece of technical drafting relating to clause 18. I commend them to the House.

Mr. Ashton: I remind the House that this is a transport Bill as well as a coal Bill. I intend to confine my remarks to the transport aspect because, over many months, my hon. Friends have dealt in great detail with the important coal aspects. They have done a magnificent job in pointing out the effects on the economy in areas such as my constituency.

Bassetlaw has three power stations—Cottam, West Burton and High Marnham. There should have been a fourth—West Burton B. It has four pits—Manton, Harworth, Welbeck and Bevercotes. The Bill will have a devastating effect on my constituency. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has never told the House what will happen to the coal after it is unloaded at the port. He has never explained how thousands of tonnes of coal per day will get to the power stations in my constituency.

Those power stations were first planned in 1947 after a very bad winter, which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I are probably old enough to remember. Manny Shinwell was the fuel Minister at the time, and he was followed by Harold Wilson. A proper plan was laid down, with a railway line rather like a roundabout running through a string of 20 different pits, 24 hours a day, 360 days of the year. The coal was fed into different wagons from a hopper and it was then trundled along through the surrounding fields. One reason why the power stations were sited in my constituency was the River Trent and the surrounding flat countryside.

That was a first-class example of planning by a Labour Government—something that the nation has not enjoyed since. It was highly efficient and effective, despite what was said at the time about the much-maligned nationalised industries. The hon. Gentleman wants to put in its place an unplanned, private enterprise scheme that is designed to suck in cheap coal from South Africa, Bolivia, China, Colombia or Poland, simply to make a massive profit without worrying about the environment or the consequences on our constituencies.

The hon. Gentleman has not told his constituents what will happen when 20,000 tonnes of coal a day must be offloaded at Immingham, so I shall tell them. The hon. Gentleman has not thought out that problem. It means 500 lorries a day, each weighing about 38 tonnes, carrying the 20,000 tonnes of coal needed to run just the power stations in my constituency. Some 500 lorries will have to leave Immingham right around the clock. People living on that lorry route will find that the value of their houses will fall by half, and they should blame the hon. Gentleman for that when they vote at the next general election.

Mr. Michael Brown: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has been to Immingham recently. The docks are connected to the A180, which is a massive dual carriageway provided by the Department of Transport. I do not think that there are any houses near it. The lorries will go straight from the docks on to the A180, a road that I opened in 1983.

Mr. Ashton: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raised that point, because it gives me the opportunity to tell him that lorry drivers please themselves. I have experienced that with the A1 in my constituency. A bypass was built to protect the very pretty village of Blyth, which used to win the competition for the best kept village in Nottinghamshire. What happened? One thousand three hundred lorries a day still go through that village every time that the traffic piles up. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is not listening, but I wish that he would. He will find that the 500 lorries travelling to and from the port will also pile up as a result of an accident or some other form of blockage on the motorway.

When that happens, the drivers will take a short cut. They are all on bonuses and have to complete two or three trips a day. They will take short cuts through villages, calling in at the local pub for their sandwiches or for a packet of fags. They will park at night two miles outside the docks because they have arrived too early and their load is not ready to be collected until 7 o'clock in the morning. Drivers will say, "We'll nip into Immingham, have a pint, park the lorry in the street, and sleep in the back." Then they will start their lorries up at four in the morning under Mrs. Brown's window so that they can be at the front of the queue at the docks.

Any right hon. or hon. Member who represents a coal mining constituency can tell the hon. Gentleman about the complaints that are received from people living near the coal mines. After moving into a modern house, they discover that the klaxon horns sound at 1 o'clock in the morning and that they can hear the Tannoys. They can also hear the warning horns fitted to lorries that sound whenever they reverse, which is done for safety reasons. Our constituents lose sleep all the time, and they protested when it was suggested that pits would go on to seven-day working. They are continually having their environment destroyed. If the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes imagines that there will be a merry-go-round of lorries coming down the motorway and going straight to the power stations, he is living in cloud cuckoo land. I hope that his constituents will ask him serious, probing questions about the Bill's effects on Immingham.

I shall tell the hon. Gentleman more about the areas on my patch. I mentioned Blyth, and Cuckney is another. Such villages have no pavements or street lamps. One woman pushing a pram had to dive into a hedge when a lorry came thundering round the corner.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I listened with great interest to the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the noise under Mrs. Brown's window and the sound made by reversing trucks, but I fail to relate them to the amendment. The hon. Gentleman is making a wonderful Second Reading speech, but perhaps we may have your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on how far one is allowed to wander off the subject of the amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I was beginning to grow just a little anxious myself. The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) made the point that he was unable to speak at

earlier stages of the Bill, and as a consequence I have allowed him to make a fairly long preamble. However, I am sure that he will now relate his remarks directly to the amendments.

Mr. Ashton: The Bill makes reference to railways, and I am making the point that no railway is attached to the proposed port. One young woman and her baby were killed in my constituency when they were crushed by a lorry against a wall. Even a horse being led down a lane was killed by a lorry. That is the kind of situation that arises when no railway is available. The Bill is a total planning shambles. It is the equivalent of saying that if all the tube stations in London were closed down and everyone could ride free on the buses, that would be fine. It would not. The city could not function. The same applies to the port.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes talks about lorries coming off the A180, but it does not lead to the power stations, which are in a remote rural area near the River Trent. The road that serves them is probably no wider than the gap between the two Front Benches. Lorries have to travel through villages in my constituency such as Walkington, Beckingham and Misterton. During the miners' strike, when there were problems with the railways and freight had to go on the roads, millions of pounds worth of damage was done because the roads were not designed to carry that amount of weight.

Nottinghamshire county council ran into serious trouble. Because of the poll tax—I am not digressing, but this is an important point—that county council no longer receives rates from the power stations because the Government get that money instead. My constituents have to put up with all the environmental problems caused by lorries, acid rain, steam, coal and noise. They receive no compensation in the form of a rebate on their poll tax as they did with the rates. The Bill will impose a further monstrous 500 lorries a day, carrying 20,000 tonnes of coal, pouring through constituencies.

8.15 pm

I do not believe that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has thought through the Bill and its impact on the environment of his constituency. Three months before the previous election, probably to save the seat of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart)—he may laugh now—the Government promised another power station, West Burton B. We all supported it because building and running it would have created thousands of jobs. I accepted that it would worsen the environment in my constituency, but some of my hon. Friends have suffered worse pit closures even than I have and grievous unemployment, so we were happy to accept the building of that new power station. We do not object to industrial development. I might even say that imported coal could help the building of a new power station. Even so, my constituents want to retain the existing coal mines and power stations, and not run the power stations on foreign coal.

The amendments give the promoters of the Bill the power to do virtually anything that they like. Once they have created the project for massive profit, there will be no cost to them for the wear and tear on the roads, or for the loss of value by half of houses on the route, even in Immingham. Nor will they have to meet the miners' redundancy pay or suffer through the loss of rate rebates.

I cannot for the life of me understand why the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is conning his own constituents into supporting the Bill. I shall not make the allegation that the hon. Gentleman is getting paid because if he was getting paid, I am sure that he would stand up and tell the House. He has not done so, but if it is found out later that he is getting paid, that will be a contempt of the House and I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will take the appropriate action.

I shall make one promise to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. There is no way that the port can be built before the next general election. If the promoters sitting in the Box watching us have spent money on anything except drawings, they have been very foolish. The next Labour Government will stop the project. If a Labour Government are returned at the next general election, the port will not be built. We may have to pay compensation for the drawings and planning that the promoters have already completed—but if they mix one bag of cement ready to start work on constructing the port, they are idiots. The port will not go ahead. No one is in favour of it—neither Conservative Members who know the Nottinghamshire area nor my own right hon. and hon. Friends. The project is designed only to make a massive profit for friends of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, and his constituents will decide that for themselves at the next general election.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: In order to understand our objections to the Bill and to the Lords amendments, I will precis the contents of clause 3. Subsection (1) states that the Act will incorporate

> "(a) sections 30 to 44 of the Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845 . . .
>
> (b) sections 77 to 85 of that Act".

and:

> "For the purposes of the said sections 30 to 44 of the Act of 1845, as so incorporated"—

and I tried to make this point clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)—

> "the works shall be deemed to be a railway and, for the purpose of section 78 of the said Act of 1845 (as amended by the Mines (Working Facilities and Support) Act 1923 in so far as it relates to the works".

Clause 3 and the Lords amendments try to write into the Bill the 1845 Act as amended by the 1923 legislation—or at least that is what the Lords think they have done. That is why I raised a point of order earlier.

The clause and the amendments seek to establish what mining code will apply and whether it has been properly chosen. In doing so, ABP assumes that it is a railway company. I submit that ABP is patently not a railway company and that the works that it intends to carry out are not railway works. However, the amendments that we are asked to approve deem them to be railway works. If we accepted the amendments, we should assume that their Lordships made the right decision in adopting the 1923 code. The courts are likely to take a different view.

It is odd, therefore, that the House should be debating the Bill. I believe that the promoters are storing up trouble for themselves. If they were to be challenged in the courts, they would be faced with enormous financial costs. It would take only six months to send the Bill back to the other place to get it right. There would still be arguments about whether it was right, but at least if it left this place in six months time as an Act of Parliament it would go out

[Mr. Brandon-Bravo]

clean. By their obstinacy the promoters are storing up for themselves many difficulties that they could avoid if they were willing to wait for six months.

Under the 1845 Act there are two mining codes—the original code and the one that was revised in 1923. I understand that if a private Bill incorporates sections 77 to 85 of the 1845 Act it is the original code that is incorporated, unless either the promoters are a railway company—in which case the 1923 Act automatically applies—or they draft the Bill in such a special way as to make it clear that they have chosen to incorporate, for good reasons or bad, the 1923 code.

Reference was made earlier to counsel's opinion. We believe that the drafting of the Bill is wrong. The Lords amendments undoubtedly seek to demonstrate the promoters' intention to incorporate the 1923 code rather than the original 1845 code, since they introduced clause 85E which is found only in the later version. When the Bill left this place it was clear that the promoters assumed that the original code would apply. The Lords amendments are, therefore, incompatible with the original intention of this House. Since they are incompatible, we believe that they make clause 3, as amended, unworkable.

Before the Bill left the Commons it incorporated sections 77 to 85 of the old Act. It provided that the works were to be deemed a railway, that there should be an area of protection and that the area of protection should be various distances in metres. Of the four different provisions, the first two are incorporated in the original code. That is simply because of the references to sections 77 to 85 of the 1845 Act. If ABP was really a railway company—again I say that it is not—reference to the 1923 code would be automatic and there would be no problem. However, as I submit that ABP is not a railway company, there is confusion—hence the justification of the points of order earlier.

The third provision uses the expression "area of protection". That expression is appropriate only in the context of the 1923 code. The fourth provision does not prescribe an area of protection. It prescribes various distances in metres. That brings us back to the 1845 code in which the equivalent of an area of protection was defined simply by reference to the distance from a railway —whether it be 40 yards, or a special distance, as laid down in whatever Bill was before Parliament at the time.

Whatever the promoters' objectives may be, at best, having read all the papers that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has struggled through today, as have I, save only their anxiety to get the Bill, defective or otherwise, on to the statute book, it is difficult to know quite what they are trying to achieve.

When the Bill left the Commons it was clearly unsatisfactory but, strangely enough, I am advised that, in the form that it left the Commons, it was workable because the assumption was that the original 1845 code would apply and that the reference to the 1923 Act was simply an error. If, however, the drafting intended to incorporate the new code, the provision is unworkable because the area of protection is defined by distances. That is unworkable in the context of the development of a port on the Humber.

There are good grounds, therefore, for doing the promoters a favour and rejecting the Lords amendments. Rejection would give them time to look at the matter again. Thereby we might save the port authority a lot of money. We ought to provide the House of Lords with an opportunity to proffer alternative amendments to correct the drafting of clause 3, on the basis of either the old code or the new. If the Lords amendments are accepted, the inevitable consequence will be that the Bill will be passed with clause 3 in an unsatisfactory and defective form.

The Lords amendments to clause 18 effectively read part II and schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1988 into the Bill. If that were strictly a planning matter, the road restrictions would apply. Those are the road restrictions that the hon. and very patient Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) referred to in his speech. By choosing the route of a ports Bill, all the constraints to which the hon. Member for Bassetlaw referred will be circumvented unless we write constraints into the Bill. Those constraints are missing. Again, that is why we have raised so many points of order.

In opposing the amendments, I say to the sponsor of the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, who may have an opportunity, with the leave of the House, to speak again, that that will not block the development at Immingham. I am given to understand that the promoters do not need the Bill in its present form. I am told that the promoters could still take the route of an order under the Harbours Act and that they might succeed in about a year. That might be cheaper than the route they have chosen to go down tonight.

The clause was out of date when it left this place many months ago. This is planning permission by means of a private Bill. Many would suggest that that, too, is out of date. The promoters' amendment seeks to correct an imperfection in the planning laws. We submit that they should have gone further by also correcting the anomaly of obtaining, through the Bill, planning permission in advance without an environmental assessment, having been undertaken. Therefore, we should defer this stage of the Bill, pending receipt of an environmental assessment, or at least we should make deemed planning permission conditional upon and subject to an environmental assessment. That is the minimum duty that we owe to everyone in the region who may be affected.

The EEC directive, referred to in an earlier debate by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron)—directive 85/337—requires environmental impact assessments for trading ports unless a member state Government have adopted certain alternative exemption procedures. That is not the case with this Bill. The Bill will not mean that the project is exempted from the requirements of the assessment. That does not seem to have been taken on board by the promoters. That would be the case only where an environmental impact assessment is built into the Bill. The directive has effect in the United Kingdom and, as such, could be used by an adversely affected party to challenge in the English courts the legality of the authorisation of the project under this Bill.

8.30 pm

Those who would immediately have cause to object would include Nottinghamshire county council, which had many problems a few years ago with coal lorries on its minor roads, the coalfield communities in Yorkshire and, dare I say it, the National Union of Mineworkers and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. Immediately the Bill is given Royal Assent a whole range of people will have grounds for taking the ports authority to the courts. I am

advised that the action would be for judicial review of the Act or a declaration that the consents contained in the Act were invalid, being in contravention of Community law. That is not a route I would recommend the promoters to take.

There is a risk of infringement proceedings under article 169 of the EEC treaty which requires a member state to adopt all measures necessary to ensure that before consent is given projects likely to have significant effect on the environment by virtue, among other things, of their nature, size and location are made subject to assessment with regard to their effects. The risk is obvious.

With those comments on the clauses and the amendments to them, I believe that there are good grounds for rejecting them all.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) is aware of the consequences of the Bill. It is sad that only a handful of Conservative Members were present to listen to and digest what he had to say. If there were any justice in this place, the Bill would be thrown out. We could say that on political grounds every day of the week and we would be right. On this occasion we are not talking about a political issue although the Bill does have political overtones. I will try to put in layman's language the points expressed by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South.

A Bill went unamended from the House of Commons to the House of Lords mainly because the Tories on the Committee in the House of Commons refused to allow any amendments to be carried. Many attempts were made by the couple of people representing the views of Opposition Members but they were all defeated by the casting vote of the Chairman. One would have thought that one or two amendments would be carried on a private Bill, but they were not because the Chairman and his colleagues thought that they were political in content.

In the House of Lords a couple of lawyers examined the Bill. I am certain that their changes have not been made because of any political motive. They see that clause 3(2)(b) says that the 1845 mining code is being used. Anybody can see that. There are two codes that are usually used—the 1845 and the updated 1923. The 1923 code usually refers to railways. The lawyers find that the 1845 code is not applicable to other parts of the Bill. Somebody in the House of Lords spotted that and said that in order to make the Bill more compatible in law, clause 85E would have to be inserted. It looked insignificant to me until I started reading it last night. I have spent about 10 hours on it since then. I missed Question Time trying to get genned up on the issue. I did that because this is a scandal. A Bill will be passed by Parliament tonight even though it is defective. We know that and we have heard a Tory Member say the same. He has seen a lawyer who has pointed out its defects.

We know—I read it out—that in correspondence the Speaker's Counsel has also said that it is defective. I have the correspondence and it is now written in *Hansard* and is in the public domain. He is saying, "Okay, the Bill is defective but it will have to be settled in court." That means that ports having their property taken away—either Immingham or one of the other ports—will have to go to court and spend money in order to win their case. Some people would say, "I haven't got the money and I daren't risk going to court." It would cost a lot of money and I hope that it will cost the promoters a lot of money. We should not get that far. We should kill the Bill here and now. When the Speaker's Counsel says that a Bill is defective, something should be done.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Skinner: I want to try to finish my explanation. I do not need interventions, even if I were to be here all night.

I want to try to fathom out and explain to my colleagues why the 1845 code is used. It is because Associated British Ports is not a railway and it does not want to be trapped by that code. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South also referred to that. Generally speaking, the 1923 mining code referred to railways.

Very few Tory Members have studied the Bill. Even the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) does not understand the Bill. He is just the paymaster. There is no doubt that the 1845 code was used because Associated British Ports is not a railway. However, the House of Lords realised that in order to make it compatible in law, clause 85E would have to be added. In the 1845 Act there is no section 85E. That is the clincher. When we see 85E we know that the 1923 Act is being used because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) pointed out in a previous debate, that Act contains the additional sections 85A to 85E. By inserting the reference to the 1923 code they have made the rest of the Bill unworkable. That is what the correspondence from the Speaker's Counsel is all about. Solicitors have written and said, "Look here, the House of Lords has amended the Bill but it has made a mess of it and it is invalid."

Anybody with any sense would take back the Bill. Sadly, this is not a true private Bill. At the witching hour hordes of Tories who have not listened to one word of the debate, not even the words of the hon. Member for Nottingham, South who explained it in a similar way to me, will march through the Lobby. There will be shop stewards on the door telling them which way to go—they call them Whips. The Government will be involved. They will say, "That is not true. A handful of Tories will vote against it." There is no question but that there will be bouncers on the door to get the Bill through.

Why do I suspect that the promoters have changed from using the 1845 Act to the 1923 Act? It is all about saving money, as I discovered when I was discussing the Bill with the legal people. They were looking at it blandly —in a legal fashion—but I said, "There must be something more than words; there must be brass." They said, "We are not sure where that is." I said, "I will find it", and I have. Clause 3(2)(b) refers to distances, but another refers to areas of protection, and the hon. Member for Nottingham, South briefly referred to that.

Areas of protection work like a map, and the company can operate only within a clearly defined area of protection. It starts from point A and goes to point B and anybody can say, "The area of protection is as described." The clause refers to metres:

> "For the purposes of the said sections 77 to 85 of the Act of 1845, as so incorporated, the works shall be deemed to be the railway"—

we now know that it is not a railway but a port—

> "and, for the purpose of section 78 of the said Act of 1845 (as amended by the Mines (Working Facilities and Support) Act 1923) in so far as it relates to the works, the area of protection shall, as regards mines and minerals lying within 172·21 metres of the surface of the ground, be 121·92 metres and, as regards mines and minerals lying at a greater depth than

[Mr. Skinner]

172·21 metres below the said surface, the area of protection shall be increased by 18·3 metres for every 30·48 metres or part thereof."

What does that mean?

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Tell us.

Mr. Skinner: I will. It means that under the 1845 Act there is a half-depth equation, so that for every metre or yard that one goes down into the earth there must be half on the top. If a firm is into saving money, and to stop any prospective mineral excavator later on, it wants a bigger surface area than otherwise obtains. The promoters used the Act that is based on two thirds rather than a half because it protects a greater area around the port.

That is where the money comes in; that is the reason why they have done it; and that is the reason why they have got into a mess. They said at the beginning, "Let us save a lot more money. Let us not use the old Act, which was based on half depth, but one based on a bigger area because by doing that we can protect our property to a greater extent." Therefore, they used one Act for one purpose but another Act for another purpose and made a mess of the Bill. That is why it should have been thrown out.

The promoters are saying that they want the benefits of the 1845 Act and of the 1923 Act—when it suits them—but that they do not care if it messes up the Act of Parliament in between because they can sort that out when they get into court. They want their cake and to eat it.

We should throw out these amendments. Before you came in, Madam Deputy Speaker, we tried to explain to Mr. Deputy Speaker that the Bill was faulty and that it should not proceed. That was why there were many points of order. If we cannot prevent it from proceeding, we must try to defeat it. The sad thing is that if we do not, the amendments will be carried, with the net result that the Bill will become an Act of Parliament and some poor sod will get his fingers burnt. We should make every possible attempt to defeat it.

One of the reasons why I am so convinced that the promoters used the 1845 Act is in the briefing from Associated British Ports, which was sent to hon. Members. That is where it gives the game away. Paragraph 3 says:

"The amendments to be considered were made by the Unopposed Committee in the Second House. No substantial change is effected by these amendments, which in Clause 3 adds sections 85A to 85E of the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act 1845 to the provisions of that Act incorporated with the Bill, and in Clause 18 substitutes the new general development order".

That relates to the amendments on planning.

8.45 pm

Even in the hand-out the promoters were still talking about the 1845 Act. They were not talking about the 1923 Act and never have been. That is why letters were sent by petitioners against the Bill, including British Coal, to Mr. Speaker's Counsel. I shall read out what he said. Mr. Deputy Speaker did not like it, but it should be written into *Hansard* exactly what he said:

"Thank you for your letter of 16th July with a copy of your letter to Sherwoods of the 13th. I can see no room for doubt that in referring to Sections 77 to 85 of the Act of 1845 the Bill as originally introduced had the effect of incorporating Section 77, as originally enacted, and Sections 77 to 85, as substituted by the Mines (Working Facilities and Support) Act 1923 and since amended. The Lords amendments made no change in that respect but had the effect of incorporating also sections 85A to 85E. That change appears to me to be one advantageous to your clients. I cannot therefore agree that the Lords amendments have made the Bill's provisions worse in any respect. With your observation Number 3, I do respectfully agree"—

this is Mr. Speaker's Counsel saying to a solicitor of British Coal, "I agree with your observation that the Bill is defective"—

"that Clause 3(2)(b), although it follows the precedent set by section 3(2)(b) of your firm's Associated British Port Bill (Hull)"

—my hon. Friends will recall that that was blocked but it eventually went through—

"it is too elliptically expressed in its specification of distances and should have been drafted so as to mesh in more precisely with section 78(5)."

Mr. Speaker's Counsel is saying that it does not mesh in. I do not know how much strength that has in legal terms, but if he is saying that a Bill that is going on the statute book does not mesh in—his words are,

"it is too elliptically expressed in its specification of distances and should have been drafted so as to mesh in more precisely with section 78(5)"—

that is devastating.

We are told in every textbook on the British constitution that the House of Commons passes Bills, which go to the House of Lords, which crosses the t's and dots the i's and it comes out perfect. That is what we are told. We know that it does not happen often. Generally speaking, that is because no one has spotted it. Members of Parliament do not spot it, Mr. Speaker does not spot it. Speaker's Counsel does not spot it, the House of Lords does not spot it and nor does the counsel in the House of Lords, so the Bill reaches the statute book. Then people say, "Have you heard about the Bill that Ridley introduced? It is wrong." That has happened four times. Many times we have told the Government, "We told you so", but we have done it tongue in cheek. Had we known we should have said so at the time. But this time we have spotted it and so has someone in the legal profession outside this place.

In eastern Europe, they have used the model of the mother of Parliaments left, right and centre as it is supposed to be the best ever. I can imagine people trotting across to Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, and saying, "We have a model at Westminster. We do things properly. Not only do we pass legislation in the House of Commons, but another gang in the other place makes sure that it is perfect, except when it is a private Bill that will make money." It is a scandal that people will make money out of the Bill when people in the House, including Mr. Speaker's Counsel, know that it is defective.

Mr. Michael Brown: The hon. Gentleman began by quoting from a letter, but he failed to quote the next sentence which reads:

"I cannot, however, imagine that a court or arbitrator, reading its provisions and those of section 78(5) together would have any difficulty in perceiving and giving effect to its intention."

Mr. Skinner: I had not quite reached that, but there was another paragraph after that. Being a typical, run-of-the-mill Speaker's Counsel who will back every horse in the race, because he is not sure—we have consulted lawyers and we know the score—he stated in the next paragraph:

"If it were possible at this stage to make more precise the drafting of that part of clause 3(2)(b), I should not hesitate to recommend that it be done."

Mr. Speaker's Counsel, having backed a couple of horses, then, being a legal man and knowing that there might be some trouble later and someone might make some money in court, covers his back and sums up by saying:

"I should not hesitate to recommend that it be done."

Mr. Michael Brown: What about the next sentence?

Mr. Skinner: The next sentence states:

"The provisions in question, however, were in the Bill as sent from this House to the Lords and their construction, and amendments to the Lords amendments cannot therefore be offered to improve the drafting in this respect."

We know that. He is saying that we cannot amend the Lords amendments. Mr. Speaker's Counsel is saying that if we could amend the Lords amendments they should be amended, but the constitution of this place does not allow that. However, it allows us to send the Bill back. Why is it not going back? We know that if it were sent back there is just half a chance that much more time would be available for people to realise that the Bill is riddled with inaccuracies and faults and that it would finally get buried. More people would read *Hansard* and see that the number of Tories voting for the Bill has fallen proportionately in the past three years. The majority was only 18 last time and there is half a chance that another handful might say, "That has done it for me. I shall not vote for a defective Bill." If they were here tonight, they would have joined the hon. Member for Nottingham, South in making sure that the Bill was defeated.

That is it in a nutshell. I am sure that my hon. Friends are aware of what is going on. A company is trying to bludgeon the Bill through so that it can make money by bringing in laundered coal from South Africa to send it to Bassetlaw and other places. Those people are not bothered about the people who live in the villages, because they themselves will not be living in villages in Bassetlaw. They are interested only in lining their pockets. They pushed the Bill through the House of Commons without allowing any votes; they sent it to the Lords where someone found a defect and tried to amend it, but having been amended, it is worse than it was before. It ends up with Mr. Speaker's Counsel who says, in so many words, "I cannot recommend this as being a bona fide Bill."

Every single one of us should redouble our efforts to ensure that this faulty Bill is defeated. Not only will we save many people a lot of heartache, but we shall also make sure that that filthy gang of promoters and the people running Associated British Ports are defeated because they are trying to con the British Parliament. Because most Tory Members of Parliament are missing, they do not understand that they will march through the Lobby tonight to allow a defective piece of legislation on to the statute book.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Like many hon. Members, I believe that the Lords amendments are flawed and should not be approved tonight—I refer particularly to clause 18, page 9, lines 6 to 14—because there has been a total disregard of existing British legislation and, more so, that of the European Commission.

As other hon. Members wish to speak, I shall confine my reasoning to why the House should not approve the amendment to clause 18, page 9, line 8. The amendment relates to the replacement of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 by the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988. The 1988 order was made in October 1988 before the Private Bill Committee in the House began its hearing. If that Committee had known then that the amendment were needed it should have been included in the Bill and the House given a proper opportunity to debate its implications for the principles behind the Bill.

It would have been most inappropriate to approve the amendment to clause 18, which concerns the terms on which the planning permission for the project is to be granted, unless the requirements of the EC directive 85/337 on environmental assessment have been complied with. Even the Lord Chairman of Committees in another place accepted that there was some doubt about whether there was an exemption for the private Bill procedure. The directive sets up the duty and it is for Parliament to ensure that the parliamentary procedures are not inconsistent with the EC directive.

Complaints have been made to the European Commission, and rightly so, concerning the failure to carry out an environmental impact assessment of the Immingham project. I believe that it would be a grave discourtesy to the Commission for Parliament to pre-empt the outcome of the discussions on the complaint between the Government and the Commission by approving the Lords amendment tonight. Such a discourtesy might mean that the Commission would believe it necessary to take legal action and bring this House into ridicule. The basis of litigation would be that the directive had not been complied with. Therefore, it would be pointless for the House to pass the Bill when the powers in it would turn Immingham into a competitor with Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp; and we should not forget the damage that would occur to the Nottinghamshire coal industry and to jobs. Those discussions could be struck down or even suspended as happened in the recent Spanish trawler case.

9 pm

I contend that the directive should have been taken into account by the Private Bill Committee which could then have considered the environmental effects on the communities in those counties of large numbers of lorries carrying coal to the Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire power stations. The Committee's report was in error in agreeing with the promoters that local highway authorities are "under no such obligation." The special report from the other place confuses the issue by stating that local highway authorities already possess adequate powers to restrict the movement of heavy goods vehicles by road. They do not and, what is more, local authorities in counties affected by the Bill maintain that they do not have such powers.

The briefest statistics relating to the proposed Humber port should start alarm bells ringing in all the communities that will be affected by heavy lorry movements. Ten million tonnes of imported coal means 1 million journeys —half a million to the port for collection and half a million to the receiving power stations. Humberside and Nottinghamshire had a foretaste of that nightmare to come during the 1984-85 coal industry dispute when roads and villages suffered badly with all damage repair being paid for either by the ratepayers or individuals. That may be accepted in a national emergency, but it is totally unacceptable on a permanent basis for decades to come.

I have a final plea for my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). I ask him to seek from the promoters of the Bill an undertaking that coal

imported through the proposed terminal at Immingham will be transported to power stations only by rail and barge. Only then will the communities facing the threat of coal lorries through their villages be able to rest peacefully in their beds. I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes if he will give that undertaking. In the absence of that undertaking, I ask the House to reject the amendment until EC directive 85/337 is complied with.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 196, Noes 157.

Division No. 302] **[9.02 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Brown and
Mr. Toby Jessel.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug

Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Terry Patchett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: In page 3, line 19 leave out "85" and insert "85E".—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 155.

Division No. 303] **[9.14 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Toby Jessel and
Mr. James Hill.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith

Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'ri)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Patchett and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 18

Planning Permission

Lords amendment: In page 9, line 6, leave out "Class XII" and insert "Part 11".—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 172, Noes 150.

Division No. 304] **[9.28 pm**

AYES

Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger

Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Toby Jessel and
Mr. James Hill.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Patchett and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: In page 9, line 7, leave out "XII in" and insert "A in Part 11 of" and leave out "1" and insert "2".—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 203, Noes 157.

Division No. 305] **[9.42 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*

Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Toby Jessel and
Miss Ann Widdecombe.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Patchett and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Students (Housing Benefit)

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. These regulations should be withdrawn because they are technically flawed and defective. It is centred around the allocation of access funds and the moneys will be disbursed under section 100 —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman is trying to engage my attention and that of the House, and he deserves to be heard.

Mr. Meacher: As I have said, the regulation is centred around the access fund and the moneys will be disbursed under section 100 of the Education Act 1944 and section 73 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1945. No regulations have been produced by the Government under those sections. How can the House reach a decision before it has sight of the regulations which will determine how the access funds are to be distributed?

It may be that the Government do not intend to produce any such regulations. That would be worse still. Either way, it would be an abuse of Parliament for the regulations to be voted through tonight when they are technically flawed and deny the House the information on which to reach a proper decision. Will you, Madam Deputy Speaker, use your good offices with the Minister to see that the regulations are withdrawn until they are properly drafted?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. In the view of the Chair, the regulations are perfectly in order. That is a matter for debate, and I am sure that the Minister will have something to say about it.

9.56 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move,

That the draft Social Security Benefits (Student Loans and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 13th July, be approved.

The contents of the regulations have already been the subject of much debate in the Chamber and in another place. Only last week the House reiterated its support for the Government's policy of withdrawing students' entitlement to housing benefit. However, hon. Members will know that the regulations do not simply remove students' entitlement to housing benefit, income support and unemployment benefit: they define those vulnerable groups of students who will retain entitlement to housing benefit and income support—with one exception, which I shall come to later. They also provide for the treatment of top-up loans and payments from the access funds in the income-related benefits.

The regulations providing for this apply not only to students who retain entitlement to income support and housing benefit but to the partners of students who will continue to have access to benefits as now, including income support, housing benefit, community charge benefit and family credit. The regulations also provide for the new rate of student rent deduction and allowances for the next academic year.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Minister explain how the difficult regulations affecting community charge benefit for Scottish students in their fourth year at universities will apply? This is a difficulty that has been raised with the Department.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman might care to raise that matter later in the debate. I want to set out what the regulations are designed to achieve. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to deliver his remarks.

Two weeks ago the Government took what I believe was a helpful——

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Should there not be a Scottish Office Education Minister present for this debate? It may be unreasonable to ask the Minister to be aware of the details of Scottish education, but a Scottish Office Minister should be present.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not for the Chair to determine which Minister moves regulations.

Mr. Scott: Whatever worries the hon. Gentleman may have about Scottish students, I made the point during our debate recently that, in the last academic year—it will almost certainly be the same in the coming academic year —a record number of students in England and Wales applied for places in higher education. The same applies in Scotland. If the difficulties were so great, it is unlikely that we would have such a record both north and south of the border.

Some two weeks ago we took what I hope was the helpful, if unusual, step of placing in the Library proof copies of the Social Security Advisory Committee's report on the draft regulations so that hon. Members could study them and use them in our discussions. The Committee's report was published with the regulations. Hon. Members will therefore have had ample opportunity to examine its findings and will be aware that, far from the Committee denouncing the Government's proposals, as recent press reports may have led us to believe, most of them have been accepted by a majority of its members.

It is fair to say that much support was expressed in last week's debate for the general principle that students should be funded by the education maintenance system and not by social security benefits. That is the crux of our policy, as enshrined in the regulations. It was never intended that students should resort to the benefits system to the extent that they do. As I said last week, that was an unplanned outcome of developments in social security in recent years.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware that applications for advanced education show a substantial increase this year, even though students are well aware of the changes proposed? Is he further aware that, for the forthcoming academic year, student support will be increased by about 25 per cent.? That includes the student loan of £420, which is interest-free.

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend outlines points which were made strongly in last week's debate and which underline this evening's debate. Were everybody terrified about the prospect of student loans being the main thrust of support for students, I do not believe that record numbers of people would be applying for higher education.

[Mr. Scott]

In essence, I said last week—I reinforce it without apology tonight—that the objectives of social security policy are not the same as those for educational maintenance policy. The needs and expenditure patterns of students are not necessarily typical of the population as a whole. They have particular needs and are supported for a particular purpose—further, higher and postgraduate education. Through the education system, they will have access to a range of resources, including grants and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said, top-up loans. In addition, access funds will be available to assist students who experience financial difficulties.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): When will details of the access funds be available?

Mr. Scott: The details of the access funds for further, undergraduate and postgraduate education have been announced.

Mr. Smith: I hoped that it was obvious that I meant the details for students who, if the regulations are passed and their social security is withdrawn, will be in hardship—some in dire hardship. They cannot know, because the figures have not been announced for the allocations to institutions or the details of how those institutions will act as mini-local social security departments.

Mr. Scott: We are still some way away from the beginning of the academic year. The access funds will be distributed to the institutions concerned, but the thrust of the policy for their use is not that they should be unduly prescriptive but that there should be the maximum flexibility, so that those administering them at the institutions concerned can recognise hardship in individual cases and respond through them. That is the thrust of the policy, and it is right that it should be so handled.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the access funds have doubled from some £15 million to £30 million? Does he agree that that substantial sum will go a considerable way to alleviating student hardship?

Mr. Scott: I very much accept and welcome my hon. Friend's point. As he said, not only have funds been increased, but my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Education and Science have said that they will carefully monitor their adequacy.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is extremely important to monitor the effects on disabled students? I appreciate that my right hon. Friend has gone a long way in that direction, but will he keep a careful eye on the access of disabled students to universities?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend will recognise that, wearing my other hat as the Minister with responsibilities for disabled people, I am particularly concerned about the needs of disabled students. They are recognised in the underlying system, but I am sure that education institutions will take particular care to monitor the effects of the changes on disabled students.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): If it is no longer any part of the social security system to support students, why is it any part of an education institution to judge hardship?

Mr. Scott: In a sense the hon. Gentleman has put his finger exactly on the point. It is much easier for the institutions of higher and further education to assess what amounts to hardship in the student population than it is for the social security system across the country, which is addressing an entirely different client group. That must be absolutely manifest. I said last week, and I underline today, that I believe that it is much better and will be more flexible and sensitive to the needs of students for education institutions rather than the social security system to do that, however much admiration I have for the social security system that I play a modest part in administering.

In the context of the range of resources that I was outlining, the Government are proposing to withdraw students' entitlement to income support, housing benefit and unemployment benefit. As I have argued in the past few minutes as well as last week, the alternative provisions available through the education system will provide adequate resources for students to live on. We accept that some students will have financial needs beyond the level provided by the grant and loan. That is why we have been exploring the role of the access funds in meeting any residual hardship. However, I do not believe that it is necessary for the generality of students to fall back on the social security system.

Mr. Dalyell: Can we have just a few facts? When the Minister talks about the generality of students, what figures are available to the Department of Education and Science or to his own Department about the number of students from the lower income groups? There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence that great universities such as Edinburgh are not getting the students from relatively low income groups which they would have expected a decade ago. I have no reason to believe that the experience of Edinburgh university is any different from that of a number of other great universities.

Mr. Scott: Surveys are carried out by the Universities Central Council on Admissions and other bodies into the social backgrounds and income levels of students.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): It is clear that young people from low-income backgrounds are under-represented in higher education.

Mr. Scott: Despite the usual sedentary intervention from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), we survey these matters. My right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Education and Science are concerned that entry into further and higher education represents a broad spectrum of income and social background. That monitoring and surveying will continue. However, I repeat what I have said at least twice already: we have record applications in England, Wales and Scotland that are not confined to those from the higher income groups. I am satisfied with that.

I imagine that a number of those who have intervened will want to make their own speeches. As this is a limited debate, I should hate to talk out the motion.

I imagine that the House will be somewhat relieved to hear that I do not intend to go through each of the regulations in detail, but I should like to describe some of their main features.

Regulations 2 and 3 relate to community charge benefit and family credit respectively. They deal entirely with the way in which top-up loans and payments from the access funds are to be treated in the calculation of these benefits. I should perhaps remind the House that registered students are entitled to a special relief and have to pay only 20 per cent. of the community charge. Subsequently, they are not entitled to claim community charge benefit. These regulations are needed to ensure that these payments are taken into account when claims are made by a non-student partner of a registered student. Similarly, single students cannot normally claim family credit because they cannot satisfy the requirement to be in employment for at least 24 hours a week. The provisions of regulation 3 are required to cover claims from families where one of the partners is a student and the other parent is in work and satisfies the 24-hour condition.

The rules for the treatment of top-up loans and access fund payments similarly apply to housing benefit and income support and are covered by regulations 4(9) and 5(7). Essentially, top-up loans will be apportioned as a weekly amount for the full year. Existing regulations mean that the maximum amount of loan available to the student will be assumed even where the student has chosen to take up a lower amount of loan or no loan at all. However, we also propose that the weekly amounts of loan will attract a disregard of £10, and that means that the vast majority of students will enjoy the full value of their top-up loan in the first year of the new scheme. I believe that that responds positively to the recommendation made by the Social Security Advisory Committee.

However, the disregard will apply only for so long as the recipient remains a student. I hope that the House would agree with that. If a student leaves a course before its conclusion, the actual value of any loan taken out will be taken into account in assessing benefit entitlement for the remainder of the academic year covered by that loan.

Our intention, which we clearly stated in our response to the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee and in our letter consulting the local authority associations, was that the disregard on top-up loan income should be subjected to the overriding disregard of £10 on all unearned income within the income—related benefits. That would mean that a student in receipt of a top-up loan and other income attracting a disregard would only benefit from a total disregard of £10 on the whole of his income.

However, I must confess that the regulations as currently drafted do not achieve that intention. This omission came to light only after the draft regulations were laid before Parliament. We therefore intend to correct the position at the earliest opportunity by including the necessary amendments in the separate regulation to cover the concession on deaf students which I announced last week and which we will be laying before Parliament shortly.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister is asking us to pass the regulations, which presumably have received careful scrutiny by parliamentary draftsmen and by legal opinion. If he is now saying that they are defective—I will suggest further reasons why they are defective and should be withdrawn—should he not take them away and bring them back to the House only when they have been correctly drafted?

Mr. Scott: It is fairly typical of the hon. Gentleman to go over the top in responding to what is a modest error in the regulations. We will shortly have another opportunity to implement the concession on deaf students. I am sure that it is right that we should make that modest amendment at that time.

The regulations before us tonight also specify that payments for hardship, made from the access funds, are not to be treated in the same way as the grant.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I ask for the opinion of the Chair on the following point: is it proper that the House should be asked to pass a verdict—that is what we are being asked to do tonight—on legislation when we hear from the mouth of the proposer of that legislation from the Dispatch Box that it is apparently defective? This is entirely new. If it is considered defective by the parliamentary draftsmen, is it not an insult to the House to bring it before us?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I attempted to deal with that point of order at the beginning of the debate. It is a matter for debate, not a matter for the Chair. It is the responsibility of the Government, and for the Minister to answer those points in the debate.

Mr. Scott: We all know that regulations affecting social security matters are complex. However, it was right for me this evening to acknowledge that there had been a small error in the regulations and to explain how, having an early opportunity before us, we intend to correct it.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): When?

Mr. Scott: I said, shortly.

Mr. Douglas: We need to know when, especially as some Scottish universities and institutions will commence their academic sessions in September.

Mr. Scott: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was not present when we debated these matters last week. I made it absolutely clear then that everything would be in place in good time for the new academic year, not just in England and Wales but in Scotland. They will be in place ready for institutions and authorities to be able to make the necessary arrangements. I give the hon. Gentleman that clear undertaking.

I began to explain that payments for hardship made from access funds are not to be treated in the same way as the grant. The payments are discretionary, and it is intended therefore that they be treated in the same way as voluntary payments. That means that regular payments will attract a disregard of £10, and one-off lump sum payments will fall to be treated as capital. In practice, however, we do not expect benefit recipients to be a priority group for the receipt of access fund payments.

The regulations relating to the treatment of income provide for the annual increase in the element of the student grant allowed for books and equipment. The allowance for those items is disregarded in calculating a student's grant income.

Regulation 4 deals with housing benefit. That regulation excludes full-time students from eligibility, on the basis that they are deemed not liable for housing costs.

[Mr. Scott]

However, the regulations also provide for a partner of a student to be treated as liable for rent. That measure ensures that the partners of students will have access to housing benefit, even when the student is in fact the tenant.

Hon. Members will wish to note that the majority of the Social Security Advisory Committee members have accepted the Government's proposal to remove students' entitlement to housing benefit.

Ms. Short: I am sure that, whatever the differences between us, the Minister would not wish to mislead the House. The majority of the committee accepted removal on condition that there was a fall-back right for the Government to give people a grant in the summer if they would otherwise be in distress. The Government have not accepted that condition, so the majority of the committee do not support the Government.

Mr. Scott: I have considered the committee's recommendations with some care. I do not think that it took account of the availability of access funds when hardship existed or of the ability of local education authorities to give grants to students during the long vacation specifically if they were experiencing hardship.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The point that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) made was that the Minister was possibly misleading the House. He is now attempting to cover himself by saying what the social security commissioner should have said. He has not told the House what the Social Security Advisory Committee actually said.

Mr. Scott: The Social Security Advisory Committee is just that—an advisory committee. The Government and Ministers have a responsibility to listen to its advice and to assess it against the reality of the situation and the totality of help that is available to students in the circumstances. That is why the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the response by my right hon. Friend have been published with the regulations.

No doubt the hon. Gentleman will have a chance later to make those points, and I shall seek to respond to them. I am not in the least attempting to deceive the House. I am stating the situation as it is and what resources are available to students in response to the situation in which they are removed from entitlement to housing benefit.

Regulation 4(6), as well as excluding students from housing benefit, sets out those categories of students who will retain entitlement. Those categories also apply to income support and include lone parents, disabled students, pensioner students, student couples with dependent children and students under 19 in further education.

We had intended that the definition of a disabled student—for benefit purposes—should be on the basis of those who meet the criteria for the disability premium, together with a transitional provision to ensure that those disabled students who had previously received income support as students on the basis of their disability should remain eligible for income support and housing benefit. That transitional provision will also apply to those who received income support as disabled students while in relevant education up to the age of 19.

Hon. Members will be aware that we now propose to extend the definition of a disabled student to include students who are eligible for the local education authority disabled students allowance by reason of deafness. However, as I implied, it is first necessary to consult the local authority associations on the proposal. It is for that reason that we have decided to introduce this measure by a separate set of regulations which will be laid before Parliament at the earliest opportunity. The regulations will be drafted to embrace students who are excluded from receiving actual payment of the disabled students allowance on grounds of parental means, and also students who fall within the discretionary award arrangements and who receive an award akin to the DSA, by reason of deafness.

Finally, the regulations relating to housing benefit provide for the annual increase in the student rent deduction. This takes account of the uprated element in the student grant for accommodation costs.

Regulation 5 excludes most students from entitlement to income support on the basis that they are not available for work during the period of study. The regulations redefine the period of study to include the long vacations falling within the student's course, but not the long vacation following the student's final year. Similarly, regulation 6, dealing with unemployment benefit, prevents students from being treated as available for work for any day on which they are a student.

The Government believe that students have made a conscious decision to follow a course of study and are not therefore unemployed in the normal sense of the word. Nor can it be said that students following a full-time course are in any sense available for full-time work. Unemployment benefit is intended to provide financial support for people who face the unforeseen contingency of unemployment, not those who have opted out of the full-time labour market. Similarly, income support, other than for those in vulnerable groups not required to be available for work, is intended to assist only those people who are available for, and actively seeking, full-time work.

Currently students are ineligible for these two benefits during term time and the short vacations. We are now making extra resources available through the education system to ensure that students have sufficient alternative support for the long vacation.

Doubtless Opposition Members will remind me that the Social Security Advisory Committee is opposed to the Government's policy on unemployment benefit. It argues that, if the contribution condition is met, unemployment benefit should be paid.—*[Interruption.]* Well, I shall put what I hope is an equally reasonable response to that argument.

Full-time students do not meet the necessary conditions of entitlement. I do not accept that students are unemployed in the same way as other claimants. Moreover —as I am sure the House will recognise—an adequate contribution record alone has never been sufficient justification for receiving unemployment benefit. There have always been additional conditions to be satisfied. In a previous report, the committee did not adopt its current line on the contributory principle. In 1986, it accepted that unemployment benefit should not be paid to students in the short vacations since educational provision covered those periods. To pay unemployment benefit, the committee accepted, would be to duplicate provision for

personal maintenance. The Government believe that this argument remains a compelling one, and thus reject the committee's finding in its current report.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Does the Minister agree that one problem is that the provisions seem to open the way dramatically to changing the position of part-time seasonal workers? It could be argued that, although they are in a different position from students, they have deliberately opted into that way of life. Many people in my constituency have seasonal employment.

Mr. Scott: This is a debate about students, not seasonal workers. We have made certain adjustments to the way in which seasonal workers are treated for unemployment benefit. The hon. Gentleman will no doubt find other opportunities to raise that subject. However, tonight we are discussing student maintenance and whether they may be maintained through the education maintenance system or through the social security system.

Before I leave this issue, I draw the House's attention to the fact that the majority on the Social Security Advisory Committee accepted the Government's proposal to remove students' underlying entitlement to income support—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Ladywood would like me to give way, I shall of course do so.

Ms. Short: By a majority of 8:6, the committee agreed on certain conditions. The Government have not met them, so the committee is not with the Government.

Mr. Scott: I have spoken about the role of the Social Security Advisory Committee. We do not have to accept every word and condition that it puts forward. The broad thrust of the committee's recommendations was in agreement with what the Government are doing. Anyone who knows about the social security system will recognise that it would not be logical for us to say that students are not entitled to unemployment benefit but are entitled to income support. Broadly the same conditions apply to the receipt of both benefits.

Of course, a safety net is necessary in these circumstances. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is establishing the access funds, about which we had some exchange of views earlier, to assist students in financial difficulties. As I said earlier in response to an intervention, local education authorities have the discretion to award vacation hardship allowances during the long vacations. Those can be worth more than £50 a week to the student. The costs to the education authority are fully reimbursed. In those circumstances, we do not believe that there is a case for retaining a social security safety net. The existence of such an arrangement could only provide an incentive for the access fund administrators and local education authorities to withdraw from their responsibilities. Our policies are clearly set out and they are that students should be maintained by the education maintenance system. We believe that both the access funds and the LEAs are up to the task.

I should like to explain one other provision. Although the regulations are intended to come into force on 1 September, many students will still be on their long vacation at that time. It would obviously not be right to take benefit away from students before they were in a position to call on the new support arrangements—loans and access funds—which will be open to them. Regulation 7 specifically addresses that point: no students will have their benefit entitlement withdrawn this year until they resume their course of study.

The regulations give effect to the Government's proposals on student entitlement to benefits. The issues that they raise have been debated only recently in this House and at length in another place. I am pleased to present them, and I commend them to the House.

10.26 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Madam Deputy Speaker, I raised with you at the outset of the debate the point that the regulations are technically flawed and should be withdrawn. You advised me that that was a matter not for the Chair but for the House. Therefore, I seek the wider agreement of the House that these defective regulations should be withdrawn and brought back only when they have been rectified. They are defective because in large measure they deal with the distribution of the access funds. The Minister spent a fair amount of time talking about the access funds. They are to be distributed under section 100 of the Education Act 1944 and section 73 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1945, yet the regulations under those sections that will govern the distribution of access funds have not been made available.

I repeat my question. How can Parliament reach a proper judgment on the regulations until it has prior knowledge of how they will be carried through? That is exactly the point made earlier in an intervention in the Minister's speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith). The Minister simply did not seem to understand the thrust of the question. It is a very serious question, and I hope that the House understands it. The Minister has already been arrogant. He admitted that the drafting of the regulations was defective but did not even apologise for it. He simply said loftily that he would correct the error at some future date.

If the Minister admits that the drafting is defective, and if there is considerably more serious defective drafting such as I suggested, will he consider that the right course is to withdraw the regulations and redraft them so that the House can consider proper regulations? Perhaps the Minister might like to answer that question. I am not asking a rhetorical question, but asking the Minister whether he will do so.

Mr. Scott: I have no intention of withdrawing the regulations. I shall make the modest amendment when we lay the regulation about deaf students before the House.

Mr. Meacher: I am not merely making a point about deaf students. I am asking how the House can reach a decision about access funds, which are at the centre of this debate, when hon. Members have no idea how they will be distributed to relieve hardship.

Mr. Scott: There is no question of the regulations being withdrawn. The access funds will be distributed to the institutions from the three different funds, and it will be up to the institutions to administer them flexibly and sympathetically, according to students' needs. It has never been intended that the access funds should be controlled by regulation.

Mr. Meacher: That is exactly what I suspected. It is an important point, which the Minister had not previously admitted. I am glad to have it out of his own mouth.

The statement that the Secretary of State is required to make to the Social Security Advisory Committee says at page 3, paragraph 14:

"Although some central guidance will be given on the administration of the Funds, it is not the Government's intention to fetter the discretion of institutions in determining how the Funds are used."

That is exactly the point—either the guidance is significant, in which case Parliament has a right to prior sight of it before it is asked to pass this legislation, or it is so insignificant as not to fetter the discretion of institutions, in which case Parliament should not pass the regulations if they give such blanket and untrammelled financial powers to the Secretary of State.

It is a serious point because within the past month Parliament has already been admonished by the courts for its carelessness in nodding through—I think the judge's phrase was "Homer nodded", which refers to Parliament, rather than Homer—such vague and open-ended powers to the Secretary of State. That was Mr. Justice Purchas' complaint about the unfettered powers voted to the Secretary of State over the administration of the social fund. However, one month later, we are being asked to do exactly the same again. That is why I ask every hon. Member who cares about the rule of law and having a check on the powers of the Executive—*[Laughter.]* I know that it causes great mirth to Ministers, but it is a serious matter. If Parliament is to exercise proper control over the Executive, it must reject the regulations until they have been redrafted so that they are genuinely accountable to the House—which at present they are not.

A further absurdity about the regulations, if they are not amended, is that if access funds provided under sections 100 or 73 are to be excluded from income taken into account under the regulations relating to income support or family credit, that requires specific regulations. If the Government do not propose to make such regulations under those sections, which is what the Minister said, access funds will be taken into account and will diminish student benefits. It is wholly unacceptable that Parliament should be asked to pass the regulations tonight when the crassly defective drafting leaves open such perverse consequences.

I make no apology for the time that I have spent talking about whether Parliament should pass the regulations, but I am obliged to speak briefly on the issue of substance. I shall immediately disabuse the Minister of a canard that he continues to peddle—he did so again tonight. The issue is not whether students should continue to be supported in part by the social security system. The Opposition accept, as do the National Union of Students and others, that social security benfits are not the ideal means of student financial support. The issue is whether the proposed alternative form of support is adequate, and in our view it patently is not.

The Government's whole case is that the average benefit received by students is about £315 a year, while the student loan is £420, so the average student will be better off. That argument is flawed on at least three counts. First, the research was undertaken by an organisation called Research Services Limited in May 1987, and is now more than three years old, so the figures are badly out of date. Secondly, it is an average figure, which fails to take account of huge urban and regional variations in cost. Private rents for students vary between £25 a week outside London, £45 a week in greater London and £60 in inner London. The beauty of housing benefit is that it is what the Government are always looking for—a targeted benefit. It alone takes into account these huge variations, while the Minister is deliberately switching to a scheme that does not.

Thirdly—by far the most important point—the figure is simply wrong. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, in its evidence to the Social Security Advisory Committee, said that in the south-east a student stands to lose £560 in housing benefit during the academic year. We may accept some leeway in the precision of that figure. But the Government's figure of £315 is not merely low, it is ridiculous, and it is absurd that the Government base their whole case on that.

The Government say that access funds will be set up to meet hardship. The Minister repeated it tonight. The total of access funds for undergraduates will be only £14 million, which works out at the equivalent of only £27 per student. Such sums clearly cannot even begin to compensate for the shortfall through loss of benefit. That is the key point which the Minister has simply failed to address. It is perfectly clear that a significant number of students will suffer serious hardship if the regulations go through. However much the Minister tried to wriggle when my hon. Friends were pressing him, that is contrary to the strongly stated intentions not merely of a minority of the SSAC, but of the united committee.

Since the Minister was so unwilling to state the view of the whole committee, let me now mention it to the House. The SSAC said:

"We believe unanimously that there must be a safety net which ensures that students are not left destitute".

When my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East raised the issue with the Minister a week ago, he gave this interesting response:

"The committee said that, during the long vacation, some students might be particularly hard hit, and that they should have recourse to a safety net. There is already a safety net —the power for local education authorities to pay hardship payments."—[*Official Report*, 9 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. 102.]

He said much the same again tonight. Tonight we want to know what guidance will be sent to local education authorities to encourage them to exercise this role and, more importantly, what funding will be made available to local education authorities to meet this hardship, and what guarantee can the Minister now give the House that all students will be catered for. Until he can answer those questions, I submit that his solicitude on this matter is not worth more than a pinch of salt.

Finally, for postgraduates the Government have clearly established a link between the provision of loans and the loss of benefits. On those grounds, we strongly contend that extension of the loss of benefits to those who are not eligible to loans—postgraduates—is outside the scope and intentions of the Education (Student Loans) Act 1990, and there is no other provision or primary legislation on which to base this sweeping disentitlement. That is another clear legislative reason why these regulations should be rejected.

It is not enough for the Minister to say, as he has, that the DES recently announced a £400 increase in postgraduate support. The current studentship awards were set in place in October 1989; no increase is planned

until April 1991. With inflation touching 10 per cent., the £400 represents not an increase in resources over the 18 months but a reduction for postgraduates.

These regulations will cause severe hardship for a large number of students. They will remove postgraduates from entitlement to housing benefit, without offering them loans in replacement. They will narrow the whole basis of recruitment to higher education in the next generation, particularly among working-class students—a point that the Minister carefully omitted.

I call on the House to reject the regulations.

10.40 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) began by accusing my right hon. Friend the Minister of arrogance. Front-Bench spokesmen may well occasionally display some intellectual superiority, but no one could accuse my right hon. Friend of arrogance. It would be difficult to find a more courteous, patient or sympathetic Minister.

This debate is similar to the one that we held about a week ago on the Lords amendments to the Social Security Bill. Indeed, I heard the expression "Homer nodded" last week: Homer has been wheeled out again and has nodded again tonight. There is actually a common theme running through last week's and this week's debates: does it make sense to focus student support on one Department or two? It was clear from the Opposition interventions in my right hon. Friend's speech, and from the contribution of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, that there is a strong case for having one Minister in charge of student support. Many interventions in the Minister's speech were about the education system, not about social security. The sooner we can put a stop to debates in which social security Ministers have to answer questions about education issues the better.

Each time the Opposition are confronted by the principle of focusing support on the DES they say that they agree with it; but when confronted with the consequences of that principle they refuse to jump. They always vote to retain the present system. They claim to prefer it because they say that the Government will not be generous to students under the new regime—so they prefer to stay with the regime they know.

Now, if the Government were minded to be mean to students, they could be so perfectly well under the present regime, but under the new one another £100 million will be available for students. Against that background, it is wholly illogical to adopt the attitude that the Opposition have adopted. Yet tonight I suspect that the Opposition will vote against the consequences of a principle that they have readily accepted.

If the Opposition are sincere, instead of harking back to the present system, they should seek reassurances on the sort of issues raised in this debate. Are the access funds adequate? The Government have already shown flexibility on that. They have already shown a willingness to increase the funds when it is argued that they need to be more generous. I have no doubt that if they are confronted with future evidence that the access funds are inadequate, pressure will be brought to bear by both sides of the House to ensure that the new system is flexible, generous and meets the purposes for which it was constructed.

Mr. Worthington: On what principle was the amount of money in the access funds calculated?

Sir George Young: I do not know. What I do know is that the amount has been increased in response to representations from educational interests to the effect that they are inadequate.

Mr. Pawsey: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the access funds have increased from £15 million to £30 million? If the Government are so mean with student support, how come there are 200,000 more students in higher education now than under the last Labour Government?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend provides eloquent force for my argument. The premise on which the Opposition's case is founded—that the Government are minded to be ungenerous to students—does not stand up to the available evidence. If access funds are deemed to be ungenerous, there will be pressure to increase them.

Basically, the regulations continue the disengagement of mainstream students from the social security system, but there is a residual entitlement to benefit if a student has a partner. If a student is a tenant but shares accommodation with a partner, the partner can apply for housing benefit. That is a sensible, but perhaps overgenerous, regime. What assurances can be given that this provision will not be abused by students claiming that their accommodation in a university town is shared by a partner, with the partner getting housing benefit in circumstances that may not have initially been intended by those who drafted the regulations? I am sure that there will be a straightforward response——

Ms. Short: Is the hon. Gentleman advocating sheet inspection?

Sir George Young: —to avoid "abuse", which is a better word, of the system.

The disregards are generous. If a student with a partner receives a loan, the loan does not affect the partner's entitlement to benefit up to the limit of £10, which covers the existing student loan. That is a welcome regime. As my right hon. Friend the Minister explained, regular payments will have a disregard of £10, but one-off lump sum payments will be treated as capital. Where there is a benefit claim, whether the payment is regular or is a one-off lump sum obviously matters. It is advantageous for it to be treated as a one-off lump sum payment. I hope that my right hon. Friend will explain how recipients of benefit will have those payments defined, either as regular payments or as one-off lump sums.

The Opposition are wholly inconsistent tonight, as last week, in conceding the principle but failing to accept the logical and welcome consequence of the principle by supporting the regulations.

10.47 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The regulations pose the wrong question in relation to the student population. I shall pay particular regard to Scotland, and I declare an interest in that I am a member of the court of Stirling university. The purpose of the regulations is to reallocate resources between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Social Security. It is understandable that, in the interests of good housekeeping, the Government want support for students to come within the vote of the Department of Education and Science.

Like other Ministers, the Minister pleads in aid the increased numbers coming forward to receive the "benefits" of higher, or tertiary—a dreadful word—education. That is not the point. I shall speak not for England, Wales and Northern Ireland but for Scotland. To make headway in becoming a leading industrial nation, we cannot possibly be satisfied with the numbers coming forward. That is a basic consideration. Do the regulations

and the general thrust of Government policy make it easier or harder for the broad mass of young people from, say, the age of 17 to enhance their educational potential? They will make it harder, although it will be easier for those whose parents have a reasonable income. Such parents will persuade their children to seek a loan because in theory it is a good option, when inflation is allowed for, at zero interest. Parents who practise good housekeeping in their own interests, although it may not be in the interests of the nation, will persuade their offspring to take a loan.

Matters are different for young people from working-class families, which is another term that I dislike although I do not abjure it because I know the class to which I belong. Such young people do not have a cushy background and will look at the figures. We have talked generally about student loans, but many hon. Members spend £50 or more on one dinner and that is more than a student receives to keep himself for a week. *[Interruption.]* All right, let us say that that is the amount that some hon. Members could spend on two dinners. I cannot speak for people in another place, but my comparison is reasonably fair. The onerous nature of the grant loan provision will deter many students from continuing further education.

A few weeks ago I went to Glasgow with some people whom one might loosely call rectors—to use the old Scottish term—of Scottish universities, to see Mr. Harrison of the Student Loans Company plc. The Minister suggested that we might go to Edinburgh. I hope that all hon. Members know that there is a difference between Glasgow and Edinburgh and that it is not just in relation to football teams. In the Student Loans Company plc the Government are erecting a massive debt collecting agency. Eventually, teams of snoopers will be employed to collect the debts that will arise if students are forced into loans.

Our nation—I am talking about Scotland—has been living on its intellectual capital for the last 20 to 25 years. Fundamental research in our universities is decreasing at a time when it should be increasing. Now universities are to be forced to undertake the onerous task of assessing hardship. There are eight Scottish universities. Will there be eight criteria for hardship? What criteria will Ministers lay down or what guidance will they give to universities? Will those institutions have to think up schemes for themselves? That is no way to administer the public purse.

Will students be willing to saddle themselves with financial difficulties or will they be attracted abroad to carry out postgraduate work or fundamental research? That is the cost-benefit analysis that the nation must make. The thrust of the Government's policy is to tidy up matters between Departments. That may look good in bureaucratic terms, but it is entirely wrong for the long-term cost benefit of the nation.

I am speaking for Scotland. If there were a Scottish Parliament, it would place a high priority on education and it would tell the Scottish people that they had to pay for it. They would recognise their responsibility to attract more people into further education because of the underlying support for it.

I must be careful not to bore the House with my personal background. I left school at 14, but I have been a student all my life. I took my last degree part time at the London School of Economics in 1986. I accepted the challenge that we should not just talk about students, but should actually find out what they are like. I must beware of giving a random sample of one, but when I went to the LSE it was packed not with British, but with foreign students. It was full of Americans. We are forcing our universities to attract students from overseas so that they can pay their way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The overseas students obviously regard our universities as good value.

Mr. Douglas: I accept that our universities are good value, but they have to bid to a central bureaucracy on the basis of their good housekeeping. That is the quasi-market structure that the Government are trying to introduce.

The thrust of the regulations and their priorities are wrong. The Government are deterring people from working-class backgrounds from going on to higher education, so that their gifts can be used for the benefit of the nation. I am not suggesting that students should live in the lap of luxury, but onerous burdens are being placed upon them.

I shall give another example from my direct experience at Stirling. There is a proposal to put up the rents for accommodation. We are asking the students—and for reasons that I will not go into now I am resisting this—to enhance the accommodation for disabled students. It involves the paltry sum of £60,000. The university wants to expand, but constraints are being imposed on it albeit by its short historical experience.

To constrain universities and students is to the long-term detriment of the nation. I ask the Government not to be parsimonious and not to think of the well-heeled student or his well-heeled parents. We should be attracting into education those who do not have financial help from their parents.

10.58 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I, too, only recently left full-time undergraduate life. I reinforce what has been said about the experience of undergraduates who, in many universities and colleges, are absolutely dependent upon some form of benefit. That is a reflection of, for example, the housing costs in the surrounding areas, and there is little that can be done about that.

The impact of the regulations and the removing of the benefits will be dramatic, at least for some universities and for some students. The Government's action fails to recognise the reality of life, at least for some students. Nor does it address the position of postgraduate students. The Minister's replies on that subject were inadequate.

It is ironic that this debate immediately precedes one on the assisted places scheme. There is a sharp contrast between the Government's attitude to the provision of basic maintenance for ordinary students on difficult courses throughout the country and their willingness to push ahead with pet schemes to support tiny numbers of privileged young people under the assisted places scheme.

The regulations, which will remove students' entitlement to housing benefit and income support, have met with rejection from several bodies. It should hardly suprise the Government that they have been rejected by the National Union of Students or even, these days, by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. The Minister's response to the criticisms of the Social Security Advisory Committee was not only weak but deliberately misinterpreted its observations. It is extraordinary to find the Government using in their support a report that is damning of their actions, as is that of the SSAC.

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

It is all very well to argue that the committee would have been in favour of the Government's proposals if they were to be implemented in a different way, but the fact remains that the SSAC is against them as they stand. Nothing that the Minister said responded adequately to the SSAC's criticisms.

The Government are failing to make available sufficient alternative finance to meet the students' needs. I am not among those who believe that——

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: In just a moment, but I have little time. I do not accept that it is preferable to operate a system whereby all students receive the same amount, but which incorporates a tiny safety net—as is suggested. A scheme tied to the real cost of being a student in certain areas would be advantageous. The Liberal Democrats would move towards a common scheme, whereby the benefits system would be used to meet the differing needs of students throughout the country.

I hope that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) does not intend to repeat the point that he made earlier.

Mr. Pawsey: The alternative finance to which the hon. Gentleman referred already exists in the form of the £420 interest-free student loan. Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that student support in the United Kingdom continues to offer the highest benefits in the western world? If the Government were as cavalier as has been implied, there would not be 200,000 more students in advanced education today than when Labour was in office.

Mr. Taylor: By comparison with other countries, we are not devoting sufficient resources to higher and further education. Nor are we turning out the numbers that we should. The Government are culpable of a paucity of provision that they should be embarrassed to have mentioned in such debates. The theory that the loan scheme will broadly compensate students for the loss of housing and social security benefits ignores the fact that in many parts of the country many of them will be substantially worse off—even if one does not allow for the fact that there are to be no increases in student grant with the introduction of the loan system.

The Government, together with the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, appear to be ignoring graduate students, as they will not be eligible for student loans. It is extraordinary to find the Government introducing a system that will deprive graduate students of a large measure of the support that they currently receive. It is inappropriate that we should be debating this matter. The Government are abusing their powers, but that question will have to be dealt with elsewhere rather than here. One might be forgiven for wondering whether the Government care about the adequacy of the provisions. The increased grants for postgraduate students do not allow sufficiently for inflation. That is quite separate from the loss of benefit.

The Minister has totally failed to answer the Social Security Advisory Committee's criticisms. It pointed out correctly that if a student has made the relevant contribution and meets the usual criteria, there is no obvious reason why his unemployment benefit should be withdrawn. I referred earlier to seasonal workers; there are many of them in my constituency. To reverse the position, if the long break for students were in the winter instead of the summer, they would be in an almost identical position to that of seasonal workers. It would equally be possible to argue that they were deliberately going to an area where they knew that they would be out of work for a time. I hope that the Government are not suggesting that benefit should be withdrawn from them. The reason why those people are eligible for help is that they need help. However, the Minister seems to be completely uninterested in that fact.

The SSAC also said that it believed unanimously that there should be a safety net to ensure that students are not left destitute, and that they should receive income support. The Government say that the access funds provide the answer to that criticism. Unless, however, much more money is provided, I do not believe that the access funds, when compared with the benefit support that is being withdrawn, can be considered in any sense to be adequate. Even after it has been uprated, the amount works out at only £116 for each postgraduate and £27 for each first-degree or other higher education student. However, the average student outside London gets £6·23 a week and a London student £14·38 a week under the present benefit arrangements. This is, therefore, a considerable cut in student support.

The Social Security Advisory Committee also said that it is impossible to judge at this stage whether the amount being put into the access funds is adequate. The Government's commitment to ensuring that the access funds are administered fairly and properly is revealed to be wholly lacking, since no guidelines have been provided to the institutions that administer them. Social Security Ministers are responding to the debate. They know well that under the social security arrangements one treats individuals who are in the same circumstances in the same way. That is one of the most important principles of any support system.

The Government appear to be creating a system under which no student can be sure of his treatment by any institution. He can be virtually certain that an entirely different set of rules would apply in another institution. It is a complete and utter mess that people will be entitled to support not on the basis of what they need but purely on the basis of what the Government have allowed to a particular institution and what it feels on a particular day and at a particular time about that individual. That is a disgraceful way in which to operate a system of support and it is disgraceful that the House is being asked to agree to it.

11.8 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The order is the final part of the Government's package in their move from student grants to student loans. We are removing the right of students to claim unemployment benefit—for which they paid—housing benefit and income support. It means that some students' standard of living will be below that laid down in social security legislation.

We have heard that the regulations are defective. The Minister says to us, "I am putting something that is totally defective before you, but we expect you to vote it through and we shall put it right later." That says something about the Government's respect for the House of Commons.

The regulations provide that those who have to pay rent are not deemed to be paying rent and that those who are available and looking for work are deemed not to be available for and looking for work. That is what we are talking about.

The move from student grants and the availability of means-tested benefits for those who need them to student loans is deeply mistaken. It is a backward move. Compared with other countries, Britain is backward educationally. It is no good for Conservative Members to say that the numbers in higher education in Britain are increasing when we are starting from way behind and the number is increasing less rapidly than in other countries. Even South Korea has more of its young people in higher education than Britain. That is an enormous cost to the life opportunities of talented people who are not being given the chance to participate in higher education and is massively damaging to the future of Britain's economy. We are failing to nurture the talent of our people and thus slipping ever backwards relatively in our economic performance.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Short: No, I will not give way.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): The hon. Lady is factually incorrect.

Ms. Short: I am not factually incorrect.

The Minister for Social Security has perhaps some excuse—he is not an education Minister—for pretending to the House that there is not low participation in higher education among people from low-income backgrounds.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding) *rose*——

Ms. Short: The statistics show that if one comes from a family with a manual background the chances of participating in higher education are very low. I am sure that the Minister knows that.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Ms. Short: We are massively wasting the talent of many people from low-income backgrounds——

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Ms. Short: I have made it clear that I do not intend to give way, but the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) is harassing me. Time is short. He is disrupting the limited remarks that I have time to make and I ask for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that I can make them.

As I said, we are wasting the talent of people from low-income backgrounds and this move will make things fundamentally worse.

The Government's excuse for the move is that students should not be supported by the social security system. That is uncontentious across the House. But it is a big fib. If one wants to remove students from the social security system, one gives them grants that leave them above the means-tested standards. The Government are removing their eligibility for means-tested benefits so that some of them will fall to a level of income lower than those who live on means-tested benefits.

The present system is that we have means-tested grants backed by access to unemployment benefit if it has been paid for and housing benefit and income support if they are needed. It is an efficient system in that the money is targeted and goes to those in need. People who are not in need are not eligible for means-tested benefits and those who do well as a result of their higher education and earn a higher income will pay back through the tax system. We are moving to a system that will penalise people on low incomes.

Less than 20 per cent. of students claim income support in the summer vacation. To be eligible for income support they have to be available for and actively seeking work. Under this Government those tests have been made harder and harder. This provision will penalise students who come from areas of the country where there is high unemployment. Only 11·5 per cent. of all students claim housing benefit and 2 per cent. claim housing benefit in the summer. They are the students who do not have another home to go to. Those are the groups that will be penalised by the move that we are making tonight.

It is ideology run mad. The lunacy is that it will be less equitable and efficient and will cost more. Those who already have more will be better off under the new scheme and those with least will be worse off. That is what the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) did not understand. The Government are making available more money but are distributing it in such a way that the poorest will have less than they have now. Those are the facts of this new, ridiculous structure, which will cost more but be less equitable and efficient. The principle of the Thatcher years is that for those who have more, more will be given, but for those who have less, it will be taken away. That is how the regulations will apply to students.

The Government recognise that the regulations will create hardship for students from low-income households and therefore have introduced access funds—they tell us to prevent hardship. The funds will be distributed by the Government to education institutions on the basis of a formula about which we know nothing which will then distribute them to people in need. The Minister tells us that universities and polytechnics know which of their students are in need. That is not true. When a student goes to a university or polytechnic he or she does not fill out forms on income but participates in education. Being aware of the quality of a student's work tells one nothing of his or her income or maintenance means. It is an inefficient way of getting money to those in need. The Minister has not answered the point, but the legality of this move is questionable. Given that he will not answer the point, it is likely to be contested in the courts.

The Minister misled the House—I am surprised that he did so—about the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee, which was set up to replace the previous committee and to make it more favourable to the Government's social security policy. Officials appointed to it by the Government were split eight to six. The majority said that they were willing to accept the removal of housing benefit, but only on one condition. They were worried that some students would become destitute—their word, not mine—because of the provisions of the scheme. They expressed an overriding concern about that and recommended that the Government should follow the principle that they adopted for 16 and 17-year-olds and that to avoid hardship the Secretary of State for Social Security should have discretion to authorise payment of income support for a limited period during the summer vacation.

[Ms. Short]

The Government refused to accept that recommendation and therefore have the support of no member of that committee. It was wrong of the Minister to call the committee in aid when the Government are not complying with its recommendations.

As the committee said, the effect of the regulations is that destitute students will be running round our cities in the summer. Another badge of the Thatcher years is the many young homeless and destitute people in our cities. In future, highly talented qualified young people who are studying will be destitute in our cities.

The proof that the Government's claim that the purpose of the regulations is to avoid students being dependent on the social security system is a big fib are their provisions for postgraduate students, who will not have access to loans and will be deprived of the right to claim housing benefit. They will simply be worse off. The Government are increasing their grants by less than inflation and taking the extra money from the pool available for postgraduate students. We shall have fewer postgraduates in the future than we have at present.

I am the first member of my family to have had a university education. I received that education because full grants were available. When I was 17 years old and was getting 2s. 6d. pocket money, I would not have contemplated the loan that is envisaged. I now know that I could have paid it back, but at that time I would not have dared. The effect of the regulations is that future generations of people like me will not have access to higher education. That is what the Government are doing tonight.

11.18 pm

Mr. Scott: The regulations cover several provisions across five separate benefits. I shall seek, in as co-ordinated and orderly a manner as possible, to respond to the points that have been made.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is not it a courtesy that the Minister should ask the permission of the House to speak a second time?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The Minister does not need the leave of the House on this occasion. He moved a motion.

Mr. Scott: I try to take advice on those matters and I thought for one moment that the hon. Gentleman had caught me out. I am grateful for your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Much of this evening's debate, not least the opening speech by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), has circulated round the issue of the adequacy of and the reasons for the access funds. I want to address that issue at the outset.

In response to an intervention, I said that the regulations do not in any sense relate to the distribution of the access funds. They give effect to withdrawal of benefit entitlement from most full-time students except those in vulnerable groups and the treatment of income of those in vulnerable groups who will retain entitlement. I repeat what I said: there will be no regulations covering the payment of access funds. They will be operated by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under powers in the Education Act 1944.

Mr. Meacher: The point about there being no regulations covering the access funds is that large sums of taxpayers' money will be handed over for the unfettered discretion of education institutions. We have no idea how that money is to be used, how it will be allocated, how many will get it and how much they will get. I submit that it is improper for the Government to ask Parliament to pass legislation as open ended as that. The courts will disagree with such legislation as they have disagreed with previous legislation.

Mr. Scott: In a sense that is surprising. I seem to remember being urged by the Opposition on more than one occasion to further enhance the resources available to the independent living fund, which provides substantial sums of taxpayers' money to be distributed at the unfettered discretion of the trustees of the fund in order to meet need. Perhaps what is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander according to the hon. Member for Oldham, West. Flexibility and funds distributed by people with particular expertise in and sympathy for the needs of individual groups of people in need of help is not a principle against which I would argue. The hon. Member for Oldham, West can pick and choose the issues to which he wants to apply that principle. I believe firmly in it.

Mr. Douglas: Will each institution of higher or further education devise its own criteria? Is that what we are being asked to support? Surely the Minister's colleagues will tell him that that cannot be right and that guidance will be given by the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Scott: I shall try to address the various points that have already been raised, and how the access funds should be administered is one of them. I have just made the point that they will be operated under the powers of the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Education Act 1944.

Allocations have already been made to the funding councils and their allocations to individual colleges will be announced in the next few weeks. There was some criticism that that was all a bit late in the day. The 1989 student number data upon which the allocations will be based will not be available to those in the DES administering the access funds until later this month. The beginning of August is therefore the earliest date by which allocations can be notified to colleges. However, I believe that that still gives them adequate time before the beginning of the next academic year to make their dispositions.

Mr. Worthington: The Scottish colleges of further education to which the regulations apply start in the middle of August.

Mr. Scott: Even so, they will have a number of weeks at least in which to make their dispositions. In practice, I estimate that it will be some weeks before students come forward and ask for help from the access funds. They will have their loans and top-up grants. The access funds are, as it were, a residual——

Mr. Worthington: Is the Minister aware that the student loans scheme does not apply to Scottish FE colleges?

Mr. Scott: Of course, I understand that. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was making a general point about further education within Scotland. I believe that the access funds will be better administered by each individual education institution. Institutions will be given guidance,

but that guidance will be largely in terms of accounting procedures and how the institutions account for the money that they get from the funding councils. They will be much more finely tuned to the needs of individuals. *[Interruption.]* I ask the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) to pause for just a moment. I cannot believe that the existence of access funds will not become more well known in institutions of further education.

I anticipate that the National Union of Students, if no other body, will make it well known that access funds are in existence. It will be in the interest of institutions themselves also to make it known that such funds are available. They will get to know the students, and will be much better equipped to meet and assess the needs of individual students than the social security system could possibly be. The funds will be much better focused on students' needs than the generality of social security claimants could ever be. Higher education institutions will be much better informed.

There are some advantages of that system compared with the other system. For example, no student who is living in hall in any university or institution of higher education can claim housing benefit at the moment. However, a student who is in hall might be eligible for help from the access funds if he runs into particular hardship. That will certainly be an advantage of the new system.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science have already said that they intend to monitor carefully the operation of the access funds and to make sure that they are adequate to meet students' needs in the new circumstances. For example, they will reflect different rent levels in different parts of the country. That will be an important flexibility for the funds. They will become well known among students and among those who are responsible for administering them. The institutions will be able to administer them in a much more flexible manner than we possibly could through the social security system.

There is no disincentive, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West alleged, for local education authorities to make hardship payments. They are fully reimbursed by the Department of Education and Science for any payments that they make. There is no disincentive whatever for them to make special hardship payments. The payments are made entirely at the discretion of local education authorities in order to prevent hardship.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) raised several points. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) alleged that students might pretend to cohabit to get housing benefit under the new scheme. It is, of course, up to local authorities to satisfy themselves that the conditions for entitlement to benefit are being met. If both partners are students, they would not be entitled to housing benefit unless they had dependent children, otherwise one partner must not be a student. Although I am sensitive to my hon. Friend's point—we are always conscious of the need to protect public funds—I do not see that that need be a major problem.

My hon. Friend mentioned that he saw the disregards within the present system as very generous. I certainly agree with that—they are generous. They are best targeted on those who need help most. He asked also how we would check whether the payments made from the access funds were regular or lump sum payments. I see no difficulty about that. Already within the income-related benefits system charitable payments can be assessed, whether they are regular or lump sum payments. Exactly the same criteria will apply in the new system of access funds as apply to charitable funds already.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West was critical of the Government because of the percentage of students in higher education, and implied that we are performing less well than other countries. The number of 18-year-olds in higher education has steadily risen since the Government came to office. When they came to office, 11 per cent. of 18-year-olds were going into higher education. By 1990 the figure had risen to 15 per cent. We estimate that, by the end of the decade, the figure will be up to 23 per cent. When we came to office in 1979, we pledged that, by 1990, we would have achieved 1 million students in higher education. We achieved that by 1988, and the figure is still rising. As I have said, this year we have a record number of students in higher education and next year it looks as if the figures will be even better. A lot of distorted statistics have been pushed backwards and forwards across the Floor of the House this evening, but the fact is that this country's percentage of the 18-year-old cohort who graduate is one of the highest in the world——

Ms. Short: Nonsense:

Mr. Scott: It is absolutely true, beyond peradventure. The percentage of the 18-year-old cohort who graduate is higher in this country than anywhere else in the world.

Ms. Short: Nonsense.

Mr. Scott: That is perfectly true.

I am delighted that the provisions make special arrangements for disabled students. As the Minister for disabled people I have a particular interest in them. The fact that the basic disability allowance for students has been increased from £765 to £1,000 per year and that new allowances have been introduced to help them with the cost of helpers and special equipment——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 267, Noes 141.

Division No. 306] **[11.31 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*

Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meacher, Michael

Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ruddock, Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Robert Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security Benefits (Student Loans and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 13th July, be approved.

Assisted Places

11.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): I beg to move,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 27th June, be approved.

I would like to describe briefly to the House the regulations governing the administration of the assisted places scheme. The draft regulations before us provide for certain small amendments to the Education (Assisted Places) Regulations 1989, which were consolidated last year.

The assisted places scheme was established for the purpose of widening the educational opportunities of able children from less well-off families. As the House knows, it provides their parents with assistance towards— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I hope that hon. Members who are not listening to the debate will move out of the Chamber as quickly as possible.

Mr. Howarth: The APS provides parents with assistance towards the fees at certain independent schools. The assistance is on a sliding scale based on parental income and the principal changes embodied in the amending regulations are concerned with the annual revision of those scales.

Regulation 1 of the draft regulations deals with citation, commencement, application and interpretation. The regulations would come into force on 21 August 1990, subject to the approval of both Houses.

Regulation 2 of the draft regulations provides for grant-maintained schools within the meaning of the Education Reform Act 1988 to be included in the definition of "publicly maintained schools" referred to in regulation 19(2) of the principal regulations. That amendment is necessary because, under the principal regulations, participating schools must ensure that at least 60 per cent. of their assisted pupils attended state schools immediately before taking up their assisted place and for this purpose we must make the amendment to the regulations to include grant-maintained schools in the definition of state schools.

Regulation 3 of the draft regulations updates the 1989 regulations. Its effect is to discount reductions from total income allowed on payments for medical insurance made by parents aged 60 or over.

Regulation 4 sets out the income scale used for assessing parents' contributions towards fees. That has been uprated to take account of movements in the retail prices index. The threshold at or below which parents pay nothing towards fees is raised from £7,584 to £8,200.

The provisions and amendments I have just described are necessary technicalities and would ensure the continued smooth running of the assisted places scheme. Opposition Members consistently demonstrate hostility to the assisted places scheme. It may therefore be helpful to the House if I explain why we have this scheme, and why we, and a great many people in the country, value it very much. Our reasons are that we are interested in encouraging high standards in education, wherever they

[Mr. Howarth]

are to be found; and we want parents, particularly those on lower incomes, to be able to choose the education they think best for their children, regardless of income.

It is those very features of choice and independence that the Labour party apparently finds so offensive. Our best independent schools—many of them former grammar schools that were driven out of the maintained sector by the destructive dogma of the Labour party—see no inconsistency between independence and service to the community. The assisted places scheme, which the Conservative Government introduced in 1981, has enabled many of them to keep faith with their traditions and offer the prospect of an excellent academic education for children who are suited to it, regardless of their social or economic background. But schooling is not just about achieving good examination passes; schools in the APS take an admirable pride in preparing their pupils in every way to make a full and valuable contribution to society. All in all, they provide educational opportunities of a quality that should not be restricted only to those who can afford to pay for them.

Let me stress, to anticipate one of the favourite debating points of the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), that I am not saying or implying that there are not maintained schools that provide excellent education—of course, there are many. But we want those first-rate schools in the independent sector to be accessible to pupils whose parents are unable to pay the fees.

These are not just abstract concepts—the assisted places scheme is about helping real, individual children. I should like to tell the House about some assisted place holders who have done exceptionally well, notwithstanding early disadvantages.

Do Opposition Members resent the success of the Bristol girl who gained four grade A passes at A-level and is now studying veterinary science at Cambridge? I am sure that her father, a window cleaner, is rightly proud and glad that the APS has given his daughter such a launch. And so is the bus driver from Blackburn whose son also achieved four grade A passes at A-level and is reading biochemistry at Oxford. Does the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) really intend to deny such opportunities to his own constituents? If an assisted place gave those parents the opportunity for their child to be educated according to their wishes, do he and his hon. Friends begrudge them that?

Then there are the twins from Wandsworth, who both gained three grade A passes and one grade B at A-level and have gone on to study mathematics at Oxford.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for cataloguing a few excellent examples. Will he draw to the attention of the House those Opposition Members who send their sons and daughters to schools on the assisted places scheme, as that would elucidate matters considerably?

Mr. Howarth: Tempting though it is to respond to my hon. Friend's invitation, perhaps at this time of night I should refrain from such an indulgence. My hon. Friend makes an excellent point of general principle, and it is something that should bring blushes to Opposition Front-Bench Members. I have argued for the scheme in terms of parental choice, but I might also justify it in terms of pupil choice. I am assured by the headmaster of Wolverhampton grammar school, a very distinguished school in the assisted places scheme, that it is not uncommon for 11-year-olds to identify, of their own initiative, the grammar school as the school that they wish to attend. Mr. Patrick Hutton, the headmaster, told me of the case of one young boy from Wolverhampton who did just this. His parents had separated, and his mother was facing great difficulties. He went on to achieve 4 As at A-level and is now reading modern languages at Leeds. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) will at least be relieved to know that the young man turned down Cambridge because he thought it too middle class.

I could tell hon. Members of many more deserving cases—there are more than 27,000 of them throughout the country—but there are other important matters which I must briefly cover.

Opposition Members for ever complain of the cost of the assisted places scheme, but if they must insist on measuring the value of education exclusively in material terms, I am sure that the twins from Wandsworth whom I mentioned will repay to society many times over the investment in their assisted places. The truth of the matter is this: in 1988-89, the average cost to the taxpayer of each assisted pupil was £2,121. The average cost of a secondary school pupil in the maintained sector was £1,985, which is a difference of only £136. But in considering even this small difference we have to take account of the fact that sixth-form education is about 60 per cent. more expensive than education for 11 to 16-year-olds. Whether or not we can conclude that that makes the assisted places scheme cheaper per capita to the taxpayer than maintained secondary provision, there is no question but that it is an extremely close-run thing.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Why is it that the Secretary of State, in the past two months, has given me a figure of more than £2,400 for the average cost of a place on the assisted places scheme, and that that is the figure that the Independent Schools Information Service independently quotes?

Mr. Howarth: If the hon. Gentlman had listened carefully to what I said he would have realised that I was referring to the year 1988-89. That should satisfy him.

Another spectre raised by Opposition Members is that the assisted places scheme creams off and impoverishes the maintained sector. Again, the case of Wolverhampton grammar school is instructive. On a basis of 18 comprehensive schools in Wolverhampton, and 171 assisted pupils at Wolverhampton grammar school, on average about two pupils a year have been diverted from each comprehensive. Two pupils a year is hardly robbing a school of a crucial intake. It is absurd to claim that the existence of the assisted places scheme is prejudicial to the academic standards of maintained schools.

What the APS scheme does, and this is its great strength, is to give a genuine extension of choice and opportunity. I need hardly say that all of the schools in the scheme have been carefully selected on the basis of their proven records of academic achievement. The same criteria are also applied to any new schools entering the scheme. The breadth and quality of the curricula they offer are in every case of high quality. And so are their records of success in public examinations.

Last summer 89 per cent. of A-level entries by APS pupils resulted in passes, and of these nearly 25 per cent. achieved grade As and nearly 23 per cent. achieved grade Bs. In addition, 87 per cent. of GCSE pupils in the scheme resulted in grades A to C.

Throughout the nine years of its existence the assisted places scheme has been a major success. Predictably, therefore, Opposition Members want to abolish it. I wish they could find the courage to acknowledge that, so far from removing a source of inequality and striking a blow against privilege, abolition of the APS would serve only to worsen social divisions of class and race and culture which the APS is working significantly to diminish. Without the APS, access to independent education, and to some of the finest schools in the country, would be open only to those who could afford to pay. So perhaps the hon. Member for Durham, North-West will explain later how she would further the cause of an egalitarian society by limiting choice to the affluent.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): It is interesting to hear of the success of APS pupils in exams. That was one of the main reasons for introducing the scheme. Has any progress been made in broadening the IQ range of pupils accepted for the scheme; indeed, do the Government have any plans thus to broaden it?

Mr. Howarth: It is for the schools to set their entrance exams and establish their own principles of selection. A number of schools are anxious to broaden the range of their social intake and are prepared to be flexible about their academic requirements. Schools in the scheme are well seized of my hon. Friend's point.

I wonder what Opposition Members would have to offer the children of this country if they were to abolish this excellent scheme. The difficulty of the hon. Member for Blackburn—one of his difficulties—is that he does not have an education policy. Moreover, he feels, very uncomfortably, the hot breath of the Socialist Education Association at the back of his neck. It does not make it any more pleasant for him that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central was rather a success at its conference. So the hon. Gentleman makes his pledges of abolition and destruction. Beyond that he offers nothing more than vague and completely unconvincing commitments to spend more money than we would on our other policies that they have said they will not reverse. I would put it to the hon. Member for Blackburn that the interests of children from poorer families are of rather more permanent importance than the hon. Gentleman's beleaguered career in the Labour party.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I have been impressed by hearing of the academic performance of some of these youngsters. It very much resembles the performance of youngsters in the good grammar schools of Northern Ireland. In view of the success of these distinguished youngsters, does the Minister have any plans to increase the number of places on the scheme?

Mr. Howarth: Indeed. I am pleased to tell the House that we are committed to increasing the number of assisted places to 35,000 by the mid-1990s. We are strongly on course to meet that target——

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I have been impressed by the Minister's enthusiasm on this subject. He referred at least three times to "the country" in his speech. Now that he intends to extend the programme, will he extend it to the nation, rather than to what he considers to be the country?

Mr. Howarth: I can well understand the right hon. Gentleman's eagerness that his constituents should benefit from the scheme, but that he must pursue with the Northern Ireland Office. I certainly note what he has said, however.

Our response to the success of the APS is as predictable as the Opposition's desire to abolish it. We are building on it so that parents in every part of the country will have access to the opportunities that it offers. Last year we added 52 new schools to the scheme. From this September, 17 more excellent schools in areas in which there was previously little provision under the scheme—including the north-east, the area from which the hon. Member for Durham, North-West comes—will open their doors for the first time to assisted place holders. A number of existing schools will be allocated increased quotas to enable them to meet the demand that they are experiencing for extra places.

The assisted places scheme is flourishing. It is working to the detriment of no one and to the great benefit of many. For all the reasons I have given, I commend the draft regulations to the House.

12 midnight

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): In opposing the draft regulations, I should like to congratulate the Minister on what I think is his first full speech from the Dispatch Box. It is good to hear him in full flow, and not just at Question Time.

In opposing the regulations last year, I outlined the research which demonstrated that the assisted places scheme has totally failed to meet the Government's objectives. I shall not go through that research in detail this year, although many of the contradictions were clear in the Minister's speech.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Armstrong: I shall not give way. It is not in the interests of anyone to conduct the debate as though it were taking place in a bar room. I certainly did not learn to do things that way at my state school.

The assisted places scheme has created needless divisions in society. To use the word "choice" in this context is a questionable use of the English language. Perhaps the Government need to go back and learn what some words mean.

The Government have been slow to learn. Everyone —even, in the past week, the Secretary of State—has conceded that we need, and this nation demands, an effective performance for all our children from the education system. People may have thought that education opportunities for all were a socialist aspiration —they never were, of course—but they cannot be that. Education is now a pressing necessity as we see the thwarting of not only the opportunities of individual children but the opportunities of our nation to compete effectively with our European neighbours. Despite that, the Government continue on a course which is unsuccessful but which gives the message, "We know what is good and we want 1 per cent. of the nation to benefit from it."

[Ms. Armstrong]

The scheme was meant for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the Minister outlined the history. I hope that he has read some of the research into the scheme. I hope that he has read "The State and Private Education: An Evaluation of the Assisted Places Scheme", which was published in the past year. An interesting review of the book in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* was written by the Minister—[HON. MEMBERS: "Who wrote the book?"] The book was written by Professors Tony Edwards, John Fitz and Geoff Whitty and it was funded by the Government through the Science and Engineering Research Council.

The review was written by the Minister who was responsible for guiding the Education Bill through the House in 1980. He said:

"Certainly ministers, including myself, have claimed in the annual debate on the scheme in Parliament that the sons and daughters of bus and lorry drivers, miners, butchers, recent immigrants and one-parent families, for example,"—

he missed window cleaners—

"have through the scheme received a first-class education they would not otherwise have attained and this has been to the good of the country and to the pupils.

The authors, however, put a new light on this. Only 10 per cent of assisted-place pupils have fathers who are manual workers and 50 per cent are employed in service industries."

Does 10 per cent. meet the Government's objective? The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) then says:

"Even more significantly, 68 per cent of mothers and 51 per cent of fathers of such pupils attended either private or selective education."

The right hon. Gentleman also deals in the article with the issue raised by the Minister about what happens to the local comprehensive. He asks whether the scheme has damaged the academic standards of such schools. He reminds us, as did the Minister, that only 1 per cent. of pupils occupy assisted places, which are unevenly scattered. The right hon. Member also said:

"I suspect, however, that the aspirant assisted-place parents with their educational backgrounds would not have sent their children to inner-city sink comprehensives, but they would have been wise enough to shop around and get them into better comprehensives with higher academic achievements. Thus if there is any damage it must be to the better . . . comprehensive schools."

That is a former committed Minister recognising that the scheme has failed.

The scheme was also designed to provide choice and support effort in local communities. I have a letter relating to the trustees of the Harpur Trust in Bedford.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The convention of the House is that if an hon. Member intends to quote or refer to another hon. Member, that person be so advised. Has that convention been observed in this case?

Ms. Armstrong: I sent a note to the right hon. Member for Brent, North and he was also informed by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) when he was quoted at Question Time.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): When the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) was informed about my hon. Friend's comments on his review and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), did he say that my hon. Friends in any way inaccurately reflected his view as a former Minister and headmaster?

Ms. Armstrong: I have not spoken to the right hon. Member for Brent, North and would not want to assume anything of the sort. I am quoting what he wrote for *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*.

The scheme is frustrating voluntary and charitable effort. There is a voluntary scheme that supports poor people who want to get their children into Bedford school. The terms of the bursary for the assisted places scheme have been issued for this year. They say that a parent earning £39,500 per annum who has one child at Bedford school be helped with fees. Parents with two children can receive help when their income is £41,800. With three children the annual earnings figure is £47,300.

Today people are talking about supporting the family. Perhaps we have a new definition of the family in poverty. The people that I have mentioned are certainly well-paid window cleaners. To use the rationale of choice to try, unsuccessfully, to legitimise such a policy is nonsense. What choice is there for parents in Doncaster, Calderdale, or North Tyneside? The Government have said that too much is being spent on the children of such people, but they are prepared to pay an average of £500 more per child on the assisted places scheme. What choice is that? What choice is there for parents who are limited by what the Government are prepared to allow their local authorities to spend on their children? The scheme does not meet the Government's objectives as they were originally outlined——

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I refer the hon. Lady to choice a little nearer to home. She may not be aware that children in her constituency can obtain assisted places at Yarm and Durham schools. Is she prepared to go back to her constituency and say that those children should not be allowed such places and instead should be sent to the local comprehensive school?

Ms. Armstrong: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman's information is more up to date than mine. My information is that Durham county does not support any assisted places. However, the hon. Gentleman may be right. We intend to phase out the assisted places scheme, but we will not penalise any child who is already participating in it. We are determined that all children, whatever their backgrounds, will have the very best opportunity. It is not only in their interests to ensure that our commitment and investment in education meets that aspiration; it is in all our interests.

I shall complete my quotation of what the right hon. Member for Brent, North said in his review:

"One criticism of the assisted-places scheme not mentioned in this book is that it took up too much time and effort of the Conservative Party . . . the assisted-places scheme could have taken the party down a side alley. Is this now being repeated with the city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools or even local financial management? A careful reading of this book has caused me to have this very worrying thought."

I invite the Minister to read the book. The Opposition have learnt, even if the Government have not, that the scheme meets no one's educational objectives, not even the Government's. Perhaps they should learn some of the political lessons that the right hon. Member for Brent,

North has learnt. I invite my hon. Friends to oppose the regulations and to ensure that we have a Government who will fight for every child.

12.12 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): The House should consider this important matter with due consideration, especially as some 4,000 places in England are available to brighter pupils with limited financial assistance. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot raise the sum that he is considering. The fact that 4,000 places in good independent schools are not taken up shows that a small advertising campaign would greatly assist those pupils to whom my hon. Friend so rightly referred.

I wish to concentrate my remarks on the north-east. It is clear that there has been a good take-up of places in Yorkshire—for example, Batley grammar, Bradford grammar, Bradford girls grammar, Harrogate college and schools of that ilk. We would all be proud to send our children to schools of such quality. I am proud that in or near to my constituency children have the opportunity to attend St. Peter's in York, England's oldest school, and Pocklington near York.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate, I hope that he will advise us how we can ensure that all children in the north-east appreciate the possibilities of a brighter and wider education in the independent sector. The latest figures available show that 70 per cent. of places had been taken up in the north-east, but that leaves a yawning gap of opportunity which I hope will be filled at the earliest opportunity.

In 1988-89—the latest year for which figures are available—the average cost of a place was £2,591, but there are certain differences that should not act as a disincentive. The fact that 52 per cent. of pupils on assisted places secured either A or B grade A-levels compared with 45 per cent. across the sector is another reason pupils of good academic ability should have their names put forward.

Mr. Devlin: I declare an interest as a governor of Yarm private school in my constituency, which operates the assisted places scheme. Does my hon. Friend agree that the scheme's real importance is that, like direct grant, it gives the talented child from whatever background the opportunity to maximise his lifetime opportunities? Is not it surprising that the scheme is opposed by Opposition Members when there are many among them who benefited from the direct grant scheme in the past? In only the last week we saw a marvellous example of how it can assist the very best to get to the top in society, because my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was himself a direct grant boy at Dulwich college.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind right hon. and hon. Members that interventions should be brief.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making such a salient and relevant point. It would do right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House much credit if they acknowledged the benefits of education through the independent sector and the opportunities that many young people have been given by the assisted places scheme, rather than constantly denigrate it and argue that we should go for the lowest common denominator. Opposition Members should accept the truth of that, and not deny the advantages of such an education to those who follow them.

This issue merits a full-scale debate. The Opposition are obviously rattled, knowing that they are on very slippery ground. I commend the regulations to the House, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will address in particular the difficulties of the north-east and the opportunities that are available there. I hope also that a leaflet can be produced explaining to parents the financial aspects of the scheme, because the calculations based on relevant earnings are difficult to understand and require the help of a local bursar.

12.18 am

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): You will note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have Ulster behind me. But the people in front of me——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): You mean, the Liberals.

Mr. Flannery: Conservative Members are in high good humour tonight, but I hope that they will listen to my comments about the assisted places scheme.

The entire British education system is in urgent need of assistance. Last week, a group of Sheffield schools sent a delegation to Whitehall in the hope of seeing a Minister. They did not manage that, but I believe that they saw a civil servant instead. They came down to tell us that they were short of teachers, that their schools were crumbling and that there was a lack of morale among teachers.

The speed with which the so-called reforms are being pushed forward is having a parlous effect on schools. They cannot possibly keep pace with them. On top of all that is the assisted places scheme. The children of Conservative Members are being educated privately, whereas we are trying to cater for the needs of the vast majority of children. Money is short because the Government are deliberately keeping it short. They provide expensive education for their children and cheap education for ours. On top of that, the Government have the effrontery to say that we are being naughty when we attack what they are doing.

If we examine what the Government mean by choice in the case of the assisted places scheme, or anything else, we have to ask ourselves—since they have private education and have created the city technology colleges—what choice ordinary children have in the schools on which so little money is spent. The city technology colleges are to be paid for by industry. Their pupils are hand picked. Are assisted places available in those colleges for ordinary children? The assisted places scheme is a piece of gross effrontery. Hundreds of millions of pounds of public money are being siphoned off to provide private education for the children of Conservative supporters. It is done under the guise of helping poor children, but the Government know that that is a piece of gross effrontery.

I have in my hand the Government's document that deals with the scheme. It began in 1984-85 and £22 million was spent on it in the first year. In 1985-86 another £30 million was spent on it. In 1986-87, £38 million, in 1987-88, £46 million, in 1988-89, £51 million and in 1989-90, £59 million was spent on the scheme. Up to today, that has taken £246 million out of the state education system. In the next three years, £62 million will be taken out of it in the

[Mr. Flannery]

first year, £60 million in the second and £70 million in the third. That amounts to another £192 million. Taken together, £438 million has been taken away from state education. In addition, the city technology colleges have taken £52 million this year. During the next three years they will take £135 million. The grand total that is being taken away from state education is £635 million.

The Government ask us to support that proposal tonight. No Conservative Member has referred to those figures. The cost to the state education system is absolutely staggering, especially when one remembers all the difficulties that Her Majesty's inspectors of education have highlighted. That money would buy books and materials for all our children. The Government claim that they are providing choice for our children. However, they are pouring all that money into a private education system that caters for their children and they are shoring it up by that means. They do it under the guise of catering for our children.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in addition to the figures that he quoted, a large number of teachers who were trained at public expense and who are much needed in schools such as those in Tower Hamlets are being used to ensure that the classes of the privileged minority are kept small?

Mr. Flannery: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why Conservative Members are keeping so quiet. They know that in their report Her Majesty's inspectors point out that a third of our children get what they call a raw deal. They are taking money from the state system and giving it to the private system, which is already wealthy beyond measure. It is a bribe to Tory supporters and a handful of others. It is money taken from our children who are being starved of funds in the state system. They glory in it. It is all part of a merciless attack on the state system, which the Tories loathe and never use. It is the same with the national health service, which they also do not use and are starving of funds—*[Interruption.]* No amount of shouting at me will help. They know that I have a habit of telling them uncomfortable truths.

While this measure is being discussed late at night, the state system is under attack and, according to what the Tories have said recently, the comprehensive schools will be next. However, they have gone over the top. The people have seen it for the dogma that it is and they are extremely angry at the state of the education system and the fact that the Tories are siphoning off money. Those angry people will be coming to see all of us before long because there is not enough money to teach our children. Local management of schools is adding to the list of schools without teachers. That is the position in which we have been placed by the assisted places scheme, city technology colleges and the siphoning off of money that should go to our children.

12.26 am

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Despite the lateness of the hour, the sort of ideological claptrap that we have just heard should not go unanswered. I am slightly surprised at the Labour party's depth of opposition. Basically, this is an egalitarian measure. It provides opportunities for people who would not otherwise be able to afford them to take advantage of a private education. For that reason it is scarcely surprising that it is popular. When it was introduced in 1981 only 7,000 people took advantage of it, but by this year the figure will have increased to 27,000 and just under one third of those will get their education entirely free. A large proportion of the others who take advantage of the scheme will pay relatively little for what would remain an unobtainable privilege if such a scheme did not exist.

I should have thought that it was a good sign that 294 private schools—there will be 16 more this year—were prepared to offer places to people who otherwise would be unable to afford them. I should have thought that that would make them less exclusive, widen the social spectrum of those able to go there and increase opportunities for people who otherwise would not have them.

Although the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) talked about cost, I believe that the basic reason for the Labour party's opposition to the assisted places scheme is purely ideological. In 1976 the Labour party signed the United Nations covenant on economic, social and cultural rights which says:

"The State Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by public authorities".

However, if we look behind that, we see that that is a human right upon which the Labour party frowns. It is a human right which it would prefer nobody to take up. It wants every child in the country to go to comprehensive schools in the state sector and to have little choice and no opportunity to go to private schools.

The Labour party is suspicious of choice, variety, high standards and selection. It opposes grammar schools. It opposed and effectively demolished the direct grant schools. It opposes grant-maintained schools which are popular with parents. It opposes CTCs despite the fact that the CTC in Solihull is seven times over-subscribed as it is so popular with parents. In Birmingham it opposed the concept of open enrolment within the state system. In other words, it believes that children should attend the school that the local authority thinks they should attend. It opposes the private sector because it wants to end charitable status and has the idiotic idea that by so doing it will help children who would otherwise be unable to attend private schools. In short, whether it is parental choice, selection on merit or high standards, its Pavlovian reaction makes Pavlov's dog look reasonably rational.

The Labour party tries to dress up its arguments as being rational. The first argument advanced by the hon. Member for Hillsborough was cost. He said that the £61 million a year that is being spent for 27,000 pupils on the assisted places scheme, at an average of £2,300 per pupil, would not be available for the private sector, but as a headmaster of a participating school said recently, that is a gross cost. The cost to the state of sending a pupil to a school in the maintained sector is not incurred if he attends a private school under the assisted places scheme.

As there is evidence that parents contribute to the cost of their children's education under the assisted places scheme, and as schools, especially boarding establishments, also contribute to the cost of children's education under the assisted education scheme, the most intelligent way of looking at it is that the scheme offers the state an

opportunity to provide an education that would normally cost £4,000 or £5,000 for a net average cost of £2,200. That is a good deal for the taxpayer.

The other point which has not been mentioned so far but which is put forward by opponents of the scheme is that it draws bright children away from the state sector. The effect is far too diffuse to affect individual schools. No one has said to me, "Our school is being affected by children taking up the assisted places scheme." Although this idea seems antipathetic to the Labour party, I thought that schools were meant to be run for pupils rather than for schools.

Labour Members fall back on their ideas of egalitarianism—the lowest common denominator. Irrespective of the examples that the Minister gave tonight, of the academic quality of the results achieved by pupils on assisted places in private schools and of the fact that the scheme broadens the number of people who attend private schools and therefore the social spectrum, all that they can say is that if not everybody can attend them nobody should do so.

Mr. Pawsey: The politics of envy.

Mr. Coombs: Exactly. If that is not the politics of envy, malice and means-spiritedness in the extreme, I do not know what is.

The scheme speaks for opportunity and high standards and it does not damage the stage system. As *The Observer* said in 1988—this is the most up-to-date article on the assisted places scheme, which shows how accepted it has become in the education establishment—

"The Assisted Places Scheme has confounded its critics by providing an opportunity for low income parents to opt for an academic education."

The scheme has made private education more accessible. I hope that the 7,000 places on it will be taken up and that it will be expanded in the future. I shall be delighted to support it in the Lobby tonight.

12.34 am

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I would not describe the regulations as egalitarian. I would describe them as nauseating—like the contributions that have been made in this debate which have attacked and derided the quality of education in our state schools. Conservative Members have told us how wonderful private, fee-paying schools are and that that is where high academic standards are to be achieved. They tell us that we are mean-minded to say that the very few should not have access to those academic centres of excellence.

Speaking as a parent who has a child in the state education system, I want all children to have access to the highest quality of education as a right to prepare them with the tools to contribute to our society. Extraordinary points have been made in this debate. On the one hand, we were told that the scheme is helping to break down the inequalities in our education system. On the other hand, we were told that only a few have access to the scheme. The very presence of the scheme widens the inequalities and opportunities between those who attend the state sector and those who attend private fee-paying schools.

It is all about buying privilege for the few. I totally reject the establishment of an education system that operates, as some hon. Members have suggested, on the lowest common denominator. I would not want the lowest common denominator education for my son; I want the very best that the education system can offer him as his right to build his future.

The Government are two faced about education. Avon county council has been poll tax-capped and the Government tell us that Avon is overspending by £57 million a year. However, it costs £1,898 a year to educate a pupil in a comprehensive school in Avon. I looked at the many private fee-paying schools in Avon to get an idea of the system that we are being told is egalitarian in which privilege and rights are bought in our society.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I am interested in what the hon. Lady is saying about equality and egalitarianism. Does she recall the time when we had an enforced system of comprehensive schools in London? Where catchment areas were drawn by local authorities, the determinant of entry to a school was not ability or religious background; it was whether one's parents could afford to buy a house in the catchment area of one school as opposed to another. Tonight the Labour party might like to make it plain that given the opportunity Labour would require all schools to be organised along comprehensive lines, with 11 to 16 schools and tertiary colleges serving them. Nothing else would exist. Will the hon. Lady come clean on that point?

Ms. Primarolo: I had the privilege of attending an excellent comprehensive school in the constituency of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). It had excellent academic achievements. It was an excellent example of how well-resourced comprehensive education operates. It is a tragedy that, in several ways, the education system in which my son now finds himself is worse than the education system in which I was at his age. Schools are in worse condition, resources are declining, and insecurities are worse as a result of 10 years of this Government.

To quote at random, at Monkton Combe school, Bath, a day fee-paying school, annual fees are £5,625. At Clifton college, Bristol, a day fee-paying school, annual fees are £5,820. At Colston's school, Bristol, annual fees are £3,555 per year. That is much more than is being spent on my son's education. That is wrong. There should be no distinction. All bright children should have the right to go to schools that stretch their abilities. All children should have the right to go to properly resourced schools. On the Minister's own figures, the average cost of an assisted place is higher than the cost of educating a child in the state sector.

People talk about academic education, good exam passes, preparing pupils to take an active role in society, equal opportunities of quality, and the benefits of education. All our children have a right to access to all those things—not the odd one or two children who get through on the assisted places scheme. Let us make no mistake. The schemes are being expanded because there are not enough pupils to keep schools going because of the drop in the population, thereby taking children out of our state system.

Bright children will do well whether they are in private schools or state schools. It is appalling that the House should say that a tiny proportion of our children should have the right to additional resources, to the detriment of the rest of the children in this country. Avon county council has been poll tax-capped. The Government have told it to cut expenditure and have then given more money to state-assisted places. That is obscene.

[Ms. Primarolo]

The Government have been exposed for what they really are. They favour privilege for the few at the cost of the rest of us. If we are to have a lecture on egalitarianism, perhaps we should start with basics, not buying privilege.

12.42 am

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I cannot possibly agree with or follow the arguments of the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), who would restrict entry to independent schools to those who earn £30,000 or £40,000 a year or more. That cannot be right, because the assisted places scheme has been successful. I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) say that the scheme was a failure and was not working. Having taught young people on the assisted places scheme, I can say that it is a success for the vast majority of those young people. The Government should be proud of that scheme, along with the other ideas that they have brought forward to provide variety and choice in education.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) referred to the money that is going into the assisted places scheme. He said that that money is lost to the state system and to our young people. It is an insult to the 172 young people who are going through Norwich high school on the assisted places scheme. They would not like to be told that the money that is being spent on them is a waste. These arguments are total nonsense—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] As my hon. Friends are reminding me, the assisted places scheme is basically a good, successful scheme. After all, it is good not only for the boys and girls who attend schools that use the scheme, but, from my experience, I know that it is good for the schools themselves. They benefit in many ways from that intake of pupils.

I have not heard one argument from the Opposition to convince me that my personal experience of the scheme is mistaken in any way. I assure my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that they have the support of my hon. Friends and of the overwhelming majority of parents in this country. The Opposition's arguments are total nonsense and the sooner we recognise that, the better.

12.45 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I have listened with some interest to the speeches of Conservative Members. Two appalling comments stood out which are, unfortunately, indicative of the attitudes behind the Government's creation of the assisted places scheme. One Conservative Member said that the scheme provided an academic education. The publicly run schools in my area of Cornwall have a high reputation and the teachers whom I visit would be most insulted if anybody suggested that they provided anything less than an academic education. There is no such distinction. It is wrong for any hon. Member to suggest that those who work in the state system are providing anything less than that which is provided in the private system. There may be more money in the private system and the ability to select more highly, but it is absolutely wrong to suggest that the teachers in the state system are not providing an academic education to the best of their abilities, that they are not doing the best for their pupils and that they are not tailoring the education to their needs.

Worse, however, was the earlier suggestion of another Conservative Member that, by arguing against the assisted places scheme, the Labour party was arguing for the lowest common denominator. No argument in favour of the state system and about whether resources should be used on assisted places suggests that the target is the lowest common denominator. Nor does anything that happens in the state system point to the lowest common denominator. All the teachers to whom I speak or with whom I work and visit in my part of the country—I know that this is true in other areas—are looking to the highest common denominator, to do the best for all their pupils and to tailor the education that they provide to the needs of their pupils. To suggest that the state system is about the lowest common denominator is redolent of insults about everything that takes place there. Such suggestions should not be made by any side of the debate.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): If the public sector of education is the lowest common denominator, that is an indictment of the Government who have been responsible for administering and running it for the last 10 years.

Mr. Taylor: That is absolutely right. That is precisely the point to which I was coming.

The attitudes that we have heard from Conservative Members and the system of the assisted places scheme itself are both elitist and defeatist. The system is elitist because it seems to suggest that we can give the best education only to a few for whom extra resources are provided, which are diverted into the private sector. Therefore, by definition, the scheme is limited in the opportunities that it can provide because it cannot provide those opportunities to the vast majority.

The system is defeatist because it also seems to suggest that—no matter what—public policy has to direct what resources there are to those whom Conservative Members believe are the best pupils and to the private sector because it is impossible—they believe—to provide that best education through the state sector. That defeatism is not right. I should not argue against what the Government are doing if I believed that it was right. I believe that it is possible to provide the best education for all pupils from all backgrounds in the state system.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: So that we can see whether there is any connection between the philosophy of liberalism and the title of the hon. Gentleman's party, will he tell us whether he believes that there should be any assisted places scheme, direct-grant schools in the form of grant-maintained schools or any other form of education that is not in the hands of the state?

Mr. Taylor We need diversity and I have never argued otherwise. However, directing extra resources to, by definition, a limited number of pupils to send them into a system that most people will never be able to enjoy is not the best use of the limited resources available to the Department of Education and Science. That is why we are against the assisted places scheme.

The argument in favour of the assisted places scheme falls down in its own rationale. We are told that it is intended for pupils who are bright but would not

otherwise have the opportunity to attend an independent school. Yet within the state system there is plenty of evidence that, if there is a group that does not do well, it is not the brightest pupils nor, indeed, the least bright. It is the middle range of pupils, if any, that suffers. The resources should be directed at them.

The argument in favour of the scheme is also based on the assumption that bright children will receive a better education in the independent system than in the state system. Several individual cases were referred to earlier. We were told that one child was the daughter of a bus driver and another was the son of a window cleaner. I have rarely heard anything so patronising in this Chamber. There is simply no evidence to suggest that those who come from a background where their parents work as window cleaners or bus drivers will necessarily fail in a state school. The implications behind those statements absolutely appal me. It is simply a fallacy.

The most important factor in whether such pupils fail is the support that they receive from their parents, the quality of the education offered by individual teachers, irrespective of the type of school in which the teacher works, and the motivation and ability of the pupils. We are all aware of many examples of pupils who go to schools which do not have a good reputation for achieving high academic results—often because the pupils who attend it do not have the support to which I referred—yet overcome their difficulties and do well.

Many people whom I know have achieved extraordinarily good results—grade A in all the exams that they have taken throughout their careers—at schools in the state sector which have no special reputation for academic results but which, when a bright pupil comes along, can offer the necessary support.

The fundamental issue addressed by teachers and others in schools which I visit in my work as a constituency Member of Parliament is the overall size of the cake. They stress the need for more text books, more resources in schools, and more teachers to offer the greater flexibility and support for the individual pupil that the private sector can offer, precisely because it is more expensive. It is the withdrawal of those extra resources and their placement in the assisted places scheme and, therefore, in a private sector that is already over-resourced that is so appalling and makes the whole scheme wrong.

I do not believe that Conservative Members have said anything to justify the scheme. Rather they have justified the assumption that is built on prejudice. It reflects that prejudice and will continue to do so.

12.54 am

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I want to recount my experience in education so that the House understands that I do not speak from what the Opposition might describe as a privileged background.

I went to a state comprehensive school and taught in the state sector for 10 years. I was a member of the Inner London education authority and, before I entered the House, I was an education officer for a local education authority. All my experience has been gained in the state education sector and, therefore, I speak with some knowledge about the state education system.

As I have listened to the debate I have been depressed by the total lack of thought that Opposition Members have given to the principles of education and freedom of choice. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), a representative of the Liberal party, spoke about taking freedom of choice away from parents. That party has come a long way from the Liberal party of the 19th century which believed in choice and diversity. It believed in the rights of parents to exercise choice. The hon. Gentleman should consider the book on liberty written by John Stuart Mill which contained the famous statement that it would be a grave mistake on the part of the state if all or a large part of education was concentrated in its hands. We have come a long way since then.

It is important that our education system should offer as many different forms of teaching and opportunities as possible from which parents can choose. It is only through diversity and competition that educational standards increase. If the state and local education authorities had complete control of all schools, if no one was allowed to send their child to a school outside local education authority control and teachers had to work in local education authority schools, there would be no impetus to provide competition and increased standards. There would be no other benchmark by which to judge those schools. It is therefore important that we should have such diversity. There are extremely good schools in the state system, but they will not maintain their excellence if no one else is allowed to provide education outside the state system.

I deplore the attitude of the Labour party. Opposition Members have had the opportunity of grammar school and public school education. They have been able to exercise such choice, but now they are seeking to pull up the ladder behind them. They tell working-class, ordinary people that they may not have that same choice. Look at the direct grant grammar school boys on the Opposition Benches who want to ensure that no one else can exercise choice in education. It is vital that we do not pull up the ladder of opportunity. People must have choice in our education system.

It is a fallacy to pretend that, because everyone cannot enjoy freedom, no one should. That is like the old socialist argument that, because everyone cannot dine at the Ritz, no one should. The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) spoke about withdrawing choice from education. Not everyone can own his own home, but does that mean that we should all live in council houses? Not everyone can afford a car, but does that mean that no one should own a car? That is the logic of the Opposition's argument.

Ms. Gordon: The hon. Gentleman asks whether the fact that everyone cannot own his home means that no one should. It does not, but it means that no one should be homeless. Equally, if all children cannot have a privileged education, they should at least have a teacher. Privilege should not mean that some children are in smaller classes while others have no teacher.

Mr. Bennett: I do not disagree with the hon. Lady, but that is not what the Labour party is advocating. It argues that no one should have choice outside the state education system. The hon. Member for Durham, North-West has not argued that because not everyone has equal opportunity, no one should have any opportunity—she believes that no one should have any choice.

It was interesting that when the hon. Member for Durham, North-West intervened in the speech of the hon.

[Mr. Bennett]

Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) she implied that she believed in the direction of labour, and that teachers should not be allowed to teach in private schools because they had been taught and trained in the state sector.

It is interesting to finish on that point because it shows that Labour Members do not think through what they say. Their policies imply that they would have to create a police state in this country. If the Labour party took to its logical conclusion its policy that nobody should be educated or teach outside the state sector, it would have to create a police state to stop those schools moving to southern Ireland, France and other countries. It would have to introduce laws to stop parents sending their children abroad. If it wishes to do that it will have to set up an edifice of controls and regulations to prevent people from trying to get round the rules by taking their children abroad. Labour Members should think through what they are saying before they decide to take away choice, variety and diversity.

I believe in this small measure, which gives working-class people an opportunity to have a choice in their education, and I support what the Government are doing.

1.2 am

Ms. Armstrong: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall speak again.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) should not lecture other people when he does not follow his own lessons. No one is saying that people in this country cannot have a choice, and there is much choice within the state sector. We are saying that taxpayers' money should not be used to subsidise a division in education which means that the Government can say that they are content with buying for 1 per cent. what they consider to be the best. Even if they want to get away with that in terms of their ideology, this country cannot afford it. We must get the best for every child.

I invite the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) to look again at the research. I judge the scheme according to the criteria that the Government set out. It is against those criteria——

Mr. Dunn *rose*——

Ms. Armstrong: I shall not give way because I am responding to a point raised by the hon. Member for Norwich, North.

In response to the criteria set down by the Government, the scheme has failed. I am happy that the hon. Gentleman should have a look at that.

Mr. Dunn: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Armstrong: Certainly—now that I have answered the hon. Member for Norwich, North, I happily give way to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn).

Mr. Dunn: I thought for a moment that I was going to be ignored.

Will the hon. Lady confirm and place on record that I can go back to the people of Dartford and tell them tonight that the Labour party's policies would lead to the closure in Dartford of the grammar schools, the city technology college, the grant-maintained school, the organisation of all secondary schools along comprehensive lines with a range of schools for 11 to 16-year-olds being served by tertiary colleges, and the total elimination of the Church schools?

Ms. Armstrong: The hon. Gentleman has a vivid imagination. To save the time of the House, I will send him our policy review so that he can read it for himself. I want to be straight with the hon. Gentleman and if I were to answer him fully, I would take some time, which I do not have.

People are saying that the Government's policy is popular, but, in that case, why are 6,000 places—not 4,000, as the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said—unfilled?

I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) for pointing out the effect of the measures on many places.

I shall finish, not with another quote from the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), although that is tempting, but with a quote from people in the independent sector who have assessed the effect of the assisted places scheme on that sector. They know that the main effect on that sector is to subsidise it. David Woodhead, director of the Independent Schools Information Service, has said that if the removal of the assisted places scheme were to go ahead

"there would be a lot of worried schools."

The bursar of St. Mary's college in Crosby said:

"Schools that have not made some form of provision to back up the assisted places scheme if it was withdrawn could be rather exposed."

Judith Sichy, director of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, said that it was impossible to say quite how much schools would lose if charitable status was abolished, but it would be a "blow" and would lead to fee increases for parents. That is the fear of Conservative Members—that the independent school sector, or much of it, would collapse because it would lose the public subsidy.

Let us use that public subsidy to good effect for the children of our country who need such support, so that we can ensure that they are able to take the country forward to an effective economy and an effective future. If we do that for all our children, no one will need to argue for any assisted places.

1.7 am

Mr. Alan Howarth: I was grateful to the hon. Lady for the kind words that she spoke at the beginning of her speech, but then I was disappointed, because I had hoped that the Labour party, in the process of its policy review, would have given some fresh thought to this issue, which we have debated many times in the past. Yet it seems to ignore the realities before it.

For example, the hon. Lady disputed—

Mr. Straw: We were of two minds on what to do about the assisted places scheme until we read the review by the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). It was his view that this experiment had been such a failure that led to our decision to phase the scheme out.

Mr. Howarth: Again, I would have hoped that the Labour party would muster its own intellectual resources to think up an education policy, but it has not.

The hon. Lady ignored the fact that there is choice. In her own area there is a choice; in county Durham children

may go to Barnard Castle school within the scheme, and with the extension of the scheme there will be a new opportunity for children to go to assisted places at King's School in north Tyneside, to which the hon. Lady also referred. The hon. Lady, like the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), said that her purpose was to ensure that excellent education was available for all. We can all agree upon that.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South then spoilt it by making it clear that she believes, not in equality of opportunity but in equality of outcome. She developed a curious, and indeed interesting, theory, which might have its attractions, that an equal sum should be made available from public resources for all children. I am not sure whether she was beginning to argue for a voucher scheme and whether that is more evidence of the influence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) on the thinking of the Labour party. Really her idea was a travesty of my right hon. Friend's thinking. All hon. Members know that my right hon. Friend has always been a great champion of freedom and of choice.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) for the support that he expressed for the assisted places scheme. He raised some serious and practical points. He asked, as did the hon. Member for Durham, North-West, about the lack of complete take-up of assisted places in some schools. It is inevitable that there will be some schools where there are not applications for all the places, just as there are many other schools that are over-subscribed under the scheme. We have a system of negotiation to transfer the surplus quota of places from the under-subscribed schools to the fully subscribed schools, and we are working on a more flexible and quickly responsive scheme of pooling to enable us to deal with that problem.

My hon. Friend also raised the question of publicity. The principal responsibility for publicising the scheme rests with the schools. I pay tribute to the effort that so many of the schools in the scheme make to ensure that young people and their parents are aware of the available opportunities. That will be part of a much wider culture, because under the local management of schools, and with open enrolment, all schools will have to seek to make themselves attractive to the parents and children whom it is their responsibility to serve.

My hon. Friend the Member for York asked whether we provide leaflets: we certainly do. They explain how the scheme works and how families can benefit from it. I hope that more local education authorities will recognise their responsibility to make known the existence of scheme schools in their area. Equally, I look to primary heads to ensure that children who could appropriately go on to a school in the scheme know about it.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for York asked about the north-east. I am pleased to say that, as part of the extension of the scheme this September, no fewer than six new schools will be admitted to the scheme in the north-east, and there will be three additional places in the Yarn school of which my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) is a governor. He made a powerful speech in which he reminded us of the disappointing record of the last Labour Government, who destroyed the direct grant scheme. Their commitment to destroy this scheme is a dreary return to that kind of prejudice.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) spoke up doughtily for Sheffield, as he always does. He was right to do so, just as the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) rightly spoke up for Tower Hamlets. I recognise the educational difficulties that those local authorities and parents, children and teachers in their areas face. Of course we shall do what we can to help. I met a deputation led by the leader of the Sheffield LEA recently, and I have fully absorbed his concerns. Only this afternoon, I saw the director of education in Tower Hamlets, and I pay tribute to her remarkable efforts to improve the quality of the service in that area.

The hon. Member for Hillsborough became rather old-fashioned when he got to the bit about the assisted places scheme. The cost of the scheme in the financial year 1989-80 was less than half of 1 per cent. of total public expenditure on schools. The hon. Gentleman has got the issue out of proportion. Since we came to office we have increased real spending by more than 40 per cent. per child. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) mentioned expenditure on books and equipment. That, too, is up by 28 per cent.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) for the refreshing good sense they brought to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest recited a gloomy catalogue of the destructive pledges of the Labour party. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North spoke with legitimate pride of his experience of teaching in one of the great schools in the scheme—Manchester grammar—and about Norwich high school.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) brought to the debate the benefit of his authority as one who has great depth of experience of working in the maintained sector. He talked a great deal of good sense.

I must take issue with the hon. Member for Truro, who wrongly extracted from the remarks of Conservative Members the inference that there had been some disparagement of the maintained schools, merely because we believe that the APS widens choice and gives the parents of less well-off children the opportunity to send their offspring to some of the best schools in the country. There are many extremely good maintained schools. We must cherish excellence wherever it is found—and support it. I look forward to meeting a deputation from Cornwall next week and I shall do what I can to ensure that the teachers of Cornwall, to whom I pay tribute, have every opportunity to continue to serve their pupils.

I commend the draft regulations to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 215, Noes 89.

Division No. 307] **[1.14 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Batiste, Spencer
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bellingham, Henry
Amery, Rt Hon Julian	Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Amess, David	Bevan, David Gilroy
Amos, Alan	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Arbuthnot, James	Boswell, Tim
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Ashby, David	Bowis, John
Aspinwall, Jack	Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Atkinson, David	Brazier, Julian
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Bright, Graham
Baldry, Tony	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Buck, Sir Antony

Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bradley, Keith
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 27th June, be approved.

HOUSE OF COMMONS (SERVICES)

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert Rhodes James be discharged from the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) and Mr. Graham Bright be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Mr. David Simpson

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

1.25 am

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I wish to express my delight at obtaining this Adjournment debate, although it is diminished by my regret at having to raise the issue in such a public way. I recognise that raising this case in the House will inevitably arouse memories, anger and anguish among those concerned in the incident three years ago.

I wish that we—myself, Mr. David Simpson and his solicitor and his barrister—had been able to convince the Home Office and the Minister, through private correspondence, of the need to pay Mr. Simpson compensation for the three months that he spent in prison for a crime that he did not commit.

I do not think that there is any disagreement between me and the Minister about the background to the case. There was a fatal road accident in April 1987, and there is no doubt that Mr. Simpson was subsequently charged with causing death by reckless driving. Throughout, Mr. Simpson protested that he was the pillion rider and not the driver rider of the motor cycle involved.

The Minister will know that Mr. Simpson was on bail for about 14 months until he appeared in Leicester Crown court on 1 to 3 August 1988. He was convicted on a majority verdict and received a 12-month term of imprisonment. However, in the light of further evidence his conviction was quashed at the Court of Appeal on 11 November 1988. After some three months in prison, that innocent man was finally vindicated.

I must emphasise that Mr. Simpson was extremely lucky that two new witnesses came forward to support his case. It was fortuitous that they did so before the appeal was heard. They had seen a report in the 10 August 1988 edition of *Motor Cycle News* and realised that there had been a miscarriage of justice. At the time of the accident, the two witnesses had been living in Leicester, but had subsequently moved to Cornwall and so were not familiar with what had happened; neither had they seen reports of the court case in the *Leicester Mercury*, the local evening newspaper.

When the witnesses saw the report in *Motor Cycle News*, they realised that it was their duty and responsibility to come forward and support Mr. Simpson's case. In the absence of those new witnesses, there would have been a distinct possibility that an innocent man would have had to serve the remainder of his sentence.

In the light of that background—and I bear no animosity towards the Minister—I wish to emphasise that I deeply resent and regret that the fact that he included the following sentence in a letter to me on 13 November 1989: I quote from the third page of the Home Office letter and the words of the Minister, or perhaps of his civil servant:

"The new witnesses, although apparently known to a friend of Mr. Simpson, did not appear until three days before the appeal hearing—some 18 months after the incident."

I am not sure what was meant by those words, but I draw from them two inferences that I find deeply offensive. The first is that Mr. Simpson should or could have been aware of the existence of those witnesses at the time of his trial, and that some fault therefore lies on his shoulders for not bringing them forward then. The second is that those witnesses were somehow sprung on the Court of Appeal at the last moment. If I am wrong in drawing those inferences, I shall be delighted to hear the Minister say that they do not represent his point of view.

The barrister who defended Mr. Simpson is convinced that the original conviction was a miscarriage of justice. The Minister will have read a letter from Mr. Gaskell to the Home Office dated 12 February 1990, in which he wrote:

"Normally, as counsel, I do not concern myself with questions about whether a defendant actually did or did not commit the crimes alleged. But as the evidence in the trial unfolded, it became clear that this was a wholly exceptional case. Sometimes juries do get it wrong: they did here. The conviction was, in my view, plainly wrong. Accordingly, Mr. Simpson spent 3 months in prison for a crime he did not commit."

It will come as no surprise to the Minister that the effects of the incident on Mr. Simpson and his family were devastating. I will quote his own words. He explains that in the pre-trial period he was bailed for 14 months,

"during which time the mental stress of having the case 'hanging over me' was unbearable and had already affected a four-year relationship with my common law wife. At this time she left me."

The relationship between Mr. Simpson and his common law wife broke down as a direct consequence of the pre-trial stress. His elderly parents suffered great mental stress, ending with their both being treated with medication by their doctor. Mr. Simpson's relationship with his two children, then aged 19 and 20, also suffered during the pre-trial period as a consequence of the stress, irritability and depression that Mr. Simpson felt.

Mr. Simpson continued to protest his innocence throughout this time in prison. He writes:

"My total bewilderment at my predicament, constantly protesting my innocence, led me to suggest to the prison doctor the drastic action of a hunger strike. I was told I would be put in a hospital wing in a padded cell if I suggested such a thing again."

Perhaps that was the natural reaction of an innocent man, trying to show the authorities that he was prepared to go to any lengths to protest his innocence. He goes on:

"While sharing a small, cramped cell with two other prisoners, one of the inmates threatened to hang himself with a sheet, whilst another inmate close by was threatened with rape, and a brutal attack ensued. Those are just two examples of the awful atrocities I encountered on a daily basis."

That further illustrates the ordeal that this innocent man had to endure throughout his three months in prison.

After this innocent man's conviction was quashed by the Court of Appeal some 18 months ago, he was released, but he is still trying to draw the threads of his life together. I quote him again:

"To this day I feel I have been mentally scarred by these events. It has left me feeling confused, persecuted and unable to trust. Family and close friends have commented continuously about my changed personality. I have been unable to form a close relationship since my release. I am constantly depressed, increasingly bitter by the complete injustice of this ordeal. This is despite the fact that I have endeavoured to build a new life for myself, completing a year's Fine Arts Course and gaining a place on a BA (Hons) Degree course. Despite my efforts throughout the last 18 months I have suffered severe financial loss due to this case, my parents (who are both pensioners) have also suffered financially due to this case. I am still in the process of paying off debts incurred while I was in prison. The constant refusals to pay any amount of compensation for this ordeal, even after my innocence was exonerated by the high court, is still creating mental pressures and fuelling the bitterness I feel.

I am picking up the pieces of my life. I would like very much to put this dreadful experience behind me. Not only for

[Mr. Jim Marshall]

myself, but for my family and supportive friends who have all suffered because of my constant determination to see justice be done. My worst fear is that this experience could happen again to an innocent man."

I recognise, Mr. Deputy Speaker—as I know that both you and the Minister will—that no amount of money can remove these mental scars. Only the passage of time will remove them from the forefront of Mr. Simpson's mind. No decision by the Government or the Minister can remove those scars. However, I hope that the manner in which I have dealt with Mr. Simpson's case—I have not castigated the Minister personally—will lead to recognition of the fact that an injustice was done and that there was a miscarriage of justice. I hope, therefore, that some compensation will be made for the time that Mr. Simpson spent in prison.

1.37 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I begin by saying two things to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall). First, I appreciate the measured way in which he has pursued this case on behalf of his constituent. Furthermore, I appreciate the reasoned and reasonable way in which he has put the case, both in correspondence and in the House tonight. It was in the best traditions of the House. No constituent who found himself in this or in any other unfortunate circumstance could wish for anyone more assiduous as his Member of Parliament than the hon. Member for Leicester, South in taking his case to the highest quarters. The hon. Gentleman's constituent must be fully aware of the way in which his case has been advanced by his Member of Parliament.

It is unnecessary for me to go in great detail into the facts of the case. There is no dispute about the facts of the trial and the appeal, as it unfolded. Before I deal with the points raised by the hon. Gentleman, the House might find it helpful if I outline briefly the criteria to be applied when considering applications for the payment of compensation in cases of wrongful conviction such as this. It is important to get the facts in front of us.

Compensation may be payable under section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 or, where that does not apply, it may take the form of an ex-gratia payment. Under the terms of section 133 of the 1988 Act compensation may be payable where a person convicted of a criminal offence has that conviction quashed by an appeal made to the court of appeal, either "out of time" or following a reference by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968, or by means of a free pardon on the ground that a new or newly discovered fact shows beyond reasonable doubt that there has been a miscarriage of justice. I remember the debates on section 133 of the 1988 Act when I took the Bill through the Standing Committee.

There is an ex gratia scheme, because those cases which do not meet the criteria of section 133 are considered in the light of the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), the then Home Secretary, on 29 November 1985. Such ex gratia cases are now confined to those cases where people have spent a period in custody but where a conviction is quashed by the Court of Appeal following an "in time" appeal or to persons charged and where proceedings were later terminated, possibly because of some alleged misconduct by the proper authorities.

The criteria to be applied in these cases are as follows. First, the detention must have resulted from serious default by a member of the police force or of some other public authority or, if there is no evidence of such a default, there must be exceptional circumstances that justify compensation. Quite often, after due process in the Court of Appeal, a conviction is overturned without any allegation of serious default by a member of the police force or any other public authority. Therefore, it is important to realise that, in many cases, quite properly, compensation is not paid because there has been no such default.

An example of exceptional circumstances would be the appearance of facts at the trial or on appeal that completely exonerate the accused person. Compensation will not normally be payable in cases where persons have been acquitted at trial or subsequently on appeal because the prosecution were unable to sustain the burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt in relation to the specific charges brought. That bears repeating. According to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary, compensation will not normally be payable in cases where persons have been acquitted at trial or subsequently on appeal because the prosecution were unable to sustain the burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt in relation to the specific charges brought. Such an occurrence would be the failure of a witness to attend, therefore preventing the prosecution proceeding with the case.

Requests for compensation are usually made by letter from the claimant or his solicitors. The facts of the case are first considered to decide whether it falls under the statutory scheme, the ex gratia scheme or neither. Such applications often require further inquiries to be made, for example of the police, before a decision can be reached. The question of eligibility for the payment of compensation is, as the hon. Gentleman knows, entirely a matter for determination by the Home Secretary of the day.

It has been important to rehearse these facts because those who are concerned, such as Mr. Simpson and his family, should know the facts that underlie our system of compensation.

I now turn to the claim for compensation, which was advanced so powerfully by the hon. Member for Leicester, South on behalf of Mr. Simpson. On 5 May 1989, Mr. Simpson's solicitors applied for compensation for the three months that their client had been detained in custody. That is common ground between the hon. Gentleman and myself.

Following that application, detailed inquiries were made of the Leicestershire constabulary, which investigated the accident. As Mr. Simpson's appeal had been in time, his claim did not meet the requirements of the statutory compensation scheme under section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. The only possibility available to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was to consider it under the terms of the exgratia scheme.

In Mr. Simpson's case, there was no question of serious default by the police in bringing the charge of causing death by reckless driving against him. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and I agree on that. I see him indicating assent. The charge against Mr. Simpson was brought on the basis

of evidence from witnesses of his position on the motor cycle at the time of the accident. The evidence of a forensic scientist cast doubt on the suggestion that the rider had been thrown from the motor cycle while it was moving. That evidence was presented to the jury which, in the light of its majority decision, must have accepted it, although none of us will know what went on in the jury room.

The two new witnesses presented on appeal questioned that evidence but did not make themselves known to the police prior to the trial—it strikes me as peculiar that they did not do so—hence the sentence that the hon. Gentleman said that he resented. I do not think that there is any reason for resentment. It is peculiar, but sometimes there are peculiar circumstances in criminal cases that are hard to understand. I find it hard to understand why they did not come forward earlier. Linden Arnold's comment —he was one of the two new witnesses—that the police did not ask them to make statements is understandable from the police's point of view because they were unaware of those witnesses when they conducted their investigation. The police behaved properly in the pre-trial period.

The witnesses were, however, known to a friend of Mr. Simpson's before the trial. In the circumstances, there are no grounds to suggest that the police were at serious fault in charging Mr. Simpson or that the conviction was wrongful on the basis of the evidence available at the trial. The new evidence produced by the two witnesses three days before the Court of Appeal hearing questioned the safety of the evidence presented by the prosecution at the trial. However, from the information available to me, it would appear that their evidence contained several discrepancies, compared with the earlier evidence given by the police officers. Some conflict about who was driving the motor cycle remains unresolved.

On the information available, Mr. Simpson's case does not appear to my right hon. and learned Friend to meet the criteria required to establish a claim for an exceptional payment of compensation under the terms of the ex gratia scheme. His application was refused accordingly.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I am grateful to the Minister for the measured way in which he is replying to the debate. Again, he has made the inferences to which I referred about the two new witnesses, but the fact of the matter is that the Court of Appeal accepted their evidence. That new information led it to quash the original conviction as being unsound and unsafe.

I appreciate that that leads to discussion and argument about the way in which the police conducted the original inquiry and I have my doubts about that. However, I deliberately did not raise that issue this evening because I did not want to cloud the specific injustice that had been done to Mr. Simpson with wider allegations about the original investigation.

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. Let us just rehearse briefly the representations that he has made since he first wrote on 26 September 1989 to the former Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney, who is now the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Then and on previous occasions Mr. Simpson's case has been given the most careful and detailed consideration and that consideration underpinned the letter that I wrote on 3 November 1989, which contained the offensive sentence, informing the hon. Gentleman that the case was not one in which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary would feel justified in authorising any ex-gratia payment of compensation from public funds.

I reconsidered Mr. Simpson's case with officials on two further occasions following the hon. Gentleman's letters of 11 December 1989 and 23 February 1990 to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. As the hon. Gentleman knows from my letters to him of 15 January and 2 May, we could find no grounds to justify departing from our earlier decision.

I listened with careful interest to what the hon. Gentleman said tonight on behalf of Mr. Simpson, but I do not think that any new matters of consideration have been put before the House. In the light of that, I must inform the hon. Gentleman and the House that I do not think that it will be possible for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to change his earlier decision.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 19 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL
(By Order)
Order for consideration of Lords amendment read.
To be considered on Tuesday 24 July at Seven o'clock.

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
Read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Wednesday 25 July.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [26 February],
That the Bill be now considered.
Debate further adjourned till Wednesday 25 July.

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [12 July],
That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate further adjourned till Tuesday 24 July at Seven o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: As the remaining seven Bills set down for Second Reading have blocking motions, with the leave of the House I shall put them together.

HEATHROW EXPRESS RAILWAY BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL
[Lords] (By Order)
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Wednesday 25 July.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL
(By Order)
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [10 May],
That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate further adjourned till Wednesday 25 July.

SOUTHAMPTON RAPID TRANSIT BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Wednesday 25 July.

EXMOUTH DOCKS BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [29 March],
That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate further adjourned till Wednesday 25 July.

KILLINGHOLME GENERATING STATIONS (ANCILLARY POWERS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Wednesday 25 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Republic of Ireland (Transport Links)

1. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Irish Minister for Tourism and Transport to discuss transport links between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The day before yesterday.

Mr. Stott: I thank the Minister for that most encouraging reply. Is he aware that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I fully support the plans agreed between Northern Ireland Railways and the Irish railway company for the upgrading of the Belfast to Dublin line? Will the Minister confirm that the £54 million grant provided by the EEC regional fund for that project is specifically dedicated to making cross-border and other improvements to the line? In other words, is not it a dedicated budget? Does the Minister have any idea of when the Irish Government will give the plan their seal of approval?

Mr. Bottomley: Mr. Seamus Brennan made it plain that the Irish Government are committed to improving and maintaining the line. I cannot confirm dedicated funds for the line. That is as much for the Irish as for us to speak to the Community about. We have agreed with the Irish Government to undertake a detailed examination of the costs and benefits, and I hope that we shall be able to report progress to our respective Parliaments shortly.

Mr. Kilfedder: May we have an assurance that the IRA will not be allowed to destroy that important link between Belfast and Dublin? Does the Minister agree that the IRA's campaign to destroy it is indicative of its opposition to a rapprochement between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic and between the people of Ulster and the people of the Republic of Ireland?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. The IRA's action is essentially partitionist. I remind the House of the words of the Republic's Justice Minister, Ray Burke, that it is only by an act of God that there has not been a major disaster. The IRA is relying on the security forces to get every incident exactly right. I hope that those who mourn over the level crossing crash outside Ballymena will realise that the IRA risks such accidents every time that it places a real or hoax bomb on the line.

Mr. John D. Taylor: As Northern Ireland exports only 5 per cent. of its products to the Republic, does the Minister accept that as we move towards the single market, a first-class rail and road system between Belfast and Dublin is a necessity? Does he share the disappointment of most people in Northern Ireland that the Dublin Government seem to be rejecting the offer of financial assistance made by the European Community, to provide a fast rail link between Belfast and Dublin? Is not that a further example of Dublin saying no to co-operation with Northern Ireland?

Mr. Bottomley: I think that my earlier remarks made it plain that the opposite is the case. I trust the Irish Transport Minister when he says that the Republic is committed to improving the line. A rail link between the two capitals of Ireland must make more sense and represent a better option than having to drive between the two. In the same way, it would be a good idea if the railway from the north-west ran to Belfast and on to Dublin. That, too, would be a better option than driving. Both would make sense in terms of the environment and reducing road casualties. It would also help the economic grography of Northern Ireland to improve rather than worsen.

Rev. Ian Paisley: It is important to keep the rail link open, but has the Minister had discussions about the channel tunnel? Which way will its traffic run? Is he aware that a large sum of money has been granted to the Irish Republic to strengthen culverts and to widen roads, but nothing seems to be done north of the border to maintain the present level of traffic through Larne port?

Mr. Bottomley: The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), who is responsible for the economy, and I had a meeting with the Belfast chamber of commerce. We all agreed that we must give business in Northern Ireland a choice of routes. The Dublin chamber of commerce has also made it clear that much business in the south prefers the roads and railways in the north and that is why so much of its traffic goes through Warrenpoint, Belfast and Larne. We aim to maintain our competitive advantage while seeing improvements north and south.

Extradition

2. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many requests have been made by the Royal Ulster Constabulary for the extradition of persons sought for *(a)* terrorist crimes and *(b)* other crimes since 1 April; and how many persons in each category have been sent back to Northern Ireland as a result of those requests.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Cope): The answer to both parts of the question is none, Sir.

Mr. Ross: Does the fact that the Royal Ulster Constabulary has not seen fit to make any requests for extradition finally confirm the impression of many people in Northern Ireland that the Government now believe that there is no chance whatever of the Irish Republic ever honouring any international obligation in relation to the extradition of those charged with terrorist crimes in the United Kingdom in general, not merely in Northern Ireland? Will the Government now stop making excuses for the Irish Republic, which has behaved most abominably in that regard?

Mr. Cope: I do not make excuses, but the RUC sends a request for a warrant from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland, first when there is good reason to believe that a particular individual is in the Republic and, secondly, when we have sufficient evidence to succeed with a warrant and, we hope, to mount a prosecution when an individual is returned. Since 1985 the general record has improved and we are working to improve it still further.

Rev. William McCrea: Bearing in mind the number of guilty persons roaming about in safety and comfort in the Irish Republic because the Dublin Government will not take the necessary steps to extradite known terrorists to the United Kingdom and the fact that there is alarm and concern at the imprisonment in the United Kingdom of four innocent persons—the UDR four from Armagh—when will action be taken to provide proper extradition proceedings between the United Kingdom and Dublin and to allow the four innocent men from Armagh to be released?

Mr. Cope: We are constantly promised new evidence on the so-called UDR four, but so far we have not received any that would allow the case to be sent back to the courts and we shall not impose a political judgment on the sentence of the courts. Since January 1988, 14 people have been returned to the United Kingdom, orders for delivery in respect of a further six people are the subject of appeal proceedings before the Irish courts and the Irish state has successfully appealed against the decision of the district court not to order the return of a further two persons. Therefore, a number of terrorist and non-terrorist cases are still pending.

Transport Infrastructure

3. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to improve Northern Ireland's transport infrastructure.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The proposals are in Northern Ireland's transportation programme, 1989-1993, presented last September to the European Commission.

Mr. Forsythe: Will the Minister explain why his Department has not yet taken action on Northern Ireland Railways' urgent request in August 1989 for authority to fit automatic half-barriers to 11 open crossings? Is he aware that those crossings include the one at Slaght, the scene of a fatal accident in March this year, and Umbra, the scene of a near accident last month? Will he urgently introduce that legislation and alert road users by publicly listing those 11 crossings?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall do what the hon. Gentleman asked at the end of his question. I should like to make sure that the Department and all others concerned provide all the evidence to the inquiry into the Slaght tragedy before we start giving out evidence across the Floor of the House. All of it will be made public.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that an important part of the improvement to Northern Ireland's transport infrastructure would be an improvement in British Rail's infrastructure from the channel tunnel to the land-sea link to Northern Ireland? What representations is my hon. Friend making to his colleagues in the Department of Transport and to British Rail to ensure that Northern Ireland can take full advantage of the channel tunnel when it is open?

Mr. Bottomley: We work closely with the Department of Transport. Most of the links to Northern Ireland will also bring improved services to my hon. Friend's constituency.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

4. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further discussions he has had about the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): Both the United Kingdom and the Irish Governments remain committed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which provides a valuable framework within which they can discuss issues of mutual interest and concern. However, in the context of any discussions on possible future arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland, I would give serious consideration to any implications for the agreement that such arrangements might have.

Mr. Skinner: Is not the truth of the matter that the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which was brought in before the previous general election, has turned out to be nothing more than a house of cards? The Government, along with some others, are trying to find another type of superstructure before the next general election, as many Governments have done for the past 20 years. If the Government and other parties can cheer the collapse of the Berlin wall, it is high time that we got rid of the border and brought out the British troops.

Mr. Brooke: As I remarked at a previous Question Time, the views expressed in the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question do not enjoy widespread support in the House.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. Friend beginning to understand that whose who are best able to represent nationalists in Northern Ireland are those who have been elected as their representatives to this House rather than the Government of that only foreign power whose constitution lays claim to Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: In answer to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I gave the Government's attitude to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I am sure that I am joined by the rest of the House in paying tribute to those in the House who represent the nationalist community in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: Since the Dublin Supreme Court has found in the case of McGimpsey and McGimpsey *v.* Ireland that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is complementary to the territorial claim enshrined in articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, is the Secretary of State surprised to discover that the Dublin Government have vetoed his political initiative? Is not it the case that the Irish Republic has a constitutional imperative to be obstructive when there is any chance of acknowledging that Ulster Unionists should have a right or rights?

Mr. Brooke: No one has vetoed the initiative on which we are engaged, although I acknowledge that it is within the power of anybody to slow progress. It was said of the great cricketer, Denis Compton, that when he called someone for a run it was not so much an instruction as the opening of negotiations. In order to secure the opening of negotiations, it is not within my power simply to give an instruction.

Disabled Pupils

5. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools have wheelchair access for disabled pupils.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Schools designed for disabled pupils include 38 primary and 22 secondary special units and 46 special schools, which cover both primary and secondary age groups. Specific adaptations for disabled pupils have also been made at 62 other primary and 29 secondary schools. Many other schools, especially primary schools, are accessible without adaptations.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is good news for children with disabilities and their parents that many more such children are able to participate in mainstream schools? However, they are able to participate in mainstream education only if they have the same choice as other children. That choice often depends on adequate staffing and therapy levels and, of course, on adequate physical access. Too many schools, particularly secondary schools, are not yet able to provide that true choice of education.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I am sure that what he said in the first part of his question will be widely accepted. I certainly accept it. It is important that children with a disability have a degree of choice and educational excellence. As far as is possible within Northern Ireland, we try to ensure that that choice is available, especially in the secondary sector.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that many schools still have not made the necessary adaptations, so that we are simply conning ourselves when we speak of parental choice? Is not that choice severely limited not only because of a lack of access to the schools, but because of a lack of proper access to classrooms within the schools?

Dr. Mawhinney: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. It is important that as great a choice as possible should be available, and we are agreed on that. I cannot recall any instances of concern about secondary schools being expressed to me, although I accept that there tends to be more difficulty with secondary than with primary schools. If the hon. Gentleman would like to bring specific instances to my attention, I should be happy to hear from him. Given the concern that he has expressed, I shall certainly make appropriate inquiries.

Political Parties (Discussions)

6. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his recent discussions with political parties in the Province.

Mr. Brooke: During the past six months I have had a series of discussions with the political parties in Northern Ireland and with representatives of the Irish Government, each of which accepts that talks would need to address, as part of the process, internal arrangements, north-south and east-west relations. The constructive approach taken by everyone has produced a large measure of agreement about the various preliminary points of principle and aso about the structure, format, and timing any talks might have.

It is, of course, for the other potential participarts in the talks to assess the best interests of those whom they represent. However, given the potential benefits of political dialogue, my judgment is that, with continuing goodwill, the outstanding matters that divide them could be resolved so that talks could be announced. I am ready to continue my efforts to facilitate the process, but such an announcement clearly cannot yet be made.

Mr. MacKay: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the whole House wishes him godspeed in those delicate negotiations? Does he agree that the political leaders of the various constitutional parties in the Province have shown exemplary restraint during the past few weeks while negotiations have been taking place? It must have been difficult for them in their constituencies and elsewhere. It is an encouraging development, and we should wish them well.

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for the sentiments that he expressed at the beginning of his question. I concur with him in praising the restraint that everyone has shown during the past fortnight in ensuring that the possibility of talks remains and can be advanced.

Mr. Ashdown: Notwithstanding the question and the answer, with whose sentiments I agree, did the Secretary of State note the comments of Bishop Cahal Daly at the funeral of yet another young sectarian murder victim yesterday? He said that those who would put obstacles in the way of the talks initiative would be letting the people down. Would not those who would put obstacles in the way of the talks bear a heavy responsibility if those talks were to fail?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the nature of his question. I would not wholly concur with Bishop Cahal Daly although I am grateful for his comments—about being able to embark on such talks without conditions, because I think that there are perfectly understandable conditions that everyone would bring to the talks. The fact that the bishop expressed that thought is a vivid index of the desire in Northern Ireland for talks to begin.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does the Secretary of State accept that if agreement were reached on the subject matters that he has listed to the House, in effect it would be a new agreement that would replace the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Has progress been made since he last spoke to the House, and do those with whom he has spoken since then share his view that the gap has narrowed?

Mr. Brooke: Obviously, in the fortnight since I last addressed the House on the matter, talks with several parties have continued for a fairly long time. The gap has been narrowed, which gives one encouragement in persisting in the task, but there is still a gap.

Mr. Mallon: Does the Secretary of State agree that all those involved in discussions over a long period of time, like the right hon. Gentleman himself, have also shown great restraint and have been consistently constructive? Does he agree that political parties in Northern Ireland are under enormous pressure and that such restraint augurs well for the future? Before he considers camping on the

racecourse, he should realise that a weekend is a short time in Northern Irish politics and that every last effort must be made to ensure that proper discussions and negotiations begin as soon as possible.

Mr. Brooke: I join the hon. Gentleman in endorsing the restraint and the confidentiality that have been shown throughout the negotiations, which demonstrate the desire of the parties to make progress. The hon. Gentleman asked about camping on the racecourse. That metaphor was constructed for a particular purpose, and every time I reflect on it I am struck by what a dangerous process it would be. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman can be assured that we should want to take every step before doing that.

Mr. Stanbrook: Was not my right hon. Friend's honest initiative doomed from the moment the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic insisted that the Irish Republic should be consulted at every stage of the negotiations? Was not the Anglo-Irish Agreement the biggest mistake the Government have ever made? Why should a foreign state have a say in the government of Her Majesty's subjects?

Mr. Brooke: I should not want in any way to amend my hon. Friend's question, but he was slightly tempting providence in calibrating the scale of the mistake that might have been made. The involvement of the Irish Government in internal talks has not been an issue between the two Governments. As I told the House during the debate on the renewal of powers, the Irish Government have acknowledged that they would not be directly involved in any inter-party talks about internal arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland. However, there is general recognition that any comprehensive political accommodation must emerge from a process of dialogue involving all the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and the British and Irish Governments.

Mr. John D. Taylor: As the Anglo-Irish Agreement gave a veto to many parties including the Dublin Government, and as it now appears that that veto is being exercised, will the Secretary of State consider those matters of reform and progress in Northern Ireland that are not connected with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, such as giving British Members of Parliament for Northern Ireland the same rights as English, Welsh and Scottish Members, and reforming the system of local government in Northern Ireland or, as a cricketing fan does he prefer to spend the entire summer at Malahide and the Mardyke?

Mr. Brooke: I understand the subjects that the right hon. Gentleman raises. The Government have agreed that they should be happy to consider them and to discuss them with Opposition Members. However, it would be preferable to consider such issues as elements in an overall accommodation rather than reviewing them in isolation.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is up to the House and the political parties in Northern Ireland to decide what is the best form of devolved local administration for that sovereign part of the United Kingdom that we call Northern Ireland and that whether we choose to consult the Government in Dublin is a matter for us and not for that Government?

Mr. Brooke: I hope that I gave my hon. Friend some reassurance in the answer that I gave a moment ago. The scope of the discussions that we now envisage would go beyond the present agreement. It is generally acknowledged that any comprehensive political accommodation must address all aspects of the problem and involve all those concerned.

Mr. McNamara: In his initial answer the Secretary of State did not talk about making a statement before the House rises. Although we respect the right hon. Gentleman's desire to make a statement to the House—I wish that many of his colleagues would do so more frequently—if he feels that it would be in the best interests of the talks and negotiations that are taking place that a statement should not be made to the House, I am sure, speaking for the Labour party and, I think, for the whole House, that we would rather he made progress than that we should insist on any sort of statement.

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the constructiveness that underlies his question.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Lest what the Secretary of State has said today at the Dispatch Box should be misunderstood, will he confirm that he stands by what he wrote to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), my colleague across the way, and myself: that the Government are prepared to consider an alternative to and a replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. Brooke: I gladly repeat the words that I uttered earlier this afternoon: that in the context of any discussions on possible future arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland, I would give serious consideration to any implications for the agreement which such arrangements might have. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Taoiseach and the Irish Government have expressed a similar view.

Eastern and Northern Health and Social Services Boards

7. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration has been given by the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland to the merits of rationalisation of hospital provision between the Eastern and Northern health and social services boards; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): The precise pattern of services in each area is a matter for each board to decide in consultation with other boards, as required. Any major changes or closures are likely to require the approval of the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he accept that the working group set up by the Northern health and social services board to examine the Moyle hospital report on the case for the retention and development of acute services at Larne does not inspire confidence that an impartial assessment will be made? Is the Minister aware that the four officers who have been appointed are too closely associated with promoting the board's own policy, which will never be accepted in Ireland? Can the Minister assure the House that this Department will seriously consider this new report and that an enlarged group will be set up that is competent to deal with the issue of cross-board rationalisation? Will he

also reassure us that justice will be done to this report, which has been professionally researched and presented, when it is examined?

Mr. Needham: As the hon. Gentleman knows, my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State has written to those who produced the report and told them that he will look carefully at its contents. He has also made it clear that any rationalisation proposals for acute care will clearly have cross-board dimensions and that they will have to be taken into acount by the boards working together. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's point will be taken into account by my noble Friend.

Mr. Kilfedder: I am deeply concerned about the drastic cuts that have been imposed by the Eastern health board. Will the Minister set up a review into the effects that the cuts are having on the hospital and caring services in North Down?

Mr. Needham: Since I have been a Northern Ireland Minister the amount of money spent on health care has risen from about £650 million a year to over £1 billion —hardly a cut. As for the particular point that the hon. Gentleman made, I shall draw it to the attention of my noble Friend.

Mr. Jim Marshall: The Minister must be aware, however, that public disquiet continues over the proposal to downgrade Moyle hospital to the level of a community hospital, and of the strong belief locally that if that plan is eventually carried out it could involve loss of life in the area. In view of that disquiet, cannot the Minister give a firmer guarantee that he and his ministerial colleagues will review the decision in the near future?

Mr. Needham: What will lead to loss of life in an acute hospital is that it is not properly staffed and does not have the right amount of equipment. Small local acute hospitals find it increasingly difficult to take on and retain the right staff and afford the right equipment. The key point about rationalisation is to ensure that we have modern acute facilities, led by the best doctors and nurses to look after our people. That is what we are doing by building the new Antrim hospital at a cost of £30 million.

Drainage Council

8. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland; and what matters concerning the constituency of Newry and Armagh were discussed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Last month the council determined that Camlough lake feeder drain No. 2 should be treated as designated. It accepted the drainage scheme recommended by the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Mallon: May I commend the Minister on having obtained a positive response to a problem that has existed for upwards of 40 years? I assure him that those whose agricultural land has been affected by the problem will welcome it and that it will also be welcomed by the roads executive which has spent almost £500,000 making good the damage done? Will the Minister pursue the work quickly and vigorously so that the harm can be undone before the turn of the days?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. May I take this opportunity of making the broader point that we do not intend to become involved in more major agricultural drainage schemes because of the environmental impact. We want to maintain the courses that have been designated so that we can avoid the high cost to the roads service, referred to by the hon. Gentleman, and some of the consequences to agriculture. We will always consider the cost-benefit analysis and the environmental impact.

Mr. William Ross: As the Minister has said that he is considering broader points, what consideration are the Government giving to the consequences of global warming on sea defences? What commitment will the Government make to the maintenance of existing sea defences, especially in regard to agricultural land?

Mr. Bottomley: We wish to ensure that we obtain the benefits from spending extra money on sea defences. Where it is not possible costeffectively to protect land, we shall not be able to do so. It strikes me that on the one occasion on which the sea defences were breached, there was a fast response by the drainage service. I think that the farmer concerned has been able to get back into production, although I have not yet revisited him. People should realise that we can spend money only where it produces a return. There is no guarantee that the forces of nature can be tamed even by the best civil engineers.

Paramilitary Actions

9. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been killed or injured in Northern Ireland as a consequence of paramilitary activity since 1969.

Mr. Brooke: Since 1969, 2,804 people have been killed and 32,700 people injured. Four of those deaths have occurred since I last answered questions on 21 June. Constable Harold Beckett and Constable Garry Meyer, both full-time members of the RUC, were murdered as they patrolled the city centre in Belfast. William Sloss was murdered by the Irish People's Liberation Organisation and Martin Hughes by the Ulster Freedom Fighters in sectarian attacks.

However, the police and the Army continue to make important finds of arms and ammunition. They also made a number of significant arrests in recent weeks. In particular, I know the whole House will join me in praising the exemplary courage of the young RUC constable who drove off a heavily armed Provisional IRA gang in Dungannon. But for his quick thinking and bravery, I am sure that he and his colleague would be dead today.

Mr. Alton: I am sure that the House will concur with the sentiments expressed by the Secretary of State. Does he agree with what Dr. Cahal Daly said yesterday that sectarian killings are the product of sick minds and twisted attitudes? He described those actions as loathsome and despicable. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that at some time the House will have to decide that those who pursue the strategy of the armalite and the bomb in one hand and the ballot box in the other will have to forgo the right to stand for election to this Parliament?

Mr. Brooke: I join the hon. Gentleman in endorsing the comments expressed yesterday by Bishop Cahal Daly and I am sure that the whole House would do the same. The

second part of the hon. Gentleman's question related to the proscription of organisations. I keep that matter constantly under review.

Mr. Barry Porter: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time that we listened to half the advice given by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and stopped this pretence of saying that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has achieved any of its fundamental aims? It has not. That emperor has no clothes. I wish my right hon. Friend every success in the discussions, but will not he concede that there is no reason to blame my hon. Friends who represent the Unionist cause on both sides of the House as they have expressed good will towards reaching some agreement. If the talks fail, let us place that blame where it lies, and that is on Dublin.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend has asked a comprehensive question. The question asked by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) perhaps had a conclusion different from that suggested by my hon. Friend. We are more likely to make progress in the talks if we concentrate on looking forward and on the positive aspects rather than questioning the motivation of anyone who is involved in them.

Mr. Hume: In answer to the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) and some other Conservative Members, will the Secretary of State confirm that we will not have lasting peace and stability in Ireland without the full agreement of the Irish Government and all constitutional parties in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: I endorse what the hon. Gentleman says about uniting people of peace and good will to ensure that the terrorist is defeated.

Economy

10. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the state of the Northern Ireland economy and its future prospects.

Mr. Cope: I do not underestimate the longstanding problems of the Northern Ireland economy, but there has been a significant improvement in recent years. The latest figures show that, compared with a year ago, manufacturing output has risen by 5 per cent., the number of employees in employment in March 1990 had risen by nearly 4,000 and it was announced today that the number of unemployed people in June 1990 had fallen by 9,100.

Mr. Hague: Will my right hon. Friend emphasise that today's unemployment figures, which show a fall in male and female unemployment, are part of a continuing and healthy trend? Should not that be a source of encouragement and optimism to everyone inside and outside the Province who believes that it will have a prosperous future, irrespective of its various difficulties, as it increasingly shares in the economic growth of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Cope: I entirely share the sentiments expressed in the last part of my hon. Friend's question and I confirm that the reduction is part of a trend. The unemployment figures announced today were the lowest for just over eight years.

Mr. Molyneaux: Does the Minister agree that the unemployment figures could be further reduced if terrorists stopped destroying businesses, even in their own areas, and if paramilitaries stopped intimidating employers and employees, again in their own areas, while, with typical hypocrisy, complaining of the shortage of jobs?

Mr. Cope: I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman. Terrorists and their activities are most damaging. It is their intention to damage the economy and other aspects of life in Northern Ireland, and they certainly affect the figures that I have given. The greatest boost to the economy of Northern Ireland would be the defeat and ending of terrorism.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Has my right hon. Friend considered the economic success of the Republic of Ireland compared with Northern Ireland and how it has been affected by the decision that it took many years ago to fix the punt to other European currencies, as opposed to the pound floating more freely?

Mr. Cope: As some of the figures that I gave earlier are better than those for the Republic, my hon. Friend might like to reflect on his question. So far as I know, there is no intention to have a separate currency for Northern Ireland.

Shipbuilding

11. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the shipbuilding industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Harland and Wolff was returned to private sector ownership in September last year. I understand that the company's current order book extends into 1993.

Dr. Godman: I am pleased to hear of those developments, and my pleasure will be shared by many of my constituents who have relatives and friends in Northern Ireland. May I press the Minister to resist proposals—offered, I think, by ministerial colleagues—that the European Community shipbuilding intervention fund be further reduced? Similarly, will he urge Harland and Wolff, where it uses those funds, to purchase engines and equipment from manufacturers in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Needham: The very fact that Harland and Wolff is now in the private sector means that almost all aspects of its business are going up: productivity is up, orders are up, and confidence is up. The only thing going down are its losses. Morale is up. That is all due to the fact that Harland and Wolff is out on its own and has a full order book which will last until the middle of the decade.

Further Education

12. **Mr. Dover:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's consultation document on further education.

Dr. Mawhinney: Further education has an important contribution to make to the economic and social life of Northern Ireland. The consultative document "Signposts

for the 90s: A Review of Further Education" highlights the main issues which need to be addressed and identifies a number of ways forward. The consultative period will last until the end of the year and I look forward to receiving the views of the many interested parties.

Mr. Dover: Does the Minister agree that the proposal to allow further education students to study university module courses for two years is revolutionary and innovative and that it will open up the possibility of higher education to many more Northern Ireland students?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is one of a number of proposals that we are seeking to canvass during the consultative period, not least because it would make a particularly significant contribution in Northern Ireland, which no longer has a polytechnic.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I also participated in the deputation from the House which attended on Her Majesty the Queen Mother. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the defeat of inflation demands that, as well as central Government, local authorities must exercise restraint and responsibility in their spending plans? What conclusions does she draw from the fact that North Yorkshire county council, under Conservative control, increased its spending this year by less than any other shire county, yet regularly achieves some of the best exam results in the country; while the actions of high-spending Derbyshire county council, under Labour, have been declared in the High Court to be vindictive, illegal and a flagrant abuse of power?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. Sound financial discipline is crucial to good management control of the economy. I congratulate North Yorkshire county council on its record and especially on its good education record—on a comparatively low community charge, lower than other people's. That shows that it can be done and that it is not the amount spent but the way that taxpayers' and charge payers' money is managed that matters.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister accept that the concern about the family which she expressed in her speech yesterday is widely shared and indeed praiseworthy? Given that concern, can she tell us what she thinks most damages families? Is it the highest mortgage rate in history? Is it the poll tax that has been imposed? Is it the freeze on child benefit, or the abandonment of community care?

The Prime Minister: The greatest support that we can give families in material terms is to keep the economy going so that it produces the highest number of jobs we have ever had in our history, the highest standard of living we have ever had in our history, and the best social services; and, as I said in my speech yesterday, it is to give particular support to lone parent families.

Mr. Kinnock: That reply shows that there is an unbridgeable gap between what the Prime Minister says is her concern about the family and what she is actually prepared to do about it. Does not she understand that the announcement yesterday that the Government are ratting on their pledge to provide help for people who care for disabled and elderly people at home shows contempt for some of the most needy, and certainly some of the most deserving, people in the whole of the land?

The Prime Minister: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that local authorities are spending half as much again on personal social services over and above inflation as they were in 1979. There are 22 per cent. more day-care places, 26 per cent. more home helps and 13 per cent. more meals served to the elderly and disabled. As for the Government support for the elderly in nursing and residential homes, for every £1 Labour spent we are spending £100. Labour Members talk; we deliver the goods.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister explain to the House, and to the millions outside, why the Government are effectively forbidding the necessary help to be given to people who are caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease and other dreadfully disabling diseases, thus saving the community and the taxpayer billions of pounds? Why has the Prime Minister ratted on the promise that she made?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, certain aspects of community care are going ahead. He also knows that—as I have said—the Labour party's record in government of looking after the elderly—*[Interruption.]* Of course Opposition Members do not want to hear about that; they only want to hear the hot air that the right hon. Gentleman pours out. For every £1 that the last Labour Government spent on residential nursing homes for the elderly, this Government are spending £100. We have created the wealth, looked after it well and ensured that it reached some of the people who needed it.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend do all in her power to ensure that the corridors of peace in Angola are opened to allow urgent humanitarian aid to reach all needy Angolans, bearing in mind the terrible famine that is afflicting that country?

The Prime Minister: It is beyond our power to keep those corridors open. As my hon. Friend knows, when we receive urgent requests for humanitarian aid because people are greatly in need of food and water, we usually meet them.

Q2. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Darling: The Prime Minister now says that she is concerned with the family. Why, then, did she block the EC directive that would have given three months' parental leave per child? Have not we something to learn from the West Germans who, in addition to having a very successful

economy, give 12 months' parental leave per child—soon to be increased to 18 months—and, in addition, 14 weeks' paid maternity leave?

The Prime Minister: The draft directive to which the hon. Gentleman refers will not be published till September.

Q3. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Carrington: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in a recent list of the world's top 500 companies, Britain was shown to have the third highest number? We were behind only Japan and the United States of America, and way ahead of our European partners. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this gives the lie to those who never miss an opportunity, either at home or abroad, to run down our industrial performance?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I saw the report: 43 British companies are represented on that list, which is the third best number after the United States and Japan. We should also realise that, of the 50 best-performing companies in the European Community, 28 are British. They are performing well. We have great opportunities for more businesses to be set up under this Government. As my hon. Friend knows 1,700 new businesses a week have been set up this year.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister now regret her support for the barbarians of the Khmer Rouge?

The Prime Minister: As I have told the right hon. Gentleman, we have never supported the Khmer Rouge. What we did support, along with many other people, was an alliance under Prince Sihanouk which happened to include the Khmer Rouge, for a seat in the United Nations. We said that we would look at that again along with our other permanent member partners in the United Nations.

The right hon. Gentleman should also remember that a goodly number of the Hun Sen Government of Cambodia were also members of the Khmer Rouge.

Q4. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 19 July 1990.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Perhaps I may start the fraternal batting by asking my right hon. Friend whether she is aware that it takes between 13 and 15 years for a major road bypass scheme, such as that announced in Newbury today, to be approved and completed. In view of the importance of the road programme to our nation's economy, may I suggest that it would be wholly beneficial to find a way of reducing cumbersome and long-drawn-out planning procedures and enable new roads to be completed more swiftly?

The Prime Minister: I have a good deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend. The problem is to balance the need for public consultation and the right to make objections with the need to get on and build the roads. The longer it takes, the more the price goes up. A planning Bill is expected in the next Session of this Parliament. We hope and believe that it will contain measures to enable higher compensation to be given to those whose property is compulsorily purchased. That, too, should help to speed up the process.

Mr. Maginnis: No doubt the Prime Minister was dismayed by the Supreme Court ruling in Dublin in the McGimpsey and McGimpsey *v.* Ireland case where it was found that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was complementary to the territorial claim enshrined in articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. What will the Prime Minister do to support the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in his efforts to bring political peace to Northern Ireland and overcome the obstructiveness of the Government of the Irish Republic?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has the full support of Her Majesty's Government and, I believe, of most people in seeking a good basis for the peoples of Northern Ireland to go ahead together to find a better basis for government in the Province. He has our full support, and I hope that he will be successful in his efforts.

Q5. **Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 19 July 1990.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the current strength of sterling on the world markets is further evidence of the correctness of her Government's economic policies? Is not it clear that the people of Britain can look forward to lower inflation and falling interest rates in the months ahead, now that the difficulties of the 1987 crash have been finally exorcised?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is a great vote of confidence in the policies of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. A strong pound will exert downward pressure on unit wage costs which will mean that our goods will become more competitive and we can continue to increase our exports. We prefer a strong pound, whether in or outside the exchange rate mechanism, or—to put it the other way round—whether outside or eventually in the exchange rate mechanism.

Q6. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 19 July 1990.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brown: The Prime Minister's Government encourage state schools and hospitals to opt out. Those are spurious rights, of course, but what about Scotland? Is not it entitled to opt out of the system, too? Is not it entitled to its own Parliament, or is that extending democracy too far? If it is not, she should have a word with Mr. Gorbachev because he will argue for self-determination. He has said that much.

The Prime Minister: Hospitals in Scotland may become self governing, but that is not equivalent to opting out of the health service; it is a different way of being governed within it. The hon. Gentleman is aware that it takes longer for schools in Scotland to opt out, because, whereas all

schools in England have school boards or courts of governors, that is not the case in Scotland. We had to set up those boards initially before we could proceed to the next stage.

Q7. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Conway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the county of Shropshire there are more than 2,000 beds in private nursing homes and homes for the elderly? Is not it staggering that this Government have spent more than £990 million supporting the elderly in those homes, as opposed to the £10 million spent under the previous Labour Government? Are not their weasel words ultimately their downfall?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. I am grateful to my hon. Friend as that is the mesage I have been trying to get across to the Opposition during this Question Time. We have talked rather less than them, but spent a lot more on looking after those who are sick and ill. The benefits for carers have also increased enormously under the Government. Spending on invalid care allowance, for example, has increased from £8 million in 1979 to more than £180 million now. They talk, we act.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother

3.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have to tell the House that today, together with other right hon. Members, I attended upon Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, to deliver the House's message of congratulation on her 90th birthday—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] Her Majesty made the following reply:

"Members of the House of Commons:

I thank you from my heart for your kind message which I am delighted to receive. I am, indeed, most touched that you should have come here to Clarence House in the midst of your many commitments to wish me well on my birthday.

To me it seems just the other day that in this same room I accepted your greetings on a previous anniversary, and I am delighted that, ten years on, there should be here, today, four members of that delegation.

One of the consolations of growing older is to find pleasure and interest in the younger generation, whose qualities became very evident to me during the 25 years that I was Chancellor of the University of London.

My belief in the fundamental good sense, wisdom and integrity of those in whose hands lie the destinies of our country is as firm now as it was in the long years of the Second World War.

Throughout my life I have seen changes and developments, new patterns of behaviour and fresh outlooks—much has been transformed but the loyalty and devotion of our people to the Crown remains constant.

It is my prayer that with God's help our country will go forward from strength to strength in the years ahead.

And now, once again, may I tell you how touched I am by your message of good wishes at this time."

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Business of the House

3.32 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): May I ask the Leader of the House what is the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Yes, Sir. The business of the House for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 23 JULY—Motion for the summer Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill.

TUESDAY 24 JULY—Opposition day (18th allotted day, 2nd part). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "Government mismanagement of the economy".

Remaining stages of the Contracts (Applicable Law) Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Orders.

Motion on the EEC Merger Control (Consequential Provisions) Regulations.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 25 JULY—Remaining stages of the Courts and Legal Services Bill *[Lords]*.

THURSDAY 26 JULY—Debates on the motion for the Adjournment.

The House may also be asked to consider any Lords amendments which may be received.

It may also be for the convenience of the House to know that the business of the House for the first week after the summer adjournment will be as follows:

MONDAY 15 OCTOBER—Debate on financial services and the single European market on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

The Chairman of Ways and Means is expected to name opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER—Progress on remaining stages of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion relating to health authorities regulations.

WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER—Completion of remaining stages of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

Remaining stages of the Caldey Island Bill.

The Chairman of Ways and Means is expected to name opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied.

FRIDAY 19 OCTOBER—There will be a debate on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, subject for debate to be announced.

Mr. Grocott: Following this week's price rises, first for water and yesterday for telephone bills, may we have an early debate on the way in which privatised monopolies are hitting the consumer? In particular, may we have a debate on the way in which former Cabinet Ministers, well paid, are advising those monopolies?

May we have a debate on the family, particularly following yesterday's crass sense of timing by the Prime Minister, when she made a statement on the family on

[Mr. Grocott]

precisely the day when the Government withdrew from important pledges that they had made, particularly to families with sick and elderly relatives? I hope that the right hon. Lady will be present for that debate because it will be interesting to hear her views.

In regard to poll tax, when shall we have statements on Scotland and Wales? That information should be available —the statements should be made today—and it is unacceptable that those matters are not being dealt with today.

We appreciate why the Government are anxious to rush for the recess, following a year in which they have suffered a steady loss of credibility through by-elections and Cabinet Ministers, but those are important matters and we need time to debate them.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I dare say that the hon. Gentleman will find time to take part in the debate on the motion for the Adjournment. The first topic that he raised will apparently be germane to the motion selected by the Opposition for debate next Tuesday afternoon. I hope that Opposition Members will then pay tribute to the way in which privatised industries—former public monopolies —are achieving rising profits and immense expansions of efficiency, with prices falling in real terms, a welcome change from what preceded the present state of affairs.

As for the family, I am glad that the hon. Gentleman noticed the importance of the speech made yesterday by the Prime Minister. I shall bear in mind his request for a debate on that and the many topics on which my right hon. Friend touched.

As for Scotland and Wales, the Secretaries of State will be making an announcement before the House rises for the summer Adjournment.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider holding an urgent debate on the behaviour expected of aspiring statesmen when travelling abroad? Or does he believe that the advice given during that debate would be totally ignored?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope that any such debate would emphasise the word "aspiring" rather than "statesmen".

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Leader of the House clarify what he said about an announcement by the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales about community care and the community charge? Does he mean that there will be an opportunity for hon. Members who represent Scottish and Welsh constituencies to question the respective Secretaries of State at the Dispatch Box? If that is not what he means, will he agree to have a debate in the first week we return on the proposals of the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which will be more necessary than ever given the way in which Scottish and Welsh hon. Members have been treated this week over community care and the community charge?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman need not get so worried about the matter. It is customary for the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland to make statements following a statement by the Secretary of State for the Environment. Each of them will be making statements before the House rises, when they can be questioned in the ordinary way.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): May I join the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) in asking for an early debate on the subject of the family, because the speech of the Prime Minister will be particularly welcome to those many taxpayers who have been outraged in recent years at having to subsidise the fornication of irresponsible fathers?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend puts the point with classic and characteristic clarity. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will welcome his support for her speech.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is not it a fact that because of difficulties with the computer, unless we make a decision on the recommendation of the Select Committee on Procedure on questions before July, there is no chance that it will come into operation next Session? Would not it be wise at least to do that business before the end of July?

What has happened to the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests on the delicate issue relating to the Select Committee on Defence? Is it satisfactory that that matter festers and festers?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, the last question is one for the Select Committee itself rather than for me. I agree about the importance of making the changes recommended on questions. I hope that the necessary motions will be tabled before the House rises.

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): Has my right hon. and learned Friend seen early-day motion 1281, entitled "Sexual Offences Bill and Procedure for Private Members' Bills"?

[That this House notes with concern that the Third Reading of the Private Members' Bill the Sexual Offences Bill, introduced by the hon. Member for Streatham, was blocked, despite the fact that it received an unopposed Second Reading, was unamended both in Committee and Report Stage, and had the support of both front benches and almost universal support in the House; and therefore urges that the procedures for Private Members' Bills should be reviewed in the light of this occurrence.]

Does he agree that the time may have come for a review of the procedure for private Members' Bills? Will he be prepared to look favourably on an amendment embodying this vital legislation to any relevant Home Office legislation in the next Session?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: While I can understand my hon. Friend's interest in the subject of that Bill, I cannot give any undertaking about its attachment to any other legislation that may be before the House next Session. Procedure for private Members' Bills is a matter for the Procedure Committee and I shall draw the matter to its attention.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a debate next week before the House rises on the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty? The Leader of the House will be aware that the Government signed that treaty. Yet they are blatantly in breach of clause 6, by embarking on the £10 billion Trident nuclear missile programme. In a review conference, non-nuclear nation after non-nuclear nation will denounce this country for breaching the treaty while at the same time expecting

non-nuclear countries to remain non-nuclear. Is not that pure hypocrisy and outrageous? Is it not time that we had a debate on that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not accept any of the hon. Gentleman's points. I am surprised that he advanced them this afternoon as he is likely to have a debate on that subject in the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend for an early debate next week on early-day motion 1136, on religious education in maintained schools?

[That this House, recalling that agreed syllabuses for religious education in maintained schools must now statutorily reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain, believing that religious education in schools should respect the integrity and identity of each religion studied within the agreed syllabus, and should in turn promote respect, understanding, and tolerance for those adhering to different faiths, further believing that thematic teaching approaches which blur the distinctions between religions tend to undermine their coherence and should be avoided, and recognising that for good educational reasons only two, or at the very most three, religions can be studied in any worthwhile depth within the normal constraints imposed on religious education by schools' weekly working timetables, urges the Secretary of State for Education and Science to monitor, assess, and if necessary, correct local education authorities' syllabuses in the field to ensure the proper reflection in those syllabuses of the ideals spelt out above; and further urges the Secretary of State to issue supplementary guidance to local education authorities on the subject.]

It would be particularly relevant to Ealing where pupils are required to follow a syllabus which is supposed to be Christian-centred, but which does not mention God, the Bible or Jesus himself and which was drawn up by the Labour council. Urgent action is needed and the House should debate the matter.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand my hon. Friend's concern about the matter if the state of affairs is as he describes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has already received representations about locally agreed syllabuses for religious education and he is considering them.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): What arrangements is the Leader of the House making to allow the House to vote on whether hospitals should opt out of the national health service and become self-governing trusts? I ask that because in Bradford, where four hospitals are due to opt out of the national health service, Yorkshire regional health authority has concentrated the phoney consultation period during the summer months of July, August and September, knowing that most people will be away on holiday and that most organisations do not meet. There will be little opportunity for any community test of opinion. What does the Leader of the House intend to do to enable the Secretary of State for Health to be told clearly that there is massive opposition in Bradford and elsewhere to hospitals opting out of the national health service?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not see why I should take great trouble to give the hon. Gentleman an opportunity to amplify or to represent his views when they are founded on so many misconceptions. We are concerned not with hospitals opting out of the national health service but with arrangements in accordance with the legislation approved by the House for hospitals to have self-governing status within the health service. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make that well understood in his own constituency.

Sir Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): In view of the confusion surrounding Sunday trading, which has persisted since the failure of Government legislation some years ago, and of yesterday's court decision, is not there an argument for a further debate, to test the opinion of the House, and through it the opinion of the country, on any change to Sunday trading laws—or are we to presume that there will be no further legislative proposals in that regard during the lifetime of this Parliament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is 30 years almost to the day since I first published an article on that very topic under the simple heading, "Set the shopper free." It seems to have been a long time maturing. My hon. Friend raises a point of concern, but a single debate is not likely to resolve the areas of continuing disagreement between the various parties. If it were possible to secure agreement, the Government would certainly be willing to give sympathetic consideration to making legislative progress.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1275, signed by 91 hon. Members:

[That this House expresses its extreme concern at the apparent intention of the Hong Kong authorities to continue trading in elephant ivory after the reservation ends at midnight on 17th July; recalls the many undertakings given by Ministers that the trade would end on the appointed day; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to keep their promises to the House by instructing the Hong Kong authorities to cease all trade and not to defy the CITES ban.]

The right hon. and learned Gentleman will recall the concern expressed by hon. Members about the loophole that the Hong Kong authorities were clearly intending to exploit, whereby the trade in ivory could continue under the guise of personal effects after the reservation ended at midnight on 17 July. Is the Leader of the House able to say whether that loophole has been closed? If it has not, may we have an early debate on that important subject?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman's interest in that topic is strong, so I am not surprised that he has returned to that theme. As was made clear by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office in a parliamentary answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans),

"The Hong Kong Government have already enacted legislation to implement the CITES ban on international commercial trade in ivory. The legislation will come into effect when our reservation is withdrawn on 18 July 1990 . . . Hong Kong legislation now fully reflects the CITES convention."
—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. *553*.]

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): As the laws that we pass in this country apply both to Scotland and to the United Kingdom, and given that we are so closely allied as to have in the United Kingdom a Lord Chancellor who is a Scotsman, will my right hon. and learned Friend ask the

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

Attorney-General, when he comes to speak on the Courts and Legal Services Bill next Wednesday, why the unacceptable parts of the proposed law reforms are to be dropped in Scotland but not in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall certainly bring that point to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) will recall the premise of his own question and that the arrangements for the constitution of this country make provision for different laws to be made for Scotland than for other parts of the United Kingdom. They may make legitimate debating points, but it would be remarkable if they were always coincident in every respect.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House spend some time during the recess thinking about and walking carefully around this building, with early-day motion 1307 in his hand?

[That his House believes that the Palace of Westminster should be made fully accessible for people with disabilities; calls for study to be made of the necessary improvements to the entrance, toilets, telephone and refreshment facilities and the installation of induction loops where appropriate; and further believes that visitors to the Palace of Westminster should not have to suffer the indignity of waiting outside to be admitted, being unable to get any refreshments without the presence of a member.]

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman first review the appalling provision for disabled people who visit or work in this building, and the lack of wheelchair ramps, induction loops, and documents written in Braille? Many people also experience difficulty hearing properly from the Floor of the Chamber and the Strangers Gallery. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider also the lack of facilities for visitors, who in the winter months are forced to queue outside in the rain and are unable to obtain any refreshments unless they are accompanied by a Member of Parliament.

The facilities here are, frankly, archaic and a disgrace to the country. It ill behoves the House to pass legislation requiring adequate facilities for the disabled in public buildings throughout the country if such facilities are not provided here—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] This happens to be a very important matter. As the Leader of the House has not announced a subject for debate on 19 October, perhaps he will bring forward proposals as the subject of such a debate on that Friday morning.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has the almost unique capacity to make a significant, important and worthwhile case sound almost positively unattractive. All the matters that he has raised have been and are almost continuously the subject of consideration and arrangements have been improved recently as a result of recommendations made by the Services Committee. The arrangements under consideration by Sir Robin Ibbs may help us to improve the way in which we address some matters. It is also necessary to acknowledge that in a building of this kind and antiquity it is not possible to make every change that we might desire for the benefit of the disabled because of the sheer physical construction of the building. But the hon. Gentleman's case deserves to be considered more sympathetically than he suggests.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider arranging a debate on the structure of local government, particularly as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment yesterday announced his response to the Boundary Commission's proposal for a unitary authority on the Isle of Wight, stating that he acknowledged the force of the arguments but that there was no prospect of primary legislation during this Session of Parliament? However, I understand today that the deputy leaders of Isle of Wight county council have announced that they are to seek a private Bill to put that proposal into effect, and it would be helpful if the House had an opportunity to discuss the restructuring of local government into unitary authorities throughout the United Kingdom.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend's constituency interests may well be represented by the private Bill that is now in prospect, but I do not know how widely shared would be his enthusiasm for a far-ranging, comprehensive reconstruction of local government. I suspect that there would be limited enthusiasm for that. At all events, his request for a debate will have been heard by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment who is sitting beside me.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the Leader of the House follow up the point made by the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field)? One hears that the Local Government Boundary Commission is making the most incredible proposals for changes between district councils. Not only will they have profound effects on parliamentary constituencies, which is one thing, but the commission seems to be erecting its own ideas about the divisions between districts—for example, using motorways—and ignoring people's feelings. May we have a debate because there will be great anger in the House at reports coming from the centre of London, which do not understand what is going on outside?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know from my experience that it is important that the Local Government Boundary Commission should be sensitive to particularly expressed local anxieties and should not place too much reliance on its own inspired approach to topics. In that spirit, I shall bring the right hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for him to pass on to the commission.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time next week to discuss the activities of the Anti-Poll Tax Union, one of the leaders of which, from my constituency, has called for the magistrates to be kidnapped?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Such a matter may well deserve to be investigated by the law enforcement authorities. It is clear that that union's activities are contributing to additional costs for fellow citizens to the disadvantage of our society.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Can the Leader of the House give a commitment that the two new Committees that will replace the Select Committee on Social Services will be up and running at the beginning of the new Session?

If he cannot give such a commitment now, will he be able to do so in the form of a letter to the Committee before we rise for the summer recess?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hesitate to give a precise commitment on timing now, but the hon. Gentleman knows that we are committed to the division of the Committee and I shall make sure that my answer is communicated in an appropriate form as soon as possible.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for an early debate on the Post Office's annual report and the poor service that it provides in north-west London? Does he agree that such difficulties are more likely to be defeated by the introduction of competition than by the maintenance of a state monopoly?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the philosophy that appeals to my hon. Friend and I shall bring his point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that missing from the Report stage of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill when we consider it in the first week after the recess will be the legislative proposal to reduce substantially the period of consideration in divorce actions because Opposition Members on the Bill's Standing Committee forced the Secretary of State for Scotland to drop it? Would the Leader of the House like to thank those Opposition Members because, had not that happened, the Prime Minister would have been in the ludicrous position of saying yesterday that there should be an extended period for consideration in divorce cases, yet legislating for a shorter period?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Many factors need to be considered on such a matter, including the fact that that part of the legislation was originally proposed by the Scottish Law Commission. No doubt the House will be ready to deal with the Bill on Report.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Can my right hon. and learned Friend find time to discuss early-day motion 1247, which was originally tabled by me, but which is now supported by my most distinguished hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving)?

[That this House notes that the phenomenal success of the House of Commons gift shop has nevertheless produced congestion in the access to two of the Commons's most popular restaurants, the Members' and the Strangers' cafeterias; and urges the re-location of this popular facility within Westminster Hall, where shopping facilities have traditionally existed, and which is conveniently placed at the end of the line of route usually taken in conducted tours by honourable Members' constituents.]

The motion calls for the gift shop to be relocated from the downstairs corridor to Westminster Hall. Its phenomenal success in its present location prevents the progress of people who are in pursuit of pies and Pepsis in the restaurant at the end of the corridor.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that the House will be grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to the success of the gift shop, which contributes substantially to the trading success of the Refreshment Department. Sensible questions need to be considered about its location, and I shall see that that is done in the context of the space audit for the whole House.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has there yet been any discussion in the House of Commons Commission about the wages paid to people in the Refreshment Department? Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept the proposition, which I put months ago, that hon. Members should pay more for their food so that people in the Dining Rooms can be paid more?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will recollect that the Member responsible for answering on behalf of the Commission, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), answered a question on that topic on Monday and drew attention to the well-established arrangements for determining the pay of those who work for the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In view of the pressure of time, hon. Members should ask questions only about the business that has been announced. I shall call those who were here for the business statement.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): That brings me back to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. I am somewhat puzzled by the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) in relation to the fact that it seems clear that there is a distinction in principle between what is happening in Scotland and what is happening in England. I am aware that there is a difference between Scottish and English law.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This must be about next week's business.

Mr. Porter: It is indeed, Mr. Speaker. The Government have accepted that in Scotland the lenders, that is the banks and building societies, cannot represent the borrower, although that is not the case in England. May we have an early debate on that, either tied up with a debate on English law or within the context of the Scottish Bill, I care not which? The principle is exactly the same.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The debates in the first week of our return from the recess should provide an opportunity for those issues to be raised.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Would the Leader of the House consider the fact that between now and our return from the recess local authorities will try to come to terms with poll tax capping and will have assessed the damage to local authority services and to our constituents? Does he agree that it would be wise to have a debate as soon as we return so that the House can look at the assessment of that damage and at any litigation that has taken place as a result of the statement later today by the Secretary of State for the Environment?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not propose to anticipate my right hon. Friend's statement.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, that any

[Rev. William McCrea]

alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement must have the consent of the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland? Bearing in mind that criterion and the fact that the Anglo-Irish Agreement as at present enforced does not have the consent of the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland, is not it about time that the House had a full-scale debate on the agreement?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House had an opportunity to consider closely related questions during the full-day's debate on Northern Ireland the week before last.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House be more than his usual charitable self, and tell us whether on any—and preferably on which—of the four days available for debate next week the Secretary of State for Scotland will make a statement on community care and the proposals for the community charge, or will we have to accept a written answer to a question tabled by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart)? If we are to discuss how to run a business properly, could we have a little more respect for hon. Members, especially those in opposition, and have some clear answers to our questions?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: For the third time this afternoon —and it may be that on the two previous occasions the hon. Gentleman was talking too much to listen——

Mr. Douglas: Come on.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Once again, the hon. Gentleman cannot stop talking long enough to listen to my answer. I say for the third time that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making a statement on that very topic——

Mr. Douglas: When?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Before the House rises.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May I support the plea of my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) for legislation to enable local authorities to become unitary authorities—not to force a uniform change of local government across the country, but to allow areas that wish to choose a form of unitary authority to do so? There is a great deal of sense in that.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Without commenting on the case for unitary authorities, I acknowledge that there has always been a good case for a more discriminating and variable pattern of approach to local government reform, of the sort originally available under the Local Government Boundary Commission, but which disappeared towards the end of the 1950s.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Following last night's decision on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, supported by 200 Conservative Members, and the dramatic effect that that will have on the coalfield communities, will the Leader of the House find time before the House rises for its summer recess for a full and frank debate on the needs of those communities?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not anticipate an opportunity arising for a debate of that sort, but the Bill has been extensively debated in the House over many months.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Reverting to the earlier question on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill, which will be debated in the week that we return, my right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that loyal supporters of the Prime Minister and her policies were also opposed to the divorce proposals. They were not Government proposals, but those recommended by an outside body. Have not we saved the House a great many problems by having those proposals removed?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I dare say that that point can be made during the debate in the week that we return.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Leader of the House outlined the timetable for the further deliberation on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. May I point out that, as a member of the Standing Committee, I have been deeply concerned about the poor management of the Bill? It has meant that four new clauses that I tabled, which had as their objective the better protection of children in sexual or physical abuse cases, will not now be heard. Does he agree that we need a debate on the protection of children when they are giving evidence in such cases?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not my business to agree on the merit of that proposal, but there will be up to two full days for discussion of various aspects of the matter when the House returns in October.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When the Leader of the House replies to the Adjournment debate on Monday, will he refer to the article in the Prime Minister's favourite tabloid on Monday of this week, which suggested that he was about to be sacked?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question should be about the business next week. Please concentrate on that.

Mr. Skinner: Next week, the Leader of the House will be answering the Adjournment debate. I am asking whether he intends to reply to the article in the Prime Minister's favourite tabloid. I want to give him some advice. If ex-Cabinet Ministers are sacked, they obtain fewer directorships than those who leave on their own accord for family reasons. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is to get a directorship, he should go now.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not about business next week.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall answer the debate and not newspaper articles, least of all those that attract the attention of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): After visiting Glenfield district hospital in my constituency this morning, I ask the Leader of the House to arrange for a debate on the disastrous crumbling of the national health service in Leicestershire, where wards are closing, staff are struggling to provide services and some patients are waiting more than two years for an appointment with a consultant. As that hospital has a reduced budget of less than £26 million and it needs £3·6 million just for maintenance, surely that scandalous situation should be debated in the House, where hon. Members of all parties take exactly the same view.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows, because he has raised the matter on more than one occasion, that the allocation of money to the Leicestershire health district is a matter for Trent regional health authority. The district received significantly more money this year, amounting to a real terms increase in its budget of nearly 3 per cent. I have no doubt that he and/or some of his colleagues will find an opportunity to return to the matter in the Adjournment debate next week.

Adjournment Motions

Mr. Speaker: I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 26 July, up to 10 Members may raise, with Ministers, subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Local Government Finance

4.6 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): With permission Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's proposals for the local authority financial settlement for England for 1991-92 and about the review of the community charge. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales will be making separate announcements about the arrangements in those countries in due course. I apologise at the outset for the inevitable length of my remarks.

In recent years there has been substantial growth in local authority spending. In the current year, local authorities are planning expenditure of £36·4 billion. That is an increase of 13½ per cent. over the comparable figure for 1989-90, and that came on top of a 9 per cent. increase over the previous year. So spending has grown by very nearly one quarter in only two years.

Local authorities, like other public sector bodies, should play their part in restraining expenditure if we are to maintain economic progress and limit the burden of national and local taxation.

As part of the settlement, the Government have to make an estimate of the total amount which it would be appropriate for local authorities to spend. That figure is known as total standard spending. From it is derived a standard spending assessment for each authority, representing the amount it should cost to provide a standard level of service.

For next year I propose to set total standard spending at £39 billion, compared with £32·8 billion for this year. This is over 7 per cent. more than likely expenditure this year. £39 billion should adequately fund local authority services next year, taking account of the additional pressures and burdens local government will face, and the scope for improved efficiency. Spending above that amount should not be necessary.

Most local authority spending is financed by Government grants and the business rate. This year those funds, known as aggregate external finance, were set at £23·1 billion, compared with about £10·5 billion from charge payers after allowing for rebates and transitional relief. I propose that the amount of aggregate external finance for 1991-92 should be £26·050 billion. This is an increase of very close to £3 billion or 12·8 per cent. above the amount being provided this year. This significant increase will necessarily mean that less can be afforded for other Government spending programmes next year. I expect authorities to pass on the benefit to their charge payers in their bills, rather than increase spending too much once again. As I shall make clear shortly, I shall be prepared to use my capping powers to ensure that that happens.

Proposals for the distribution of grant, including any changes which may be made to the methodology for standard spending assessments, will be announced in the autumn in the usual way. Earlier this year, I made it clear that I would be willing to consider new evidence about the way the standard spending assessments are calculated.

This year, with many councils overspending, the average charge after capping was £357. That, alas, is the position from which we will start next year. If local authorities play their part, as we have played ours by increasing external finance by nearly £3 billion, the average charge next year should be close to the community charge for standard spending of about £379. The majority of areas have charges below that figure this year, and many will benefit because no authority will have to pay into the safety net next year. Efficient authorities should be able to set charges below this figure, as should authorities who will still be receiving grant from the safety net.

Those local authorities which are not prepared to budget sensibly should know that I shall be prepared to make vigorous use of my powers for charge capping next year. As Secretary of State, I have power to cap in two ways. I can cap a council's excessive budget, or cap excessive increases from one year to the next. This year it was impracticable to use the latter power. Next year, I shall not hesitate, where authorities budget above the standard spending assessment—or SSA—for 1991-92, to use either or both powers to protect charge payers.

In deciding what is an excessive increase in an authority's budget, I propose to distinguish between those authorities which budget well above their SSA and those which spend above SSA by a smaller margin. I would expect to see smaller annual increases for the higher spenders, because the more profligate the authority the greater the scope for savings. As it would be the first time that authorities were capped on the basis of excessive budget increases, I have decided specifically for this year to give an advance indication of the proposed criteria for capping so that local authorities may take them into account in reaching their budgeting decisions.

In summary, while I would expect most authorities to budget at or below their SSAs, I intend to use my powers to protect charge payers. I want to ensure that the substantial amount of extra money contributed by national taxpayers to local government is not wasted in much higher spending but helps to keep charges to reasonable levels.

I now turn to our review of the community charge. The basic principle that all local people should make some direct contribution to the cost of local services through a charge levied on almost all adults has been accepted increasingly widely, but it would be surprising if a change of this magnitude did not require some adjustments in its second year of operation.

We have received many constructive suggestions from hon. Members and others. My proposals concern the standard community charge, non-domestic rating, the area safety net, the transitional relief scheme, the administration of the charge and improvements in accountability.

An issue which has given rise to a great deal of concern is the standard community charge. This charge applies where domestic property is no one's sole or main residence. It is right that owners of such properties should contribute towards the cost of local services. We have given local authorities a wide discretion in setting multipliers for the various classes of standard charge payer for the year ahead. It is disappointing that many have not used this discretion sensibly. There are many people, for example, who are required as a condition of their job to live in a particular property. They quite naturally wish to maintain another property which they would regard as their home, even though it is not their sole or main residence. The law allowed local authorities to set out a different approach to these cases, and I regret that many local authorities did not do so.

I therefore propose a number of changes for next year so as to reduce the maximum standard charge which local authorities can levy in a number of exceptional cases. Among those who may benefit are people such as clergy men, service men and some teachers who are required as a condition of their job to live in a particular property; people who have houses with an empty "granny flat"; people who find themselves paying a standard charge when their home is empty following repossession; people who have an empty flat over a shop which it would be difficult to let for security or other reasons; students who face a reduced personal charge, but who can face a double charge if they own a home elsewhere; people whose homes are empty because they have gone to look after a relative or friend, or to be looked after; and farm owners who have empty dwellings on their land which, because of planning restrictions, can be occupied only by agricultural workers.

We are also proposing to help people who are having difficulty selling a property, either on a move or after they have inherited it, by extending the period during which it is subject to a zero charge. Full details of all these changes are set out in a consultation paper published today.

These and other proposed changes will, I hope, be widely welcomed. Subject to consultation, we propose to bring forward regulations which will come into force before the end of 1990 so that authorities can give effect to these changes from 1 April 1991.

There has been concern about the position of owners of small businesses who live "over the shop". They pay rates on their business property, but they are, of course, also liable to pay the community charge. That is not in fact an anomaly: all adults have to pay a personal charge irrespective of where they live, and rates are paid on all business property. It would therefore be inappropriate to change the fundamental liability for either the community charge or the business rate for people who happen to live on their business premises. Like other businesses, they may qualify for transitional protection against large increases in rate bills and, like other former domestic ratepayers, they may be eligible for community charge transitional relief. However, I recognise that this group of businesses may need more time to adapt to the higher bills which they face under the new system and I propose to amend the business rate transitional arrangements, for what are called small composite hereditaments, so that from 1991-92 annual increases in the business rate will be limited to 10 per cent. in real terms instead of the current maximum of 15 per cent. That will help the occupiers of 95,000 properties in England.

There has also been concern about the liability for non-domestic rates of people who provide bed-and-breakfast accommodation in their own homes. The present exemption for people who make accommodation available for fewer than 100 days a year has caused some difficulty. We therefore plan to change this rule from 1 April next year. We will shortly issue a consultation paper canvassing a range of options based on the amount of accommodation which the household proposes to make available rather than the time for which it is available.

These are the main changes to the community charge and non-domestic rates. I am also proposing a number of minor changes, designed for the most part to improve the administration of the charge by local authorities. These are also included in the consultation paper which is being sent to local authorities today. Copies are in the Library and the Vote Office.

I also have in mind improvements to the community charge bill. The contribution of individual authorities to high charges is not clear enough on the face of the bill, and charge payers are inclined to think the council whose name appears on the top of the bill is responsible for the whole of any excessive spending.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Many hon. Members are interested in the statement and are anxious to follow it. It is difficult to hear when hon. Members make comments from sedentary positions.

Mr. Patten: I shall therefore be proposing changes to ensure that the respective contributions of precepting and charging authorities to over or underspending are shown much more clearly. This will increase accountability. I propose to make——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): This would not be necessary if it was not for you lot——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who is shouting and pointing across the Gangway, that it is very bad behaviour. He should know better.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is no reason to raise a point of order, just because I have called the hon. Member to order. Please desist.

Mr. Douglas: He is sponsored by Gilbert and Sullivan.

Mr. Patten: I propose to make an alteration to the area safety net. The safety net is designed to protect charge payers in those areas where the ending of cross subsidies under the old rating system caused the largest changes.

As the House will know, in 1991-92 gaining areas will not have to contribute to the area safety net, and this will enable 20 million charge payers to benefit by up to £75. I expect the authorities concerned to ensure that this benefit is passed on to charge payers, and is not swallowed up in higher spending. For those people in areas receiving the most support from the safety net, which is paid for from the Exchequer, I propose that support should be withdrawn more slowly than previously proposed, at a maximum rate of £25 per adult per year. This will help almost 3·5 million people living in 25 areas where the support received in 1990-91 was more than £100 per adult. This could be worth up to £28 a year for the charge payers affected.

Finally, I propose a substantial increase in comunity charge transitional relief in 1991-92. The transitional relief scheme was designed to help former ratepayers, and pensioners or disabled people who were not ratepayers, who faced significant increases in their bills as a result of the change to the new system.

I do not propose, as some have suggested, to change the basis of calculation to take account of actual charges set by local authorities. That would merely channel extra help to the areas where authorities have increased spending fastest. I propose changes which will, none the less, help those most affected by the switch from the rates to the community charge—typically, people who lived in a property with a low rateable value.

[Mr. Patten]

The improvements will more than double the amount of relief to be given in 1991-92 from the planned level of £260 million to £570 million. This is an increase of £310 million. I propose to distribute this extra help by requiring authorities to calculate relief in 1991-92 so that most households face no more than an increase of £2 a week because of the structural change from rates to the community charge. In other words, the threshold will be cut from £3 to £2. I also propose to postpone the phasing out of the relief for two years and to extend the scheme by two years to 1994-95. In all other respects, the scheme in 1991-92 will be unchanged. It will continue to be based on assumed charges for 1990-91, and will apply where people stay in the same home.

These changes will mean that every household receiving transitional relief at present will not only keep that relief in full next year but will see it increased by £52. Pensioners and disabled people who were not former ratepayers will also have an extra £52 of relief in their own right. On top of this, postponing the withdrawal of relief will be worth up to £13 in 1991-92 to everybody already entitled to relief this year. Many couples, instead of losing £26, will gain £52. In other words, as a result of these changes they will be £78 a year better off than they would otherwise have been. About 7·5 million people will gain in this way.

Furthermore, the lowering of the threshold will bring almost another 4 million people into transitional relief for the first time. These are people who lost between £2 and £3 a week as a direct result of the change to the new system. They will gain up to £52 a household. These changes will require amendments to the regulations which will be brought forward in the autumn. My officials will be discussing the administrative implications with the local authority associations.

The settlement I have proposed envisages 12·8 per cent. more support from Government grant and business rates towards local authority spending. That is generous by any measure, reflecting a substantial increase in real terms. If authorities budget sensibly, the average community charge in England should be close to the community charge for standard spending of about £379. But I can assure the House that if they do not I will use my powers to protect charge payers from excessive demands. I expect local authorities to set prudent budgets, so that the extra grant being provided goes to help charge payers through moderate charges, and not to boost spending.

The changes I have announced to transitional relief will benefit an extra 4 million people on top of the 7·5 million who already receive relief. They will represent a further £310 million of help on top of the previously planned £260 million for the relief scheme in 1991-92. Among those who will benefit will be elderly and disabled people who qualify for extra help under the current scheme. Almost 3·5 million people will benefit from the changes to the safety net. Many individuals and small businesses will benefit from the proposed changes in the rules concerning second homes, composite hereditaments, and bed and breakfast.

My announcement today means substantially more relief to those who most need help in the changeover to the community charge. It means a realistic financial settlement for local authorities. I believe that we have played our part in helping to smooth the introduction of this major reform. Now it is up to local authorities to play their part.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): That statement is a double admission of failure which will disappoint many hon. Members on both sides of the House, and many millions of people outside as well. It is an admission, first, that the poll tax is and has been a disaster; and secondly, that it is a disaster from which nothing can be salvaged. The statement leaves the poll tax where it has always been: unfair in principle, unworkable in practice and fatally flawed.

Is not the message for the poll tax payer that no relief is in sight, and that for the majority, the bills will go up sharply yet again next year? Why should anyone rely on the Secretary of State's estimate of average poll tax bills, when he was so hopelessly and spectacularly wrong last time round? Is not his estimate for this year in any event more than £100 higher than his similar estimate for last year? Even the changes to the transitional relief scheme leave it still based on the same fairy-tale figures which have already meant that it is no more than a sham and a charade for millions of people. Will the Secretary of State confirm that, because the transitional relief scheme is still to be calculated on assumed rather than real figures it will provide no help to many poll tax payers who will be much more than £2 a week worse off?

Is not the message for local authorities from the Secretary of State's statement that they are again to be short-changed by the Government, that their independence is to be further eroded, and that, even after taking account of the shameful betrayal of those who pinned their hopes on community care, services will again have to be cut?

Has the Secretary of State learnt nothing from the disastrous experience of the past 12 months? Does he not recognise that it was his and his predecessor's insistence that local government spending would be £3·6 billion lower than it turned out to be which forced up the poll tax bills for this year, since every penny of that shortfall fell on the hapless poll tax payer? Why does he persist in repeating and compounding that error this year? Can he name any local authority association—including those under Tory control—that agrees with his assessment of local authority spending for 1991-92? Is not it the case that it is the hard-pressed poll tax payer who will again pay the price for the right hon. Gentleman's mistake?

What estimate has the right hon. Gentleman used for inflation—or is he too embarrassed to say, following his assertion last year that it would be less than half what it turned out to be? Will he confirm that the national non-domestic rate will be raised in line with the actual rate of inflation? What estimate has he made of the cost of new commitments imposed on local authorities by the Government, and how are those new commitments to be paid for? Will it again be the poll tax payer who picks up the total bill? What estimate has the right hon. Gentleman made of the costs of collecting the poll tax, and of the shortfall faced by local authorities in the light of worryingly low collection levels, not least in his own constituency? Is not his hint that he intends this year—unlike last—to publish his capping criteria in advance evidence that, whatever other lessons he has failed to learn from charge capping, he now concedes that penalising local authorities for breaking rules imposed on them after the event was a serious and damaging mistake? Is not the truth that this is a paltry package that fails to live up to its advance billing and represents yet another battle lost by the Secretary of State at great cost to other spending

programmes? The right hon. Gentleman has squeezed out of the Treasury a package worth only a touch more than £2 billion. With that sum, he has first to try to make good the errors made last year; secondly, to allow for inflation, now rising fast; thirdly, to meet the cost of new commitments imposed by his Government; fourthly, to remove the most glaring anomalies from the first year's operation of the poll tax, and, fifthly, to allow for a frighteningly low level of collection. It cannot be done.

Mr. John Lee (Pendle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not recollect that anything has happened that needs my immediate attention. What is it?

Mr. Lee: As the House rises for the recess next week, Mr. Speaker, would it not be possible for you to grant an extra five minutes to the hon. Gentleman—

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order, and it delays the House.

Mr. Gould: In view of that attempted abuse of the House's procedures, I will repeat that last paragraph.

With a sum of just over £2 billion, the Secretary of State now has first to try to make good the errors of last year; secondly, to allow for inflation, now rising very fast; thirdly, to meet the cost of new commitments imposed on local government by his Government; fourthly, to remove the most glaring anomalies from the first year's operation of the poll tax; fifthly, to allow for a frighteningly low level of collection. That cannot be done: the circle cannot be squared.

The message is therefore, a grim one for local authorities and for poll tax payers alike. Happily, it is also a grim message for a Government who are uniquely responsible for the mess that they have created.

Mr. Patten: I suspect that it is conceivable that the hon. Gentleman's questions were drafted before I made my statement. He suggested—it was the first of a series of clichés that were trooped before the House—that there was no relief in sight. There is relief in sight, in the form of more transitional relief for 7·5 million who are already receiving it. We are talking about 4 million more people receiving transitional relief, and 3·5 million being helped because of the modifications that I have made to the safety net. It is worth noting that as a result of the benefits that we provide, which are more generous than those available under domestic rates, and as a result of transitional relief, while the average community charge set for this year after capping is £357, the actual average charge paid is £286. The difference between the two is made up through benefits and transitional relief.

The hon. Gentleman said that community charge standard spending was much higher than community charge standard spending last year. He referred to the increase in total standard spending. We have had to take account of a 13·5 per cent. increase in local authority spending—an increase of almost a quarter in two years. If we had not done so, unfortunately people would have faced community charges which were much too high in the coming year.

The hon. Gentleman said that local authorities were being short-changed, and referred to a £3 billion-plus package as "paltry". That reminded me of a remark made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) about a large Government subsidy. He said that, if that was beating someone to death, it was the first time that it had ever been done with a cheque book.

Mr. Gould: How is it £3 billion?

Mr. Patten: I shall go through the £3 billion. The £3 billion is a £2·95 billion increase in aggregate external finance and £310 million in transitional relief. With great respect, the hon. Gentleman does not yet understand local government finance. He cannot, and I cannot, say what the contribution from the non-domestic rate pool will be until September, because we do not set the multiplier until September. Of course there will be a contribution from business rates, just as there has been in the past.

Mr. Gould: How much?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman and I cannot say until we set the multiplier. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that if the cash did not come from the business ratepayer—I assume that even under the Labour party's proposals, when they emerge, businesses will pay something—it would come from the taxpayer.

Mr. Gould: The right hon. Gentleman has made a mistake.

Mr. Patten: I have not made a mistake. Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman has shown once again that, even with his hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) sitting beside him, he does not understand local government finance.

The hon. Member for Dagenham referred to local authority spending assessments. He said that at least some of the local authority associations proposed a substantially increased figure for total standard spending over what we have suggested.

The figure of £39 billion that I suggested would mean an increase of over 30 per cent. in local authority expenditure over three years. Many of my hon. Friends will regard that as spectacularly too high. The figures suggested by the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends would imply a 40 per cent. increase in local authority expenditure.

The hon. Gentleman has to come clean. Not only must he tell us what the Labour party would do in place of domestic rates and the community charge—the Opposition have wriggled, squirmed and turned on that month after month and year after year—he must tell us how much more the right hon. and learned Gentleman the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks that he should commit the Labour party to spend on local authority spending. Is it £1 billion, is it £2 billion, is it £3 billion? How much more than £3 billion should local authorities have next year?

The hon. Gentleman will not tell us. He cannot tell us. It is a vacuous and cynical response that the Labour party makes to our proposals.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we have a heavy day ahead of us. We have a series of Lords amendments to two Bills and, of course, the important debate on the televising of the House, to which the House is looking forward. I ask hon. Members to bear it in mind that there will be other opportunities to debate this

[Mr. Speaker]

statement. I shall allow questions to continue on it until half past 5. Then we will move on to the next business. I ask right hon. and hon. Members to ask single questions.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the changes that he has announced will be greatly welcomed? In the first part of his statement, he made no reference to those prudent local authorities, such as West Sussex, that have spent below their SSA. Those local authorities have been unfairly treated for many years because the money from central Government has been going to profligate authorities to bail them out.

Could my right hon. Friend refer to the provisions relating to flatlet houses? Many owners of such houses are being charged the community charge whenever their accommodation happens to have one empty flatlet.

Mr. Patten: On my right hon. Friend's first point, I join him in commending those local authorities that have been prudent over the years and spent regularly at or below target. They have given extremely good value for money to their ratepayers or charge payers. Invariably they have provided a high level of service at the same time.

I hope that my right hon. Friend noted that, when I referred to capping for the future, I referred to those authorities that spent above their SSAs, either by a small amount or by a larger margin. It is on those authorities that we shall need to concentrate our particular attention. It would be intolerable if they were able to use the generous settlement announced this afternoon to push their spending higher, rather than to help their community charge payers.

I assume that my right hon. Friend was referring to what are sometimes known colloquially as granny flats. We propose to set a zero multiplier for such flats. All the proposals we are making on the standard community charge are contained in a consultation paper published today. We shall be anxious to hear contributions from right hon. and hon. Friends and others on those proposals. Once we have received those observations, we shall make a final announcement in the autumn.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does not the Secretary of State realise that this will be an unsuccessful and expensive attempt to conceal the real unfair nature of the community charge for a little longer—until the other side of the general election? Does he not realise that a dozen sweeteners do not provide any substitute for a healthy diet? Will he come clean with the House by saying that all he has done today is to announce that he is buying votes and buying time? He has traded accountability of local government to local people for accountability to himself.

Mr. Patten: I am providing a decent and reasonable settlement so that local authorities can provide good value for money while they also provide the schools, fire services, and other community services that people want in their area. They want those services at a reasonable price.

I am bound to say that £3 billion-plus strikes me as more than a few sweeteners. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that his constituents will benefit from the proposals that I have made on the area safety net system.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the excellent package he has outlined, which will be extremely welcome to a great many people up and down the country, in spite of the churlish response it has had from the Opposition?

How will those who will benefit from the transitional relief changes—the disabled and pensioners—and those likely to benefit from changes in the standard charge, as well as all potential beneficiaries, know exactly what is proposed? How will they know what those changes mean to them, given that we cannot rely on the Opposition to give an honest picture of them?

Mr. Patten: It is interesting—we saw this in some of the advertisements that Labour local authorities financed earlier this year—that the Labour party, even when it talks about the take-up of benefit, is apparently more anxious not to let people know about the benefits to which they are entitled.

Mr. Gould: That is a disgraceful assertion.

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman considers the example of the Association of London Authorities—a Labour organisation—he will know that that is true. I could have made that point a great deal more strongly in the past than I have this afternoon.

I shall certainly do what I can to ensure that the additional benefits that I have announced this afternoon, the extension of transitional relief, are made clear to all those who could receive greater assistance as a result.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will not the Secretary of State realise that the package he has announced this afternoon clearly has the next general election in mind more than tackling the basic problem of the poll tax, the ability to pay? Nothing that the right hon. Gentleman has said today deals with that matter.

Will the right hon. Gentleman also admit that too many people on low incomes have to pay the full poll tax? Will he assure us that, when rebates are considered, he will use each of his votes in Cabinet to ensure that rebates are given to those people on higher levels of income?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman refers to ability to pay. I must point out that about 25 per cent. of all community charge payers are in receipt of assistance. A large number of them get 80 per cent. relief from their community charge with the rest covered by income support. In England, we are spending in all more than £2·5 billion in benefits for community charge payers. That recognises our responsibility to help the needier members of the community.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Against the background of the most generous settlement for many years—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."]—factually, the most generous—my right hon. Friend deserves particular congratulations on sending additional support to 4 million households that previously did not benefit from transitional relief. Will my right hon. Friend also note that the shallow criticisms by the Opposition Front Bench spokesman are more accurately reflected in the sparse attendence on the Benches behind him?

Mr. Patten: I had indeed noticed how interested the Labour party was in next year's local authority financial settlement. I wonder whether more Opposition Members will turn up on that afternoon, to which we are looking

forward, when the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) outlines the labour party's policy on such matters. I am sure that it will be standing room only, but we might have to wait rather a long time for it.

My hon. Friend was right to refer to the size and generosity of the settlement. We are putting a large amount of money from taxpayers and business rate payers into local authorities. We have played fair by local authorities; local authorities should now play fair by the community charge payer.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I congratulate the Secretary of State on delivering a long, intricate and difficult obituary on the creature produced by the right hon. Members for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). The right hon. Gentleman's statement simply demonstrates that the concept of restraining local government expenditure has gone out of the window, as has the concept of accountability. Why does he not bury the corpse and go back to a system based on ability to pay?

Mr. Patten: I believe that the proposals for which we have legislated and the announcement I have made this afternoon will mean—I argued this in the debate a couple of weeks ago, part of which the hon. Gentleman attended—that there is a much more direct transmission mechanism between local authority spending decisions and local electors. People are already looking with a far beadier eye at the spending decisions taken by local authorities. Unfortunately, when we introduced the community charge, a number of local authorities thought that they could spend up and blame the consequences on the new system rather than on their spending decisions. It would not be right to let them get away with that indefinitely.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): May I, as a critic of the community charge, congratulate my right hon. Friend on the amelioration he has brought forward today? Have the Government any plans to reduce the excessive assumed level of income from capital above the limit of £3,000 for the purposes of rebates?

Mr. Patten: I am sure that my right hon. Friend welcomed as much as I did the announcement that the Chancellor of the Exchequer made in his Budget statement on the capital limit. There is some misunderstanding about the implications of interest rates that are implied by the increase in the capital limit to £16,000. First, no account is made of the first £3,000 of savings. Secondly, benefit is not withdrawn at the rate of £1 for £1 of income, but at the rate of 15p for every £1 of income. That means that, at the top level, at almost £16,000, the most that somebody can lose is £7·80, which is an implied interest rate of about 2·5 per cent., so the position is not quite as some of my hon. Friends have sometimes argued. Nevertheless, I am sure that, with his customary courtesy and eloquence, my right hon. Friend will continue to pursue that argument with the Secretary of State for Social Security and with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): I am sure that the general public will never cease to wonder at the hypocrisy of the Government. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that yesterday—perhaps to obtain publicity for herself—the Prime Minister eulogised the family? Does he appreciate that the measures he has announced today will do nothing to stop the split-up of families because of economic pressure or for the conflict faced by women who are having to bear the poll tax charge for husbands, leading to the breakdown of families, or for the homeless in our streets? Is he aware that there is a vast army of people out there whose resolve will be reinforced by his statement today, and that the poll tax will be the rock on which the Government will perish?

Mr. Patten: When one is talking of hypocrisy, those whom I think of first are those elected members, whether of this House or local authorities, who are refusing to pay the community charge and who are urging—without, it must be said, according to a recent survey conducted by the BBC, much success—others to do the same, people who are attempting to act as free riders or freeloaders on the backs of the constituents.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): As a strong critic of the sharpness of the initial introduction of the community charge, I warmly congratulate the Secretary of State and thank him for the tremendous way in which he has shaken the pockets of the Treasury and made highly intelligent and receptive spending decisions on the sums of money that he has achieved. Will he remind the Opposition that, under the old rating system, 18 million people paid and 5·5 million received relief, and that under the new system, with his statement today, 36 million people will be financially enfranchised locally and about 25 million people will have assistance to help them pay?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right. As I said, the average charge paid by community charge payers this year is £286, which is a reflection of the generosity of the benefits and transitional relief. The benefits available are much more generous than they were under domestic rates, a point which has never been recognised by Opposition Members, who are regularly—indeed, institutionally, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) pointed out earlier—churlish.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Does the Secretary of State agree that the fact that he has been forced to increase external financing by £3 billion next year and transitional relief by £310 million this year means that he has grossly miscalculated the revenue support grant settlement and the SSAs for local authorities in this financial year? Will he, even at this late stage, do something about the finances of local authorities, especially in view of the redundancies that will be caused by his clearly wrong figures this year? Will he also do something about the cuts in services that will come about as a result of his miscalculations?

Mr. Patten: I have not miscalculated. Local authorities have increased their expenditure by 13·5 per cent.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, while his statement is welcome, there are areas where local people increasingly find it difficult to acquire houses in the face of outsiders buying holiday or weekend homes? Will he give an assurance that, as a result of the changes that he has announced affecting second homes, the locals will not find themselves having to pay more to pay for the reliefs on houses that are purely holiday or weekend houses and which fall outside the categories he mentioned?

Mr. Patten: I hope that my right hon. Friend will be reassured when he sees the consultation paper that we have

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published this afternoon. The proposals to which I referred dealt with particular categories of people who, in the rather unhappy phrase used by my Department, are involuntary second home owners. The categories mentioned by my right hon. Friend are not covered in the consultation paper, and I hope that that reassures him. I hope that hon. Members in all parts of the House will respond to the consultation document. We are keen to try at this stage to remove as soon as possible any legitimate grievances that may have arisen over the standard community charge.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall the several cases I have drawn to the attention of the Government for the Spinal Injuries Association, among other voluntary bodies, where families which include a severely disabled person have had to pay over £700 a year more than they paid in rates? That arises from the repeal of the previous Government's Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978, when the poll tax became law. Should not those families have far more protection than the right hon. Gentleman has announced so far?

Mr. Patten: With respect to the right hon. Gentleman, who knows a great deal about these matters, he is wrong to say that there is a connection between the consequence that concerned him and the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978. Under the rating system, it was occasionally the case that disabled people would make changes or alterations to their property that would increase the rateable value of that property, and there was, properly, relief against that. The community charge is not in any way a levy on property: it is a levy on individuals.

The right hon. Gentleman should take account of the enhanced benefits for the disabled that have been introduced by the Government. If he is as concerned as I am sure he is about the impact on the disabled and others of the community charge in some parts of the country, I hope that he will be urging the leaders of Labour local authorities to set moderate levels of community charge.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): My right hon. Friend's announcement, particularly in the way in which it relates to the extension of the transitional relief scheme, is welcome because it provides extra help and support for those who live in terraced houses with historically low rateable values, many of whom are pensioners and on modest incomes. But will he confirm that at the end of the day the level of the community charge in my constituency depends on the spending decisions of the local Kirklees council, and will he join me in urging it to get rid of the extravagance and wastage which undoubtedly now exist?

Mr. Patten: I am sure that my hon. Friend, particularly after the representations that he made to me on that point, will welcome the changes that we have made to the area safety net, which will benefit his local authority to the tune of £2·2 million. That is very much a result of the representations that he made to me and to the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities. My hon. Friend is right to say that the level of community charge depends clearly and explicitly on the spending decisions taken by local authorities. We have provided a reasonable settlement. It is now up to local authorities to play their part.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): We can cut through the Secretary of State's Elastoplast politics this afternoon and ask him if it is a fact that the aggregate external finance level that he has announced this afternoon is £1 billion less than the Tory-dominated Association of District Councils said was necessary next year merely to maintain existing services, and inevitably means hundreds of millions of pounds worth of cuts in jobs and essential services.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the promise of limited jam tomorrow will not cut any ice with the 28 million people who are worse off this year because of the poll tax? Is he also aware that hundreds of councils are in chaos because of their inability to collect the poll tax following the strike action that is occurring because of the millions of people who are unable or unwilling to pay? Is he further aware that shuffling the deck chairs on the Prime Minister's flagship will not turn it into anything but her Titanic?

Mr. Patten: The whole House, whether properly or inappropriately, has from time to time taken a particular and keen interest in the hon. Gentleman's own relationship to the community charge. The whole House knows that the hon. Gentleman is—at least for the time being—better off on two counts: first, because he is a resident of Wandsworth and secondly, because in his own community he does not pay the community charge, but leaves it to his constituents to carry him.

Not all the local authority associations are endorsing the figure politically at the moment, but they are putting forward a paper drawn up by their officers—the equivalent in governmental terms of a bidding letter. They have suggested that they would need to spend £40·7 billion next year and I referred to that point earlier. Over three years, that would represent an increase in local authority spending of 40 per cent.

I should have thought that even the Labour party, especially given the Gladstonian fiscal rectitude of the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), would regard that as grotesquely excessive. It was, of course, a Labour Government who were the only Government in recent memory under whom local authority spending actually fell in one year by 6 per cent.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): At first hearing, the arithmetic of my right hon. Friend's package sounds extremely attractive. He deserves to be congratulated on bringing his package forward in this way. Can he reassure the House that people living in areas of low-spending or prudent-spending local authorities—*[Interruption.]*—who this year face an enormous increase in their total bills, will not have the gains from his package eroded by further wildly optimistic estimates by the Treasury about the rate of inflation?

Mr. Patten: First, while my right hon. Friend was referring to low-spending and prudent authorities, he was interrupted by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) and by the hon. Member for Newham,

North-West (Mr. Banks)—my unofficial pair. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] He was interrupted with the suggestion——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): You had better withdraw that.

Mr. Patten: I make it clear straight away that all I am referring to is the fact that the hon. Gentleman and I have a relationship in the House of genial contempt, which has seen us through many long nights together. I do not want to get the hon. Gentleman into any difficulty.

The hon. Gentleman interrupted my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) to suggest that he was referring to rich or Conservative local authorities. With a bit of difficulty, I can think of one or two reasonably prudent, reasonably low-spending Labour authorities. [HON. MEMBERS: "Dagenham."] Yes, like Dagenham. We want all local authorities to provide value for money. At the moment, it is mainly Conservative authorities that do so.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend referred to the arithmetic of the settlement. In bringing forward this settlement, I have been absolutely determined to put forward proposals that would not only sound attractive in July, but would look equally attractive in September and in next March. We are talking about an increase in aggregate external finance of 12·8 per cent. and about an increase in total standard spending over this year's budgeted spending of 7·1 per cent. Those are extremely robust figures.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Can the Secretary of State explain—as no one else has today—why, when it comes to imposing the poll tax on the people, Scotland is first in the queue, but when it comes to hearing a Secretary of State explain the changes, we are the last in the queue? Does the Secretary of State not understand that one cannot solve the poll tax disaster by nibbling at the edges of injustice or by throwing money at it? The only way to make the poll tax acceptable is to relate it properly to ability to pay. Until that is done, the campaign of resistance and non-payment in Scotland—represented by half a million people 15 months into the poll tax imposition—will continue and intensify.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland makes his statement, it will be as sensible and realistic as my statement this afternoon. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will draw attention to the fact that, in its second year of operation in Scotland, one of the consequences of the community charge is that a number of local authorities have moderated their spending decisions.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's proposals this afternoon, especially those on transitional relief and on business proprietors who live over the shop, and I also welcome his response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling).

Will my right hon. Friend examine how, between now and his announcement on SSAs in the autumn, he can ensure that charge payers in shire counties operate on a more level playing field than do charge payers in inner London and other local authorities, who have been rather well looked after this year?

Mr. Patten: We have made it clear, as my hon. Friend knows, that we are prepared to consider fresh evidence on the methodology of the standard spending assessments. I know that some shire districts and shire counties have expressed a number of criticisms. There has occasionally been a problem this year when the lack of level ground on the playing field has been a result of some of the spending decisions that have been taken by shire counties.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): When the Secretary of State leaves the House, will he acquaint himself with the levels of income on which those on income support and state pensions have to live? Is he aware that the lowest income group in my constituency—those on income support—pay at least £4·95 a month in poll tax and that they were not properly compensated by the Department of Social Security for the poll tax?

When will the right hon. Gentleman do something about a pensioner in my constituency—and about many more like her—who has had to sell her mother's sideboard to pay the poll tax this year for herself and for her husband? When is the Secretary of State going to do something about people who are devastated by poverty and——

Mr. Patten *rose*——

Mrs. Mahon: —I have not finished yet. It is time that the Secretary of State started concerning himself about that—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This does not help the hon. Lady's other colleagues.

Mr. Patten: I am not sure whether the hon. Lady is now paying the community charge, but——

Mrs. Mahon: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. What on earth have how and when I pay my bills got to do with the Secretary of State?

Mr. Patten: For one very simple reason. If the hon. Lady is refusing to pay her community charge, as I believe is the case, a consequence is that her constituents, including some of those to whom she has referred who are less well off, will have to pay higher community charges in due course.

It is preposterous for the hon. Lady to behave in that sanctimonious fashion. I am sure that she will be delighted to know that Calderdale is one of the areas that will benefit from the area safety net adjustments. My hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson), who also represents a constituency in Calderdale, has made that point to me on a number of occasions. Calderdale will benefit to the tune of £2·2 million.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that local government spending has moved from a seething cauldron of public indifference to a position in which the public are taking an acute interest in what councils are spending? Many local authorities are now looking at their spending plans far more prudently than ever before.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is entirely right. One consequence of the introduction of the community charge is that public debate in local authority areas about spending decisions has become more acute and more lively.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I take it from the Secretary of State's remarks that transitional relief will be extended in my constituency for a further lengthy period. It is currently £40 per annum for the next three years, but I presume that it will be reduced. I understand that the unified business rate is also being reviewed, and that an amount will be transferred to compensate for the different amount of relief that is being given to private poll tax payers. Therefore, businesses in my area that expected some relief—the initial relief, although it was spread over 10 years, was welcome—will now find themselves zero-rated. I take into account the increase in mortgage and tax rates as well. May I also know——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has taken three bites.

Mr. McKay: Just a further little one, Mr. Speaker. Will all the services that have been lost as a result of trying to find savings of £10·5 million be returned?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman represents a constituency which, because of modifications to the area safety net, will benefit to the tune of £2·1 million additionally next year. In the hon. Gentleman's constituency and all others, the postponement of any phasing out of transitional relief will obtain. As I said earlier, we are extending that scheme for two years. As to the uniform rate, large and small businesses in constituencies such as Barnsley are among the main beneficiaries of the changeover to uniform business rate and of revaluation.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people most disappointed at the outcome of his statement today will not be charge payers but the Opposition, who see the community charge issue disappearing fast as one that can help them to win the next general election?

I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the problem confronting prudent district authorities within high-spending county councils. Can he assure those district councils that, when he caps high-spending county councils, he will do so promptly, so that district councils know that their charges can remain steady and will not have to be revised?

Mr. Patten: Hon. Members opposite will look even more long-faced when the Opposition announce their alternative to domestic rates and the community charge, but we may have to wait some time for that. I sympathise with my hon. Friend's remarks, because I also represent a prudent district council which has to send out bills that are much larger than they should be, because of the county council's spending decisions. We must review the effects of high-spending county councils. I referred to our proposed changes to the Bill, and I hope that those relating to capping will help to ensure that county councils spend more sensibly in future.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does the Secretary of State accept that his statement will create a group of 4 million people who he recognises have paid too much this year? We have constantly pressed their case. They include low-income earners, pensioners, the thrifty, and people generally who would rather die than be in debt. The Secretary of State now says that next year, they will be helped by £1 per week. Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the spirit, integrity, consciences and values of those people are so cheap that they will be bought by £1 per week in the form of a post-dated cheque?

Mr. Patten: I am not seeking to do that, but to provide, at the expense of the taxpayer, greater assistance—perhaps to many receiving benefit. I am seeking to provide greater relief for those charge payers whom I think need it. It is preposterous to say, whenever a benefit is increased in a Budget or on other occasions, that, because that has not been done before, people who do not receive that increase are in some way disadvantaged.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. Friend has made a most ingenious and valiant attempt to respond to the many intense, varied and often contradictory pressures that have been brought to bear on him from all parts of the House. I wonder whether he shares my more fundamental concern. He will be raising some £3 billion in public expenditure, which the nation may understand better as a figure of roughly £60 per head of the population, or £250 per family, to deal with a series of phenomena which arise partly from profligacy and partly from inflation. Is not it dangerous at any time to encourage the nation to believe that phenomena of that kind can ever be dealt with fundamentally and finally by increasing public expenditure, when we already have 10 per cent. inflation?

Mr. Patten: I have a good deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend on two counts. First, he mentioned that I had been the beneficiary of a good deal of advice. He was right to say that it was not always consistent. Secondly, he is also right to say that we cannot continue indefinitely to bail out local authorities with increased support from taxpayers. Local authorities intend to increase their spending this year by 3·5 per cent. in real terms. From 1985 to 1991, they will have increased their expenditure in real terms by the best part of 20 per cent. That is a massive rise and it must be paid for by someone. Community charge payers will increasingly recognise that they will have to pick up the bills because of the lack of value for money offered by their local authorities.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is not the truth that there has been a cut of more than £3,000 million in local taxes paid by the residents of large and expensive properties? The Secretary of State cannot for political reasons claw that money back. Is not that his dilemma? Is not that why £3 billion of taxpayers' money must now be found? My constituents in west Cumbria think that the poll tax is monstrous and appalling, and they look forward to a Labour Government who will abolish it.

Mr. Patten: As we all know, the Labour party's alternative involves local authorities spending more, but people being taxed less and also receiving free Esperanto lessons. The hon. Gentleman is wrong on every count. I am certain that he would not want to defend a system in which single pensioners, for example, pay exactly the same as a family of four or five wage earners living next door. Nor would he defend a system, I am sure, in which poorer families subsidised the domestic rates of better-off families. The real problem is the tendency of too many local authorities to spend too much money.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I wish that my right hon. Friend had been responsible for the community

charge from the beginning. As to transitional relief from the uniform business rate, that disappears as soon as the premises change hands. Does my right hon. Friend intend to modify that arrangement, which hits small businesses in London and the south-east in particular extremely hard?

Mr. Patten: No, we do not intend to change that arrangement. One could not do so without also ensuring that similar provisions applied to new as well as existing property. In most circumstances, it would be very difficult to reach a decision. The transitional arrangements are intended to help business rate payers who were not aware before revaluation that their liability would dramatically change. That is not the case when someone moves premises.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The review acknowledges the hardship that the poll tax has brought upon many people, and a sensible Government would never have imposed it. But it does not recognise the effect on non-working partners, mainly married women, who must carry the full burden of the poll tax. Nor does it recognise the effect of the poll tax on small towns dominated by large businesses. They have lost a great deal in terms of the business rate, but they still have capital charges to carry. Nor does the statement acknowledge the stupidity of the standard spending rate calculations, which bear no relation to a local council's spending, be it Labour or Tory controlled. The review only serves to perpetuate an unfair, immoral and unconstitutional system which, if the Secretary of State had any integrity, he would denounce today.

Mr. Patten: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman completely misunderstands the situation. Under the old system, if a local authority received a large amount in business rates from a big local employer—a point on which the hon. Member for Dagenham has been wrong on a number of occasions—the rate support grant would have been adjusted downward.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement, which has the hallmarks of practicality and common sense. In considering changes to the methodology of the SSAs, will my right hon. Friend give particular consideration to relating the system under which a notional sum is arrived at for the revenue from interest on capital that an authority receives to the actual revenue from an authority's capital? Secondly, will he bear in mind the importance of the tourist industry and the necessity to give a fair deal to authorities which have a large number of visitors?

Mr. Patten: As I said earlier, we are prepared to look at new evidence on the SSA methodology before we distribute grant later this year. I should make it clear that none of my proposals will involve primary legislation, although some will involve secondary legislation. The only change that we have not discussed which affects the business rate in a way which will involve legislation is the change that we have to make on caravans.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the Minister not understand that the people whom he is threatening all the time, saying what he will do to them, are local councillors who have been elected to provide services for local people? Does he not recognise that the more disadvantaged the area and the less well off the people in it, the more they need those services and the more anguished the decision for local councillors, Labour or Conservative, whether to cut education, social services or libraries—cuts which really affect people in their daily lives? Will he please stop hectoring councillors and understand what they do for local people in areas such as Leicester and elsewhere, where they are prudent and careful and deeply resent being called profligate when they are trying to serve the people who have elected them?

Mr. Patten: I should be surprised if even the hon. and learned Gentleman thought that an increase of 12·8 per cent. in aggregate external finance to local authorities, including the one in which his constituency resides, was insufficient.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I particularly welcome the extension of the transitional relief arrangements, but will my right hon. Friend confirm that, among the 4 million additional individuals who will benefit are those lone-parent families with sole earners whose income levels make them ineligible for relief at the moment and who have been obliged to pay between £4 and £5 per week per household as a consequence of the changes in local government finance? Unless they are assisted, the measures that my right hon. Friend has announced today will not be as effective as most of us would wish.

Mr. Patten: The 4 million that I mentioned earlier are those who will now benefit from the transitional relief scheme because their losses in the move from domestic rates to the assumed community charge were between £2 and £3. Now that we have reduced the threshold to £2, they will benefit from the transitional relief scheme. I hope that many of those to whom my hon. Friend referred will also benefit from the enhanced assistance that we are giving in other ways.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Secretary of State has sorely tempted the geniality of my contempt for him this afternoon with what he has announced, which was not so much a statement, more a redrafting of the poll tax legislation, made that much more cynical because he is attempting to bribe the electorate before the next general election. What calculation has he made of the increase in pay and prices that local authorities will face in 1991-92? What will the poor people of Newham have to do in terms of their further contribution to the safety net? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Patten: One or two of my hon. Friends are making remarks about what the hon. Gentleman's constituents might do which lack gallantry even if they are pointed and relevant. The figures that I mentioned earlier involve, as I said, increasing total standard spending from £32·8 billion to £39 billion, and an increase of 7·1 per cent. in the total standard spending figure over local authorities' planned spending for this year. Those are helpful figures.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I believe that the review will be seen as a thoughtful response by the Government to the concerns of many people, and I imagine that my constituents will be pleased, particularly those with low rateable values and those such as vicars and teachers who have to live in second homes while they buy properties for their retirement. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

time goes on, any party that comes up with the idea of returning to some sort of domestic rating system will be seen as going back to the dark ages?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is entirely right. He will know as well as I do some of the things which Opposition Members have said about the inequities of the domestic rating system, and he, like me, will have come to the conclusion that it is inconceivable that, after saying some of those things, they could even consider going back to domestic rates.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I am refusing to pay the poll tax because eight out of 10 of my constituents lose under the poll tax compared with the rates. Nothing that the right hon. Gentleman has said today will lessen their anger at the unfairness and injustice of the poll tax. Will he give an assurance that the people of Bradford, who last May exercised their local democratic rights by turfing out the Tories from control of Bradford city council, will not be penalised by any Government actions between now and the next general election?

Mr. Patten: I certainly will not penalise anybody, but the way in which I react to local authorities will depend what they do. Once again I must say that it is astonishing that the hon. Gentleman should take the view that his constituents should face larger bills so that he can have a free ride.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend accept, from someone who does not love the community charge, that I think that he has done extraordinarily well to get £3 billion extra out of the Treasury? Is it not somewhat alarming and disturbing to hear £3 billion called "a piffling sum"? If £3 billion is a piffling sum, God knows what the socialists would spend.

Surely the whole idea of local government is that it should be local and that it should be government, so that the people know that, when they vote for a local government they are voting for one kind of authority or another. Instead of charge capping, which puts the albatross of overspending firmly around the Government's neck, why not put it firmly where it should belong—around the local authorities' necks, and penalise them a pound for every pound spent over the SSA?

Mr. Patten: We have both been in the House for the same period, and my hon. Friend will recall that we have in the past had clawback systems which approximated to the proposal he makes but they are not uniformly popular —for example, with my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend is right to say that the amount of money that we are proposing as an increase to aggregate external finance is substantial. For the Opposition to witter on about it not being £3 billion is equivalent to their saying that money raised through corporation tax and spent on public services is somehow not a contribution from the public Exchequer.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Secretary of State has been wittering on about local authorities increasing their expenditure, but is not it true that that expenditure has been on important services such as home helps, provision for the mentally handicapped, education, housing and other obligations placed on them by the Government; and that local authorities have also had to cope with the inflation created by the Government's economic policies? Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that, when this malevolent and wicked tax was produced by the Government, it was said that it would be simple? Who will pay for the massive administration that his proposals today will entail? Will it be borne entirely by the Government? Does he realise that, as a result of his threat today to poll-cap every local authority, he has shifted from the liberal wing to the jackboot tendency in his party?

Mr. Patten: I leave knowledge of jackboots to the hon. Gentleman. It is entirely possible to provide good-quality services for the amounts that I have mentioned. It is also entirely possible for local authorities to provide a good standard of service with increased spending of 30 per cent. over three years. Plainly the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has his work cut out to convert the Labour party to fiscal probity.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is not the additional allocation of £3 billion to local authorities next year more than they could reasonably have hoped for? Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is still an enormous gulf between the best and the worst local authorities in terms of price and quality of service? What steps will he take to bring greater efficiency, greater economy and greater effectiveness to local government?

Mr. Patten: The answer to my hon. Friend's first two questions is a strong affirmative. The answer to his third question is that we all look to the Audit Commission to continue to press for greater efficiency in local government. For example, the commission has identified £650 million-worth of possible savings that have still not been made. It has also pointed to about £150 million-worth of savings that could be made through energy efficiency, and no doubt all hon. Members would agree about that. There is plenty that could be done to achieve the objective to which my hon. Friend properly and eloquently referred.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I congratulate the Secretary of State on an undoubted sleight of hand, in which he was aided and abetted by the headline writers in some of our broadcast media, in pretending that an allocation of £3 billion is in some way a gift of Government through the grant system. Grant has increased by only £2 billion, two thirds of what has been talked about. The remainder comes from the national business rate.

The Secretary of State's announcement is a fraud. Will he confirm that the year-on-year increase in spending to which he has referred from last year, is well accounted for by the removal of creative accountancy measures, including the use of capital receipts? Authorities cannot be blamed for high poll tax charges, nor can they be blamed for spending cuts that are being considered by the Cabinet in its public spending review.

The amount of £2 billion is peanuts. What happened to the £5 billion that we heard about only a few weeks ago, and what happened to the Government's promise that they would look at those who had no income, people such as mothers looking after small children at home? What

happened to the 43 suggestions put to him by his Back Benchers and what has become of the promised fundamental review of the poll tax?

Mr. Patten: I wondered whether the hon. Gentleman would continue with his list of rhetorical questions and ask what happened to those Labour Back Benchers who are not here, and what happened to the Labour party alternative. *[Interruption.]* I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's question, about which his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham shouts from time to time. The hon. Gentleman knows too much about local authority finance to believe what he said.

Aggregate external finance to local authorities this year is £23·1 billion. Next year it will be £26·05 billion. That difference of £2·95 billion is made up of revenue support grant, specific grants and contributions from the non-domestic rate pool. For the hon. Gentleman to say that one should take no account of contributions from the business rate pool is like saying, as I mentioned earlier, that corporation tax should not be included in Government revenues because it comes from business. The hon. Gentleman's argument is ridiculous. He is trying to find some specious intellectual justification for spending the whole afternoon being churlish.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that it has not been possible to call all those hon. Members who have been rising. I shall give them some precedence and further opportunities, possibly in the Adjournment motion next week.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The whole House knows the problems that you face, but may I point out that some Conservative Members with northern seats who will benefit from this package suffer from high-spending local councils?

Mr. Speaker: It is terribly difficult to call all hon. Members who wish to participate. As I have said, there will be other opportunities.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps you will consider that on a day on which the Government put down a business motion requiring us to stay here all night, and as there is no pressure for business to finish by 10 o'clock, it should have been possible to call all hon. Members who were rising.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No. I have to have regard to the legitimate interests of hon. Members who wish to participate in later debates. It is desirable for some hon. Members who wish to get in early at Question Time, but that means that other hon. Members have to wait until late in the night.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We heard the Labour voice of Lancashire but we did not hear the Conservative voice. We should like to thank the Secretary of State for what he has done.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Conservative voice will be heard next week.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you explain how the only hon. Member who represents an entire county can express his view on this important package?

Mr. Speaker: What about trying next week? The hon. Gentleman has not been deprived in any way. He was called at Question Time today.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I suppose I shall have to hear hon. Members' complaints.

Mr. Franks: Further to the point of order by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), Mr. Speaker. We all appreciate your problems and accept your rulings. Will you bear in mind that you called the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), which is a Labour voice for Cumbria, but did not call any Conservative voice for Cumbria?

Mr. Speaker: I shall do that next week.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the two motions on statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Crown Agents (Additional Powers) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Commission and Court of Human Rights (Immunities and Privileges) (Amendment) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Orders of the Day

Government Trading Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

NEW PROVISIONS IN CONNECTION WITH GOVERNMENT TRADING FUNDS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 23, at end insert—

"(5A) An order establishing a trading fund for operations carried on by a person appointed in pursuance of any enactment may provide—

(a) for the fund to be under the control and management of that person instead of the responsible Minister and, accordingly,

(b) for this Act to have effect as if—

(i) the reference to the responsible Minister in section 3(1) of this Act and the first reference to him in section 4(1), and

(ii) such other references in this Act to the responsible Minister as may be specified in the order, where they are references to him in the exercise of his function of controlling or managing the fund,

were references to that person."

5.37 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), after first 'the', insert 'continuing operations of the'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment (b) to the Lords amendment, after 'managing', insert 'the continuing operation of'.

Dr. Marek: Amendment (a) is a probing amendment. Consideration of the amendments should not detain the House for long because in principle the Opposition have no problem with any of them. We are pleased with amendment No. 2 and amendments Nos. 3, 4 and 5 are technical or consolidation measures. Perhaps the Economic Secretary will confirm what I have said. I sympathise with the Economic Secretary who has been landed with the Bill at short notice because of the departure of the former Financial Secretary to the Treasury. We shall proceed gently in seeking some assurances.

My noble Friend Lord Bruce of Donington raised three points in Committee in the other place. One point that he made when Lords amendment No. 1 was being considered in the other place was whether a corporate body could be a person. Could the Bill be construed in such a way that a corporate body could be appointed by statute to run a trading fund or an agency? The Earl of Caithness said:

"On the first point raised by the noble Lord, I do not believe that there is a need to cover corporate bodies because the Bill refers to a person appointed pursuant to any enactment."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 June 1990; Vol. 520, c. 229.]

I am sure that the Government have considered that point in detail and I should like clarification of it. It would cause some consternation among the Opposition if the Bill were to allow a corporate body to run a trading fund. It is important that the original intention of the Bill is made clear—that trading funds should be run by the responsible Minister. It was later discovered that some people were appointed by statute to run trading accounts. We accept that it would be wrong for such people to be required to hand over the management of those trading funds to the responsible Minister.

We are not opposed to Lords amendment No. 1, but we are concerned about how wide it may be interpreted. Wherever possible, we want responsibility to lie with the responsible Minister, who is accountable to Parliament. If my supposition is right, it could be open to future Governments, of either party, to move trading funds so that they could be run by corporate bodies. That would introduce all sorts of problems. It raises the fear of privatisation without primary legislation, although I think that Lords amendment No. 2 reassures us on that matter.

My noble Friend sought reassurance that Lords amendment No. 1 was principally concerned with the day-to-day management of the funds. He also sought reassurance that, ultimately, responsibility lay with the responsible Minister, not with some civil servant or person appointed by statute. The Earl of Caithness gave my noble Friend that assurance, but it would be nice to hear it from the Economic Secretary.

Amendments (a) and (b) are linked. There is some confusion about the Lords amendment. I hope that its intention—that a person appointed by statute can run any fund—means that he or she runs it on a continuing basis, from day to day. If a fund had to be wound up, I hope that the responsible Minister would intervene. The Lords amendment—its drafting may be defective—provides

"for the fund to be under the control and management of that person instead of the responsible Minister".

By inserting the words, "continuing operation", the sentence would read,

"for the continuing operation of the fund to be under the control and management of that person instead of the responsible Minister."

That may be otiose, but it makes it clear that the day-to-day management of the fund is under the control of that person, and if it were to be wound up or if there was anything that was not part of the continuing day-to-day operation of the fund, the responsible Minister would have to take responsibility.

I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say, first, about the points made in another place and, secondly, about the reasons for the Lords amendment.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) for his kind remarks. I appreciate the work done on this legislation by Lord Bruce of Donington. I shall deal first with the amendment and then with the specific points that the hon. Gentleman raised.

A fund will usually be under the control and management of the responsible Minister, who will also be carrying on the funded operations. Lords amendment No. 1 is concerned with funds for operations carried on by a person appointed in pursuance of any enactment. An order establishing such a fund may provide that its control and management be with that person. One example of that would be the Chief Land Registrar, who is appointed under the Registration Act 1925 to carry on

"the whole business of land registration under the Act."

In such cases, once a fund is established the operations will continue to be carried on by the office holder, pursuant to the relevant legislation, just as they were previously. The Lords amendment relates only to the control and

management of the funds in such cases. It sensibly provides that it may be placed with that office holder by the order establishing the fund.

I understand that the hon. Gentleman's amendments stem from a concern about the winding up of a fund that is under the control and management of a statutory office holder. As with any fund, new section 4A would apply. The responsibility for making appropriate orders under section 4A will remain that of the responsible Minister. Lords amendment No. 2 puts beyond any doubt the fact that the winding-up powers are not concerned with funded operations ceasing because they are being privatised.

I shall take the hon. Gentleman's specific points in turn. His first point related to a statutory office holder. As a matter of construction, the reference to a person appointed pursuant to statute does not extend to bodies corporate. That was not the Government's intention, and they had nothing like that in mind. That question was raised in another place, but, as far as I am aware, no one has yet identified a corporate candidate that has inadvertently been caught by that provision. It should also be remembered that funds can be established only in relation to the operations of a Department of Government.

I cannot rule out privatisation of trading funds, and would not wish to do so. However, if that were to happen, it would require further primary legislation, such as happened with the Crown Suppliers. I hope that that reassures the hon. Gentleman. The Bill does not provide the means to bypass the need for further legislation, and the amendment places that beyond doubt.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My hon. Friend may recall—and it goes back a number of years—that a trading fund was set up for the Ordnance Survey headquarters in Southampton. I am sure that he has used that as a model of what can be achieved. It has succeeded in competing in the private market, even though it is a trading fund. It is moving forward with great prosperity and is creating a vast amount of employment in the area.

Mr. Ryder: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful observation. As he knows, the orginal legislation was passed by the House in 1973. The purpose of this Bill is to update that legislation in the light of developments that have been put in place by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts, who is also responsible for the civil service. Perhaps I can add a rider to that by informing the House that the Ordnance Survey is not regarded as a trading fund.

Amendment to the Lords amendment negatived.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The Question is, That this House—*[Interruption.]* We have just been debating the amendment to the Lords amendment.

Dr. Marek: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There was some confusion when Mr. Speaker called the first amendment. He asked me to move amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 1. If that was the case, what you have just said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is perfectly correct. I certainly was not going to shout, "Aye" when you put the Question on amendment (a). I do not know whether that helps you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not need any help. I assumed that the hon. Gentleman, having been called to do so by Mr. Speaker, had moved his amendment to the Lords amendment. I put the Question that amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 1 be made and there was no response other than "No", so I declared that the Noes had it. Therefore, the amendment to the Lords amendment was negatived.

Lords amendment No. 1 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 6, line 8, after "or" insert

"while continuing to be operations of a department of the government"

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Dr. Marek: First, I should like to thank my hon. Friend Lord Bruce of Donington for moving the amendment in another place and securing its acceptance there. My hon. Friend in the other place took a great interest in the Bill, did a lot of work on it, and I am sure spent a considerable time examining it and making sure that there were no further pitfalls or loopholes in it. It has been 17 years, since the Trading Funds Act 1973, before the Government have had to introduce more legislation because of what they considered to be a lacuna in that 1973 Act. There is nothing wrong with taking careful measure of any Bill to see whether it is watertight. I am certainly most grateful to my hon. Friend Lord Bruce of Donington.

I should like to pursue the point that I raised about privatisation. I very much approve of the Economic Secretary's reply to amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 1. He said that the privatisation of trading funds cannot occur without primary legislation.

The Paymaster General, the Earl of Caithness, did not reply fully to my hon. Friend Lord Bruce of Donington when he moved the amendment. He said that he was advised that there was no question of any possible privatisation without future primary legislation, but unfortunately he did not say it categorically. He said simply that he was grateful to Lord Bruce for tabling the amendment and recommended that the House should accept it. He said:

"It proves the diligent work which the noble Lord has carried out on this Bill. It is something that we have come to expect from him and he had not let us down. He had given careful and detailed study to this measure."—[*Official Report, House of Lords;* 18 June 1990, Vol. 520, c. 604.]

He then moved on to another point with which I shall deal in a moment.

The Economic Secretary has already satisfied me in his reply to amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 1. However, it is an important point, and I hope that the House will forgive me if I mention it again. Privatisation of parts of the civil service that have trading funds will not be possible without primary legislation and the House being given the opportunity to discuss the matter. I am very pleased about that.

The Earl of Caithness then talked about how annual reports and accounts would be presented. I have a letter——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The amendment merely seeks to insert the words

"while continuing to be operations of a department of the government."

It is difficult to relate what the hon. Gentleman is saying to the Lords amendment.

Dr. Marek: I hope that you will bear with me for about 30 seconds, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have the *Hansard* of the

[Dr. Marek]

debate on Report in another place, considering what is now Lords amendment No. 2. The Paymaster General spoke about annual reports and accounts. If you bear with me for a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall be as quick as I can.

I have a letter from the Earl of Caithness to Lord Bruce of Donington, in which he makes it absolutely clear that copies of reports and accounts in the continuing work of the Government trading funds have to be laid before both Houses. Towards the end of the letter the Paymaster General states:

"If exceptionally the annual report is published separately, then the Treasury would use its powers of direction under section 4(6A) to ensure that the annual report is available to Parliament, either by laying it before both Houses or by placing copies in the Libraries of both Houses."

If those reports were made separately, it would be very useful for them to be laid on the Table of the House as they would automatically come to the notice of hon. Members. If they were simply placed in the Library, the onus would be on hon. Members to seek the information required. I hope that the Economic Secretary will assure me that the reports and accounts will be placed on the Table of the House.

I have made only two quick points: the first concerns privatisation, and the second is about reports and accounts being placed on the Table of the House. I should be interested to hear the Economic Secretary's reply.

Mr. Ryder: I am happy to elaborate on the Government's commitment on privatisation as it is relevant to the Bill. There are differences of opinion between the two sides of the House, but the "next steps" agency's document made the position clear. The Prime Minister said:

"Next steps is primarily about those operations which are to remain within Government. . .Where there is a firm intention of privatisation when an agency is being set up, this should be made clear."—*[Official Report,* 24 October 1988; Vol. 139, *c.14.*]

Thus, in the rare cases when we anticipate privatisation, that will be made clear when the agency is set up. Of course, not all agencies will become trading funds, but for those that do, the position is now equally clear. Although we cannot rule out privatisation of funding operations, that would require primary legislation to deal with the winding up of funds as, for example, happened with the Crown Suppliers.

Lords amendment No. 2—an Opposition amendment that was accepted by the Government—put that beyond doubt by making it clear that the winding-up provisions are not concerned with finding operations ceasing because they are being privatised.

As for the hon. Gentleman's other point, I am happy to say to him that it would be for the convenience of hon. Members if the reports and accounts of trading funds were given the widest possible circulation in the House, compatible with the existing arrangements. The hon. Gentleman knows that we have already committed ourselves to putting those documents in the Libraries of both Houses. We shall certainly do everything we can to ensure that, compatible with the existing arrangements, they are given the widest possible circulation, outside the two Libraries, within the Palace of Westminster.

6 pm

Dr. Marek: Would it be possible for them to appear on the pink slips in the Vote Office? That would make a big difference. If they appear on the pink slips, they come to the attention of every hon. Member as a matter of course.

Mr. Ryder: I have no objection to them appearing on the pink slips, provided that that arrangement is compatible with what happens in other related spheres. I shall certainly look into the matter with a view to trying to achieve that aim on the hon. Gentleman's behalf.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to the Economic Secretary for his reply. I can ask no more than that he should look into the matter and try to achieve that aim.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES OF FUNDS

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 8, line 28, after "require" insert—

"(6B) Where any enactment (other than this Act) requires, in whatever terms, a report to be prepared for any period as to the funded operations and sent to any person, or laid before Parliament, or both or so sent or laid by any time or times, an order may provide for that requirement to be treated as satisfied by preparing the report for the financial year and sending it to that person, or laying it before Parliament, or both, as the case may be, so sending or laying it by the time or times specified in the order."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Dr. Marek: There was a debate in the other place about whether the amendment should have been tabled. As far as both I and their Lordships were able to discover, it was tabled simply to take account of practices in the Patent Office.

I wonder whether an amendment could have been tabled simply for the Patent Office. I do not disagree with the Lords amendment, but a little information about it would be helpful. Is it just the Patent Office that is covered, or does the amendment cover other bodies?

Mr. Ryder: The amendment is intended to deal with a problem which, so far as we know, is confined solely to the Patent Office. However, the amendment would cover any other similar problem. The Patent Office is required by the legislation to produce an annual report on a calendar-year basis. The intention underlying sections 4(6) and 4(6)(a) of the 1973 Act, as amended by the Bill, is that trading funds should be able to produce and publish combined annual reports and accounts. Since the Patent Office works on an April to March financial year, which it would be likely to retain if it were to become a trading fund, if it is to meet that requirement, the Patent Office will either have to change its financial year to the calendar year or publish two separate annual reports. The amendment solves the problem by making it possible for a report that is produced for a trading fund's financial year to be treated as satisfying any other statutory reporting requirements.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 9, line 11, at end insert—

"(5) That Act, as amended by section 1 of this Act and this section, is set out in Schedule *(Government Trading Funds Act 1973, as amended)* to this Act."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 5.

Dr. Marek: This is another technical amendment. However, I should like the Economic Secretary to put on record his assurance that that is the case—that the Government Trading Funds Act 1973, as amended, is being reprinted in the schedule to the Bill and that the amendments deal with purely consolidation matters.

This is a small Bill on which both the Government and the Opposition have collaborated to improve it. If the Economic Secretary can reassure me on that point, I believe that, together with the other amendments that have been made in both Houses, the Bill is now a better Bill.

Mr. Ryder: The purpose of the amendments, however lengthy they may be, is extremely simple. The Bill amends the Government Trading Funds Act 1973. However, it is not easy to follow the final result simply by reading the Act and the Bill together. Therefore, we considered that it would help those who will use the legislation if the Bill reprinted the 1973 Act, as amended.

For the avoidance of any doubt, I should make it clear that the amendments make no change whatever to the text of the Bill. They reflect all the amendments that have been made to the Bill during its passage through both Houses, including Lords amendments Nos. 1 to 3, which have just been agreed to by the House.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his assistance in ensuring that the Bill has been improved. Both he and his noble Friend Lord Bruce of Donington gave us useful advice.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 5 agreed to.

Aviation and Maritime Security Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 5

OFFENCES RELATING TO SECURITY AT AERODROMES ETC. 1982 c. 36

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 10, line 10, leave out "course of his duty" and insert "exercise of the power conferred by section 20(2)(aa) of this Act"

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [*20 June*], That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Question again proposed.

6.8 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Since Lords amendment No. 5 relates to clause 5, as well as to identity documents and security, may I raise with the Minister a case that throws a little light on the clause. It is an important issue. It relates to security arrangements at Gatwick airport and to statements in connection with identity documents, as set out in clause 5.

The case is that of a constituent who has asked his Member of Parliament to draw the matter to the attention of the House. The constituent is me and I am my own Member of Parliament, so I know something about the case. It is not often that one has the opportunity to raise a case in such a direct way. However, it may help to amplify some of the issues raised in the amendments.

I shall not bore the House with the details, but I am sure that many hon. Members have experienced being parted from their luggage when travelling from one country to another. From 1 to 3 July I was on official business in Innsbruck in connection with the Council of Europe. I returned from Innsbruck in the company of two Conservative Members of Parliament. On 3 July we travelled to Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris. Unfortunately, that visit coincided with an air traffic dispute. We were therefore unable to catch our connecting Dan-Air flight No. 986 from Paris to London. We went to the Dan-Air desk where I produced my baggage receipt. The chap on the desk was very helpful. He said that since we needed to get back here to vote we should travel to London by other means. Therefore, we decided that the best method of travel would be by train and ferry. He took details of my baggage receipt number and said that he would be more than happy to ensure that my case was handed on to me at the House of Commons. There were two labels on my bag. One said, "Tony Banks MP" and the other had my name and home address on it. There was no doubt to whom the luggage belonged. We then went on to London. It took us a great deal of time to get here but we made it eventually.

I did not bother about my luggage because I assumed that it would catch up with me eventually. I knew that the dispute would last for a day or so longer. There is a theory that one of the rings of Saturn is made up entirely of lost airline luggage. I can only assume that my luggage has now been added to that collection. I have been waiting for my luggage to be returned from Gatwick airport by Dan-Air authorities. It has not turned up. The manager of the Thomas Cook office in the House has been assiduous in trying to track it down. Some 10 days after I returned,

[Mr. Tony Banks]

when I was beginning to become a little concerned about the whereabouts of my luggage, he was told that it had been collected on 10 July. The baggage receipt label had remained in the possession of the Thomas Cook office all that time. Obviously, I had not collected it and I wondered who had. I asked Mrs. Banks whether she had collected it unbeknown to me but she insisted that she had not. I began to get rather worried.

This matter is related to the amendments because someone must have seen the luggage in the baggage handling area, pretended to be me and collected it. I have the details of the person who seems to be most concerned; the managing director of Gatwick Handling, which has handed over my luggage to someone purporting to be Tony Banks, Member of Parliament, without my knowing anything about it. When asked whether the luggage had been signed for, Gatwick Handling said it had not. The manager of the Thomas Cook office here asked on what authority the luggage was handed over. He was told that it had been handed over on authority but not what the authority was. It could not have been the baggage receipt because that has remained at the House of Commons. My luggage has disappeared.

I should like the Minister to make representations on my behalf to Mr. Peter O'Boyle, the managing director of Gatwick Handling, and to Dan-Air to ask what the hell a Member of Parliament has to do to ensure that something is done other than raise the matter with his Member of Parliament, which I have done, and for his Member of Parliament to raise it with the Minister, which I am now doing. This is outrageous. Someone has impersonated me and made off with some of my finest gear. If that is security at Gatwick airport, these amendments are sorely needed.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It is only because so many amendments are linked that I have not yet had the opportunity to find out to which amendment the hon. Gentleman was addressing himself.

Mr. Snape: Mr. Deputy Speaker, your customary ingenuity, together with that of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), will have to be brought into play if I am to comment in any detail on the sad sequence of events outlined so graphically by my hon. Friend. Although the matter is worrying from the point of security, it is difficult to believe that anyone could imitate my hon. Friend. He is one of the best known Members of the House, and it is a surprising breach of security that someone can purport to be Mr. Tony Banks and not be recognised. That is perhaps the most significant aspect of the issue. I hope that the Minister will treat the matter with the seriousness it deserves and that we will be given a proper explanation.

As you have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a large number of amendments are linked together, but I shall confine my remarks to amendment No. 41, which says:

"to take such steps—(i) to ascertain what practices or procedures are being followed in relation to security".

I want to deal particularly with the detection of substances such as semtex or, bearing in mind the experience of Dr. Jim Swire, marzipan. The Minister will be aware that the machinery currently being tested at Gatwick airport is primarily the TNA system, which cannot discriminate between various plastics, some of which contain nitrogen. I understand that there is a problem in distinguishing between wool and explosives.

I have a copy of a letter from Ferranti International to the Secretary of State, which was passed to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). Both Ferranti International and my hon. Friend have asked me to raise this matter. I understand from the letter that Ferranti recently invited the Secretary of State to a demonstration in London of some evaluation trials on what is known as the EGIS system.

Both sides of the House will be aware of the importance of the detection of plastic explosives. Ferranti's claims for the EGIS system suggest that it is superior to the TNA system. Did the Secretary of State go to the demonstration, and if so, what are the Department's views about its efficacy, bearing in mind the extensive trials held throughout Europe last year and this year? I will not press the Minister if he does not have the information to hand immediately. I know that he will agree that the detection of such substances is one of the most important aspects of airport security.

I should be grateful if at some stage during the debate he can tell the House whether the Secretary of State, Ministers or civil servants have any experience of the system and whether the claims made by Ferranti have been substantiated by his Department. I hope that we can have the fullest possible details of the Department's intentions on the testing of the machines at Gatwick and our other leading airports. This is the issue upon which hon. Members, both in Committee and on the Floor of the House, have expressed the greatest concern.

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was not able to make his speech a little earlier, because some of his points would have given the sketch writers some amusing thoughts and ideas. I remember the hon. Gentleman's visit to Paris, because I think that we met each other on the Gatwick express and I gave him a lift back to the House. I can assure him that I do not have his luggage—*[Interruption.]* I always try to be helpful, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) knows.

I shall look into the points made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West and I promise——

Mr. Tony Banks: That was not the occasion on which the Minister gave me a lift. I came back with two of the Minister's colleagues and we were forced to come back by train and ferry because of the dispute. We never made Gatwick airport.

I have raised this issue in a reasonably light-hearted way, but there are serious implications involved if someone can simply go along and satisfy the authorities that he is a Member of Parliament. It is not about me particularly but it demonstrates that there is something wrong with security at Gatwick.

Mr. McLoughlin: I accept that. I shall look into it and take the matter up with the appropriate authorities. I did not realise that the hon. Gentleman went abroad as often as he seems to.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) asked about the TNA machine and the Ferranti letter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. As he knows, the TNA machine is now in place at Gatwick. We

are looking at the progress that it is making, and we will be monitoring its effectiveness closely to see if it has a proper role to play. I should like to take the opportunity to go through some notes on the Ferranti machine and write to the hon. Gentleman.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 6 to 11 agreed to.

Clause 6

AIR CARGO AGENTS

Lords amendment: No. 12, in page 12, line 26, leave out "by them" and insert

"(whether by them or any other person)"

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 34.

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendments introduce no new points of principle. They revise the definition of cargo agents to include those who do not deliver cargo to an aircraft or ship but use a third party, such as a haulage contractor, to make the delivery.

Without the amendments, cargo agents would be able to escape from the effect of the security directions—and from the intentions of the clause—simply by using a haulage contractor to deliver cargo. I am sure that hon. Members will appreciate the significance and wisdom of these two small amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 17

INTERPRETATION OF PART II

Lords amendment: No. 13, page 20, line 30, after

"British Dependent Territories citizen"

insert

"a British National (Overseas)"

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is purely a technical amendment which adds the term "a British National (Overseas)" to those found in clause 17(1)(a). The term is derived from the provisions of the Hong Kong Act 1985 and brings the terms used in paragraph (a) up to date.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 14 agreed to.

Clause 22

POWER TO REQUIRE HARBOUR AUTHORITIES TO PROMOTE SEARCHES IN HARBOUR AREAS

Lords amendment: No. 15, in page 24, line 47, leave out from "then" to "any" and insert

"subject to subsections (3A) and (3B) below, if a constable or"

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 16.

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendments seek to strengthen the rights of private householders in harbour areas where a search of their home is necessary.

The amendments present two safeguards for householders who, often by accidents of geography or history, live within harbour areas. First, in line with general practice, only constables with a warrant will be able to carry out searches of private residences, and, secondly, only certain constables will be able to carry out such searches. Searches of private dwellings outside harbour areas are not possible under the terms of the Bill.

Clause 22 has been substantially amended, but the Government never intended to use the powers in the Bill to require private residences to be searched by security guards. Where there was a need for a private residence within a harbour area to be searched—that would be agreed to only after the most careful consideration—the Secretary of State would require it to be carried out by the appropriate constables. That has been formalised by the amendments.

Mr. Snape: The amendments touch on an important point of principle. Hon. Members will agree that the redrafting of the regulations for the searching of private premises within harbour areas is welcome.

There was an exchange in another place between the Minister and my noble Friend Lord Underhill about the port of Harwich. I do not press the Minister if he does not have the information immediately to hand, but doubt was expressed about whether clause 22, as amended by their Lordships, would cover specific problems in and around a port.

If the Minister has any information, we should be delighted to hear it, but we rest content on the important point of principle that it will be impossible to search private homes within a harbour area without the acquisition of a proper warrant.

Mr. McLoughlin: I confirm what the hon. Gentleman has said. We were concerned about how this problem came to light and we have substantially amended the clause to meet some of the objections that he made.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): If a private security guard approaches a constable, on what grounds does the constable make a search?

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall try to help the right hon. Gentleman, but I am aware of his tremendous knowledge on the subject. The only people who will able to carry out searches of private homes in harbour areas are constables.

Mr. Rees: I understand that, but on what grounds does the constable carry out the search? Does he question the security guard before making a decision?

Mr. McLoughlin: A search would be carried out under the necessary direction by a constable of the appropriate forces. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman understands the words "appropriate forces".

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments No. 16 to 19 agreed to.

Clause 25

MATTERS WHICH MAY BE INCLUDED IN DIRECTIONS UNDER SECTIONS 21 TO 24

Lords amendment: No. 20, in page 29, line 12, leave out "In so far as" and insert "Where".

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 21, 22 and 39.

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendments have their origins in an amendment to what is now clause 25, which was moved in Committee by the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn).

The amendments to clause 25(4) and the equivalent amendment to the Aviation Security Act 1982 provide that a person receiving a direction which requires searches to be carried out or other measures to be taken by the police should inform the local chief officer of police or, in Northern Ireland, the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary if the direction requires the searches or other measures to be undertaken by armed police.

Directions proposing the arming of police are likely to be issued infrequently; none has been issued under the powers of the 1982 Act. Nevertheless, I am sure that hon. Members will agree that it would be wise to have this power available in case urgent and direct action is necessary in the event of an increased threat of a terrorist act.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 21 to 34 agreed to.

Clause 54

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Lords amendment: No. 35, in page 49, line 12, after "repeals" insert

"in the Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975."

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Hon. Members will note that clause 54 postpones for two months after Royal Assent the commencement of several provisions, including schedule 3. Paragraph (3) of that schedule amends section 2(1)(a) of the Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975. Therefore, the corresponding repeal in schedule 4 should be postponed for the same period, and the amendment will achieve that.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 36 to 39 agreed to.

Schedule 1

FURTHER AMENDMENTS OF THE AVIATION SECURITY ACT 1982

Lords amendment: No. 40, in page 54, line 2, at end insert—

"(aa) for the words from "any person authorised" to ""authorised person")" there is substituted "an authorised person","

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 42.

Mr. McLoughlin: These amendments provide for the retention of the term "authorised person" in section 20(1) of the Aviation Security Act 1982 but delete the wording that defines that expression. The wording is unnecessary because the definition of "authorised person" is set out in paragraph 16 of schedule 1.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 41 and 42 agreed to.

Televising of Proceedings of the House

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and other hon. Members.

6.29 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move,

That this House agrees with the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House in its First Report (House of Commons Paper No. 265—I).

It might be worth recording my impression that one reason for the lack of overwhelming enthusiasm for attending this important debate is the fact that an equally important presentation by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is taking place in another theatre in a different part of the House. I dare say that interest will increase as we proceed.

As the House will be aware, the Select Committee, which I chair, published its report last week. Our verdict, simply put, is that the experiment has been a success and our recommendation—with only one dissentient, for rather special reasons—is that televising should become a permanent feature of the House. The report is long and covers all the matters of potential concern to the House, or about which particular anxieties have been expressed.

Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of the whole House, my thanks to all those whose efforts and expertise have made the experiment possible. They are listed in paragraph 6 of our report, but I wish specifically to mention the broadcasting organisations and Broadcasting Communications, which produced the signal. We should also pay tribute to the occupants of the Chair in this House and also to the Chairmen, members and staff of Select and Standing Committees, the Parliamentary Works Office, Mr. David Doig, the Clerk to our Committee, and most notably, if I may say so, the supervisor of broadcasting, Mr. John Grist, whose role has been a source of great reassurance to some hon. Members who were initially doubtful about the experiment.

I turn now to the Committee's detailed findings about the conduct of the experiment in the Chamber and in Committees. Paragraphs 16 to 33 of the report review aspects of televising in the Chamber itself, including the cameras, which have proved a great success technically, without being unduly obtrusive; the control room which, although extremely cramped, has worked remarkably well; and the cooling and ventilation system, which has, on the whole, been adequate to the task of dissipating the extra heat from the upgraded temporary space lights.

The lighting was probably the subject of the greatest apprehension before the experiment began. Certainly, the additional brightness—although it is at the margins of acceptabilty for television purposes—can be tiring on the eyes, especially towards the end of a long sitting. Equally certainly, the makeshift temporary lights that we can see above us can hardly be regarded as the embodiment of good taste and aesthetic excellence. But, by and large—I realise not everyone will agree—the House seems to have grown accustomed to the increased light levels, and has tolerated them as part of the experiment.

I should, incidentally, make it clear that if we vote for permanent televising, we shall have to live with the temporary lights for another Session while detailed work continues on the suitable design of a permanent replacement lighting system.

Let me next deal with the subject of sound in the Chamber, for this matter has been raised on the Floor of the House more than any other during the experiment. Its importance is reflected in the great emphasis which we give to it in our report. Our approach to the subject is set out in paragraph 23, from which I quote:

"We recognise that the first requirement of a debating Chamber such as the House of Commons is that it should be possible to hear the Member who is speaking, save only in extremely noisy conditions. The House is entitled to expect that every effort will be made to take full advantage of technological developments so that the standard of audibility in the Chamber is the best available. That being said, we think it right to emphasise at the outset"—

I am still quoting from the report—

"that the basic sound system in the Chamber has not been modified for the televising experiment."

I strongly emphasise that.

The sound system currently in use—that is to say, the microphones and the bench amplifiers—although it was the subject of significant modifications in 1970-71, was first installed as long ago as 1951. Technical advice, not surprisingly, is that—irrespective of televising—the system will need to be replaced or radically overhauled some time during the next five years. Work is already proceeding more urgently than that.

The files of the old Sound Broadcasting Committee, whose responsibilities we inherited, demonstrate clearly that complaints about audibility in the Chamber are not new, although I acknowledge that their number and frequency have grown since the start of the experiment. Quite why that should be is a question which has perplexed the Select Committee and its advisers. As the report makes clear, apart from some minor adjustments of the microphones near the Dispatch Boxes, there have been no changes to the sound system since the introduction of televising. I must also stress, as this was raised again in the House only the other day, that the bench amplifiers have been turned up as high as is consistent with the avoidance of feedback. They have most certainly not been altered —least of all turned down—to suit the whims of the broadcasters.

Nothing that I have said detracts from the seriousness with which the Select Committee views the genuine anxieties about audibility in the Chamber. It is for that very reason that the Committee has established a working party, under the chairmanship of the supervisor of broadcasting, to advise on the technical options for modernising the sound system. The working party, which is assisted by Mr. Richard Wright, head of sound operations at the BBC, will make its recommendations as early as possible in the next Session, with a view to any necessary work being carried out during the 1991 summer recess. The new equipment will almost certainly have to last as long as the present system, so a year spent now making sure that any proposed changes will work effectively is, in the Committee's judgment—and I hope that of the House—a price worth paying.

There are, it should be said, some very real constraints, which the Committee identified, on the scope for improvements in audibility in the Chamber—given what the report describes as

"its distinctive lay-out, architecture and political character."

We do not have desks in front of us, we do not have individual microphones, and the House will not hold all

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

hon. Members at the same time. When the House is very noisy—whether we like it or not this happens with some regularity—the Committee says that

"only a system of individual microphones would be able to cope".

That is not feasible. The Committee has rightly assumed that the House would not be willing to countenance fundamental changes in its practice and procedure to achieve total, continuous audibility.

We certainly shall, however, be aiming to secure the most efficient sound system consistent with these practical limitations, because I have no doubt that that is what the House is entitled to expect. We will try to bring it up to date, to the highest standards possible.

It is only right to end this section of my remarks on a positive note. As we point out in the report, the production of a television signal of broadcastable quality from the Chamber is a demanding operation, and it has been carried out, the Committee concludes,

"with great skill and proficiency".

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the event that the House were to approve the report tonight and accept permanence as a principle, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman believe that it is highly unlikely that the House would ever wish to reverse such a decision, given that the public clearly want cameras in the Chamber?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The development of opinion in the Committee, which I think is reflected in the House, is the best pointer. The Committee included several people who originally voted against the experiment. At the end of the day only one still dissented, on a conditional basis. I think that opinion has moved strongly in the direction of permanence.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does that mean that it is irreversible?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Nothing is irreversible. We cannot bind our successors. Some eccentric successors may come along and undo all our good work, but I hope not.

On the whole, the Select Committee concludes that this aspect of the experiment has been handled "both efficiently and resourcefully." That judgment appears to be shared by the overwhelming majority of Select and Standing Committee Chairmen. That is not to deny that there have been problems—notably with the operation of the microphones and with the temperature in Committee Rooms on hot days—although, again, both are matters which predate televising. In addition, tripod-mounted cameras are less than ideal because of the amount of space that they take up, and many Chairmen would prefer the installation of remote-controlled equipment, as in the Chamber. Certainly the Select Committee takes the same view. I must point out that, even if we assume that the House will approve the Committee report today, the considerable additional costs involved make it unlikely that that development will come about before any permanent televising arrangements are in place.

Let me say a word about the effect of all that on the House itself. Before the experiment began, fears were widely expressed that the presence of the cameras would have a number of undesirable effects on the way in which the House conducts its business. For instance, it was claimed that hon. Members would "play to the gallery", that speeches would become a series of quotable "sound bites", and even that standards of discipline would deteriorate.

No one could claim, with hand on heart, that the House has continued to behave as though the cameras were not there. We have all grown accustomed to the initially disconcerting practice of "doughnutting"—although "doughnuts" appear to be in short supply tonight. We have all noticed some colleagues appearing in unfamiliar places to benefit from the more becoming backdrop of the panelling under the galleries, and it would be surprising if hon. Members—especially, perhaps, those of us who are able to speak from the Dispatch Boxes—were not conscious at times of addressing a rather wider audience. Even if we allow for all those factors, however, it is difficult to sustain the argument that the basic character of the House as a lively, often intimate debating forum has been changed to any significant degree.

In regard to standards of conduct—one always hesitates to pronounce judgment about them—our report strikes a mildly encouraging note. Despite recent manifestations of what might be termed "July Syndrome", fewer Members have been named or ordered to withdraw from the Chamber during the experiment than in recent comparable Sessions. As for the general level of noise in the Chamber, we record in our report your impression, Mr. Speaker, that it had not increased markedly during the experiment.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): For the record, it should be said that withdrawal from the Chamber is often related to the behaviour of the Prime Minister. If there were another Westland, doubtless it would happen again.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman can be trusted to make an original intervention in any debate——

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree with that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I would not dream of responding, in that sense.

I have dealt so far with the way in which the television pictures of the House's proceedings have been produced —a process over which the House has been anxious to retain firm control. However, right hon. and hon. Members are equally, if not more, interested in the result —that is, how the televised material reaches viewers. Those matters fall within the editorial judgment of the broadcasters.

The Select Committee commissioned a comprehensive study from the parliamentary research group at the university of Leeds, and the group's final report is published in full as annex 4 to the Select Committee's report; I simply draw attention to its conclusions on regional coverage. The group judges that the broadcasters have fully met the assurances that they gave before the experiment began as regards achieving reasonable balance and reflecting local interests. On political balance generally, the report mentions two points of concern, but also lists a number of qualifying factors that made reliable conclusions on that sensitive subject hazardous. For those reasons, the Select Committee deliberately refrained from comment, instead drawing attention to the statutory machinery to deal with complaints in that regard.

In the Committee's view—confirmed by the Leeds group—the volume of coverage in the Chamber has been

pretty well as expected, with the emphasis overwhelmingly on extracts used in news and current affairs programmes. However, Committee coverage has, in the words of the report, been "vastly in excess" of what was predicted, and the amount of live coverage has been especially encouraging, given the fears before the experiment that there might be none at all.

Audiences for specialised programmes have been steady, although not spectacular; it is through news programmes that most of our constituents see the work of the House. As those bulletins are watched by many millions of people, we should not underestimate the extent to which the televising of our proceedings has opened up the House to a much wider audience. If the Select Committee has any significant regret, it is about the lack of an evening round-up programme of the day's parliamentary business on any of the terrestrial channels —although we recognise that that is a matter for the editorial discretion of the broadcasters.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The right hon. and learned Gentleman qualified that latter remark by referring to "terrestrial channels". There is an excellent evening round-up programme on British Satellite Broadcasting—BSB—called "Left, Right And Centre"; I am an occasional presenter, along with other hon. Members. Perhaps that format could be urged on other television producers, and there could be a televised equivalent of "Today in Parliament".

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has underlined my point. I think that the Committee, as a whole, hoped for something of the kind. I suspect that, with the multiplication of channels, there will be an amplification of coverage of various kinds. I shall say more about that when I deal with the dedicated channel.

The House will be aware that the rules of coverage—the types of shot that the television director is permitted to take—were relaxed after about two months of the experiment, to allow a somewhat wider range of reaction shots and to enable the director to use a "mid" or group shot. In addition, a second wide-angle feed has been made available to the broadcasters, strictly for editorial purposes.

Mr. Dalyell: I am not complaining, but will the Leader of the House satisfy my curiosity? By what alchemy have the rules suddenly become more and more relaxed? I am not saying that it was wrong, but, after all the firm assurances that we have been given, I think that we are entitled to ask how it happened.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is no question of alchemy. The Committee was not a Committee of alchemists but a Committee of parliamentarians operating in accordance with the rules laid down in last year's report, and those rules were quite clear. The hon. Gentleman says that he is satisfying his own curiosity; he could do so completely if he were to study last year's report, which said that this was an experimental process but that, throughout the days of the experiment, variations in the rules should be permitted. Flexibility was encouraged, under the discretion and the control of the Committee of which I was Chairman, and it was in response to representations made by the broadcasters that the variations were made.

The Committee concluded that the rules, as now framed, afford "a reasonably clear, accurate and lively account of the House's proceedings."

That does not mean to say that they have necessarily reached a final, immutable form. The Select Committee —or, more accurately, its successor—will remain ready to consider any suggestions that may be made for changes in the rules; however, it is my guess that they are likely to be no more than marginal in character. We seem to have reached a reasonable modus vivendi.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Before he leaves that point, will my right hon. and learned Friend tell us whether the Committee examined the quality of the commentaries aligned with the programmes? I find that in a certain programme broadcast on Sunday mornings, the two commentators treat the subject in a very glib style, and I am not sure that they do any good to the presentation of the film.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I note what my hon. Friend says. That point was not raised with the Committee. However, my hon. Friend can raise it directly with the broadcasters.

If the House agrees with us that the experiment should be regarded as a success and that televising should be placed on a permanent footing, how are we to proceed from here? The report proposes that the current administrative and financial arrangements—whereby the broadcasters fund a company, House of Commons Broadcasting Unit Ltd., which subcontracts the production of the signal to an independent operator—should continue until 31 July 1991. In the meantime, the Select Committee's successor should work out the details of a permanent televising system, which would be submitted to the House for its approval by Easter 1991 and would come into effect in autumn next year.

We shall continue with the present arrangement—if it is the wish of the House to make it permanent—and, during the next six months, we shall work out the permanent arrangements that will thereafter come into place.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is it proposed that the Committee, when it is reconvened—assuming that the House agrees—will examine the non-broadcast use of material from the House? As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, I have written to him about that, and I hope to raise the matter if I am called. Will it be within the terms of reference?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes, indeed. The right hon. Gentleman has been in touch with me on more than one occasion on that matter. We have had several applications from outside broadcasters and composers to use material from the television archive that has not been broadcast. We have not found it easy to come to principled conclusions on the matter, so we have put it to one side and we shall look for principles to guide us in making the right reaction in due course. Most of us believe that the right answer will come with the introduction of a dedicated channel. That will put everything in the public domain and people will be able to do what they like. The televised material will then be like a copy of *Hansard*. It will be as available as *Hansard*.

Mr. Benn: The problem is not availability. Hon. Members can obtain any debate from the archives but must sign a statement that it will not be used. Like *Hansard*, non-broadcast material is available but one must undertake not to use it.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is right. It is available in record form but it has not been broadcast. There is no lack of sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman's points, but if we move into that territory we must have rules to guide us.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned a dedicated channel. It might be of use to the House if he would talk a little about his thoughts and expand on the points about a dedicated channel. As he knows, an amendment has been tabled by 168 hon. Members calling for a dedicated channel in the fairly near future. It would be of great use if we could bear my right hon. and learned Friend's thoughts in mind.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The most unsurprising thing that I am likely to say in my speech is that I did not need my hon. Friend's encouragement to address myself to that topic. Clearly, I shall have to deal with that.

I shall deal first with the two alternatives that we have identified for permanent television and come on to the dedicated channel after that. The Committee identifies two main options for permanent arrangements. One is a House broadcasting unit, which would own or lease the necessary equipment and would be directly responsible for producing the signal and supplying it to the broadcasters. The other is an independent unit answerable to a Select Committee and contracted to or licensed by the House to produce the signal and supply it to the broadcasters. In either case the production of the signal could be carried out as an integrated operation incorporating coverage of Committees and another place, assuming that their Lordships are willing to consider such a proposition.

I know that some right hon. and hon. Members are attracted to the idea of a House unit constituted as a Department of the House. The Committee will certainly examine that option seriously. However, we shall want to explore carefully the extent to which the legitimate desire of the House to retain control over the form of the signal necessitates in practice the employment of the relevant broadcasting staff by the House itself. Equally, if the idea of an independent unit is pursued, we shall need to be assured that the interests of the House are properly safeguarded and that the broadcasters are protected against unfair exploitation by a monopoly supplier of the signal. Whichever alternative is adopted, the House can be assured that it will retain control over the televising operation through the Select Committee and, on a day-to-day basis, through the Supervisor of Broadcasting.

The financial arrangements could in theory range from total public funding to a scheme in which the broadcasters pay the full cost of generating the signal—perhaps through some form of subscription. Obviously, I must not anticipate the Committee's eventual conclusions, but I think it fair to state as a general principle—it may be only my view—that the initial onus lies on those who favour public funding to show why the broadcasters should not continue to be responsible, as they are now, for meeting the major part of the costs. The House might take the view that the division of expenditure on the experiment is broadly correct. The Parliamentary Works Office met the cost of changes to the fabric of the building, the House was responsible for the staffing of the Select Committee, including the Supervisor of Broadcasting, and the broadcasters paid for the equipment. All those matters will receive the Select Committee's urgent attention next Session and I hope that the House will understand why, given their complexity, we did not attempt to reach conclusions on them in time for this debate.

I now come to a dedicated channel, about which many right hon. and hon. Members feel strongly. It was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey). It is reflected in the amendment which you said that you intended to call, Mr. Speaker, tabled by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). Should we have a dedicated channel devoted to continuous transmission of the proceedings of the House—gavel to gavel, as the transatlantic jargon has it, although we do not have gavels in the House? The advantages of such a development are obvious. It would ensure complete coverage. It would avoid the problems of editing and compression into unrepresentative highlights which worry the House.

The Select Committee needed and needs no persuasion of the merits of a dedicated channel. The case for that was firmly upheld in the Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). His case was, indeed, totally accepted by the Committee. Paragraph 172 of the report says:

> "We reiterate our belief in the need for a dedicated channel providing continuous, unedited coverage of the House's proceedings and we recommend that this should be provided at the earliest opportunity, as an adjunct to the permanent televising of the House."

That is as far as the Committee goes. There is absolutely no doubt about our position. The House will be interested to know that discussions are already taking place on one possible scheme which, at first sight, appears rather promising. So there need be no doubt that this is an issue which the Committee has taken and will take extremely seriously, and on which we propose to take evidence in the autumn, if the House approves our report tonight.

The amendment appears to mean that the House's approval for the Committee's report, and hence for the principle of permanent televising, is conditional on the existence of a fully operational, permanent dedicated channel within 12 months. Strictly speaking, if no such channel were established by then, and despite the promising proposal that I mentioned, that certainly cannot be assured. So televising at that point would either come to an end or we would need to make it subject to annual renewal by the House. That would run completely counter to the main thrust of the report, which is that the principle of permanent televising should be settled once and for all now.

The amendment is also unhelpful in that it seeks to tie the hands of the House in advance before it has seen the outcome of the evidence which the report says that the Committee proposes to take on the subject next Session. In my judgment, the amendment is unhelpful even to the fulfilment of its own objectives.

Nothing that I have said detracts from the importance of the objective of establishing a dedicated channel. The Select Committee goes out of its way to endorse that strongly in the report. We considered the proposition which is explicit in the amendment. After considering it carefully and tightening the drafting, we concluded, with only one dissenter—my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North—that our conclusion was right.

I advise the House that we should now come to a conclusion on the main question. It must make sense to decide whether we shall say yes or no to permanence

today. That will not in any sense diminish the zeal with which I and the Committee will pursue the establishment of arrangements for a dedicated channel.

The Committee proposes to follow up several other matters if our report is agreed by the House. They include the requirements of the archive. That embraces the point of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). Last, but far from least, we shall consider the needs of the deaf. No fewer than 4 million of our fellow citizens are classified as hard of hearing, of whom some 2·5 million suffer from a hearing impairment sufficiently serious for them to benefit from subtitling. For that reason, a whole section of our report is devoted to the needs of the deaf and to the trials of subtitling and signing which the Committee has organised on their behalf. Access for the deaf to our proceedings is an important topic which will be high on the new Committee's continuing agenda.

In conclusion, I remind the House that the Select Committee's report is the outcome of a careful and considered evaluation of the experiment by 20 right hon. and hon. Members, seven of whom voted against the original decision to hold it. The fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North now remains the lone dissentient—only in a qualified sense, but he can speak for himself later—is some measure of the extent to which the experiment has proved that the House can be, as the report states,

"exposed to a wider audience through television without losing its special character."

The success of the experiment reflects credit not only on those hon. Members who have always been in favour of televising, but on those who honourably held—some still do—a contrary view, but who co-operated fully. They bore with fortitude the inevitable changes in the appearance and working conditions of the Chamber and Committee Rooms.

We have been able between us—broadcasters alongside politicians—to develop an important interpenetrating partnership in which each has come increasingly to understand the other and in which, so far at least, we may all have some modest pride.

After decades of debate, not just inside the House, but outside, prompted by such notable and diverse pioneers as Sir Robin Day and Aneurin Bevan, who spoke strongly in favour of television in 1959, the House has the opportunity tonight to settle one way or the other whether it wants its proceedings to be televised on a permanent basis. The Select Committee's report gives a clear lead in favour of permanent televising and I commend it to the House without condition, qualification or amendment.

7 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I strongly support the motion in the name of the Leader of the House, but although I voted for the televising of the Commons and the establishment of the experiment, I am by no means an unqualified and uncritical supporter of it.

I had certain reservations about the way in which the experiment would work in practice. First, I was concerned about the effect of televising on the behaviour of the Chamber—I hold different views about that from Conservative Members. Secondly, I was concerned about the balance of coverage between the House and its Committees. My third concern was the political balance of coverage between the Government and the Opposition. My anxieties have been removed on several grounds, but I am still anxious about one matter, about which I shall speak later.

I do not want to miss the wood for the trees. I want to emphasise the main thrust of the Select Committee that the televising experiment has been a remarkable success. Thankfully, we are not dependent upon anecdotal evidence to judge its success.

I join the Leader of the House in paying tribute to the people involved with the report at different stages. I especially want to pay tribute to the Institute of Communication Studies of the university of Leeds for its research on the televising experiment. Its report contains a wealth of information and it means that our judgment can be based upon a proper detailed assessment of programme output, not on the views of individual hon. Members.

As a result of the research undertaken by the BBC on the public's reaction to the experiment and that undertaken by the Independent Broadcasting Authority on the reaction of hon. Members, we have a substantial body of research from which we can form our judgment.

The unequivocal message from the research is that the experiment should cease and televising become a permanent feature. The BBC research into public reaction to the experiment revealed that the overwhelming majority of people, 83 per cent., felt that the televising should continue. The public also made some interesting observations about us: 70 per cent. of them thought that most hon. Members were quite intelligent—I do not know where they got that figure from—59 per cent. thought that we worked very hard, which is undoubtedly true, and as many as 40 per cent. thought that we were trustworthy. The crucial figure is the 83 per cent. of the public who feel that the experiment has been a success. We should be answerable to them were we to switch off the cameras.

The IBA conducted a survey into the reaction of hon. Members to the experiment and it revealed that the proportion of hon. Members who supported the televising of the Commons grew as the experiment proceeded. I hope that an overwhelming majority of the House now want that experiment to become permanent.

The most interesting research was that conducted by the Institute of Communication Studies on the way in which broadcasters dealt with the material that we sent out. That material is no use unless it is broadcast in a way in which people find it watchable and can be assimilated by them. On page 35 of the Select Committee report, the researchers at Leeds university conclude:

"Broadcast reporting of Parliamentary proceedings has evidently been extensive, serious, responsible, balanced in many respects, even at times creative . . . It is thus hard to find a single criterion by which their record and performance during the experiment could be seriously faulted."

That is praise indeed and it is based upon an assessment of the output.

It is also important to consider the audiences that we have reached via the various programmes. The report details the audience figures for "Westminster Live" on BBC 2 and its coverage of Prime Minister's Question Time, which ranged from 800,000 to 2 million. The "Parliament Programme" on Channel 4 attracts audiences of between 200,000 and 250,000. "Westminster Week" on BBC 2 attracts an audience of 300,000, as does "Week in Politics" on Channel 4. Even "Westminster"—one would have to be an addict to watch it since it is broadcast at the dreadful time of 8.15 am—attracts 100,000 of our fellow

[Mr. Bruce Grocott]

citizens—an average of 150 per constituency. If any hon. Member could address 150 of his constituents at that time in the morning, he would have a better means of communication with them than me.

Those figures are remarkable, especially when one compares them with the previous potential viewing figures. The Strangers' Gallery has the capacity for 157 people, but compare that with the lowest viewing figure of 100,000 —those who watch "Westminster" on BBC2, broadcast the day after the events in the House. That demonstrates the success of television in making our proceedings available to our democracy as never before.

The overwhelming thrust of our findings is that the experiment has been a success. I shall consider the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) in a moment, but I hope that all hon. Members will be cautious before voting for any amendment that says, in effect, because we cannot provide a single dedicated channel within a set time, we should switch off the signal currently received by so many of the public.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend used the words "switch off the signal". Did he hear the reply that the Leader of the House gave to me when I intervened? He said that he could not bind his successors. He was speaking for the Government. It is not, therefore, the Government's intention to see television removed from the House through their initiative. That means that the right hon. and learned Gentleman accepts that, in the event of the 12-month period running out, another motion will be tabled next year. How does that mean the signal would be switched off? That is my case, but my hon. Friend has misrepresented me.

Mr. Grocott: I am not misrepresenting the words on the Order Paper that we must follow. My hon. Friend's English is the same as mine and the words on the Order Paper say:

"provided that within 12 months from the date of approval of this resolution, televised proceedings of the House are broadcast on a dedicated channel".

That can mean only that, if they are not, the Select Committee recommendation is not approved. I must leave it there because time is short and I am sure that my hon. Friend is anxious to make his own speech.

Fears were expressed about the effect of televising our proceedings. The first fear was that it might seriously affect the way in which the Chamber operates. Many hon. Members, particularly Conservatives, were fearful lest we might become unruly and disruptive. My anxieties were the reverse of that. The evidence is not that television makes people unruly and disruptive. Particularly for public figures, the evidence is that television makes them bland and rather boring. Most television presenters are incredibly bland and boring, in my view. Television sanitises events on many occasions, and that particularly applies to sporting events. Horses do not thunder over fences but flow over them on television, and one never feels the crunch of the tackle in football.

My fear was that we should lose our passion and genuine anger of this place, remembering that justifiable anger develops sometimes when we speak on behalf of our constituents. Indeed, there is some slight evidence that that has happened and that this has become a less rowdy place. Personally, I hope that that trend does not develop further. I want it to be a real place occupied by real people, and I am thankful that, by and large, television has not greatly affected the House.

The person whom television appeared to affect most in the early stages was the Prime Minister. For the first three months she was almost unrecognisable to my hon. Friends and me. She stopped sneering and started smiling at us. She looked up and appeared to enjoy life for a change. Thankfully, she has reverted to type and the snarls have returned. I am glad that television is consistently showing people as they are.

My anxieties about the coverage were accentuated by my dislike of the rules of coverage that we approved some months ago. I am pleased that in January we relaxed the rules, and I hope that the rules of coverage will be relaxed further, not so that things get out of hand, but because we should leave to the television directors the professional judgments that they can make about which shots to use. I hope that there will be more reaction shots. We have nothing to fear from such a development or from what I should like to see—the establishment of a television unit as a Department of the House. So I should like to see more reaction shots and more freedom given to the director, and perhaps we can relax the rules on disorder, to which there is reference in paragraphs 81 and 82 of the report.

Another fear that we need no longer have is that television might somehow neglect the engine rooms of the Commons, the Select and Standing Committees. There has been no such neglect. Indeed, there has been remarkably extensive cover of Committees. The statistics in the report show that 93 Select Committee meetings and 36 Standing Committee meetings were covered during the period of the experiment. What is more, they got good viewing figures when carried live. That applied particularly to Select Committees,

There is no secret why such meetings are popular with the public. It is because they are intelligible. It also has something to do with the fact that people taking part in Select Committee proceedings talk in language that people can understand. The proceedings do not sound as if what is happening is occurring in a club. For example, people talk to each other using their names. Like all hon. Members, I am proud of my constituency and mention it whenever I have the opportunity, but in the real world people call each other by their names rather than by their constituencies. That helps Select Committee proceedings to be intelligible to the public, and I believe that in the long term we have lessons to learn from that, from the point of view of the way in which we organise our proceedings on the Floor of the House.

Another pleasant surprise has been the regional coverage, which is of great importance to many hon. Members on both sides. I ask the House not to rely on my personal views but, again, to examine the study carried out by Leeds university, which said:

"The interesting and imaginative record of Parliamentary coverage in the regions was particularly impressive not only for amount but also for its distinctiveness.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I dispute the findings of Leeds university on that point because, as other hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies will agree, the coverage of the House in Northern Ireland is extremely limited. It is biased against many hon. Members and in favour of only one or two. The

way in which the proceedings of the House are broadcast —I should say, are not broadcast—is a disgrace to the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Grocott: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman put his views to the Select Committee or to the research group. It has been encouraging to note how little criticism there has been of the coverage at regional level. I can go only by the results of the research group, which show that that coverage has been most satisfactory.

I urge Conservative Members not to think that the changes for which they have voted relating to the broadcasting system could have no effect on the way our proceedings are covered. I find a curious split personality on the part of Conservative Members. On the one hand they constantly encourage the broadcasters by saying, "We must have more coverage of Parliament. It must be serious and praiseworthy". On the other they say, "We must throw television to the commercial winds." There are points at which those two objectives are not compatible, and the research shows that regional coverage in particular might be affected. On page 36 of the report, the Leeds university group said:

"Attention is drawn in the body of the report to several signs of BBC-ITV differences in regional television approaches to Parliamentary coverage, which might well be accentuated as competition intensifies on the commercial side of the British television divide."

It is all part of the argument about television quality and variety of programmes. Conservative Members cannot have it both ways on such issues.

On regional and Committee coverage the experiment has been a great success, but I draw attention to our recommendations that there should be two additional Committee Rooms equipped for television, that we should have remote cameras for coverage in Committee Rooms and that the ITV companies must try to find a better way of spreading the cost of Committee coverage so that single companies that want only one Committee covered for their region are not severely financially disadvantaged in the way that they are now. At present, if 10 companies want the signal, the cost is the session divided by 10. If one company wants it—and all too often the one is a smaller ITV company—it must bear the whole cost, and that position needs changing.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I hope that I shall have an opportunity of contributing to the debate later. In the meantime, I refer to the hon. Gentleman's apparent aversion to commercial television and private enterprise. Will he explain why, when an amendment was put before the Select Committee that would have offered the general viewing public start-to-finish coverage at public expense, every Labour member of the Committee rejected it?

Mr. Grocott: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am not averse to commercial television. I worked for it for eight happy years. He knows that the amendment was opposed because it would have made acceptance of the report conditional on that one consideration. The hon. Gentleman has a worthy obsession, for a dedicated channel, and we know that it comes from an hon. Member who has been consistent in his opposition to the principle of television coverage.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I refer the hon. Gentleman to a study for the Hansard Society entitled "Cameras in the Commons", which said, referring to Northern Ireland:

"the 1 March Questions also brought growing anger in Northern Ireland—mutually among MPs and broadcasters —on the way 'outsiders' were trying to get into the act, whether because their whips wanted it or because the Members wanted to be seen on television."

It also said that in mid-March

"only questions 6 and 17 among the first 20 were from Ulster Members. At that point the BBC and Ulster Television cancelled their plans for live cover of NI Questions both for 29 March and for early May. Before television, the ballot rarely went beyond 25 entries, almost all from within the Province. Now it was over 100."

Televising the House has not advantaged Northern Ireland Members and it has changed the attitude of the House to Northern Ireland questions.

Mr. Grocott: The hon. Gentleman will make his own speech in his own time. However, he knows that the report from which he quoted is also supportive of the experiment and of the effects of the experiment.

The other issue, which is more serious and more contentious between the Government and the Opposition, is that of political balance and of the coverage that Opposition and Conservative Members receive. The disparity between the coverage of the Government and of the Opposition is shown clearly in the research. I am fairly relaxed about that because I do not expect us to be in opposition much longer. However, as a matter of principle the figures should be of some concern.

I have always felt that television runs the risk of helping whichever party is in power. Governments have tremendous advantages with the media. Prime Ministers —notably this Prime Minister—can obtain media opportunities whenever they want them. They can appear on virtually any channel, at any time, with an interviewer of their choice and with the questions vetted beforehand. As we all know, the Lobby access and the Parliamentary Press Gallery access of Government Departments is phenomenal. At the most recent check, there were 166 Government press officers. Governments always have a huge advantage in getting their message across.

I was concerned—as was the Leeds university research group—when looking at the figures in table 6 on page 15, on actuality coverage—that is, clips from the Chamber —to find that there were 268 clips of the Prime Minister, 105 of the Leader of the Opposition, 445 of the Cabinet, 197 of the shadow Cabinet, 295 of non-Cabinet Ministers, 112 of shadow non-Cabinet Ministers, 770 of Conservative Back-Bench Members and 622 of Labour Back-Bench Members. I know that there are qualifications to the figures and they are spelt out in report. Clearly, Governments will have more coverage because, for example, Ministers will be answering questions. However, there is no doubt—and the research group spelt this out, so it is not just my opinion—that that should be an area of concern. It needs more research and I put in a plea to the Leader of the House—and I hope very much that whoever happens to be a member of the successor Select Committee will agree—that we need to continue to monitor the output of television from the House. It is no use monitoring it only in the six months of the experiment and it is no use relying on complaints from the public or from hon. Members. There must be continuous, serious monitoring of output. I hope that money will be forthcoming to ensure

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that research continues so that we can all make our own judgments and do so on the basis of factual material.

Assuming that the House approves in principle today the televising of the Commons—and I very much hope that that will be the case—many important issues need to be considered. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington raised the question of a continuous, dedicated channel. At the risk of re-emphasising an obvious, but important point, I must tell my hon. Friend that the Select Committee was quite unequivocal in its support of a dedicated channel. In paragraph 172 of its report the Committee said:

"We reiterate our belief in the need for a dedicated channel providing continuous, unedited coverage of the House's proceedings and we recommend that this should be provided at the earliest opportunity, as an adjunct to the permanent televising of the House."

I strongly support that. However, the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington makes the continued televising of the Commons conditional on the success within a year of the negotiations. That has massive disadvantages.

Although we may all agree with the principle of a dedicated channel, we should not lose sight of the fact that only a small number of people are capable of receiving it. The figures need to be put on the record. A dedicated channel can operate only by means of satellite, which people receive either directly or via cable. I have already given the viewing figures for the most important programmes, although I did not give figures for news programmes, for which the number of viewers is even greater. At present, 21·5 million households can receive the terrestrial channels. The number capable of receiving the single, dedicated channel on which my hon. Friend the Member for Workington is so keen are as follows. At present, 800,000 people have satellite dishes and 93,000 people are connected to cable, many of whom, but not all, will get the satellite——

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Households.

Mr. Grocott: Yes, I have given the figures for the number of households capable of receiving satellite transmissions, although not all the cable stations deliver satellite programmes. The total is 893,000 households—that is, 4 per cent. of households—that might be able to receive a dedicated channel if it comes about. The amendment proposes that unless we can devise a means to deliver a single, unedited channel to 4 per cent. of our fellow citizens, we shall switch off the transmission to the 96 per cent. who depend on terrestrial transmissions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The amendment does not say that.

Mr. Grocott: That is what it says.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): The hon. Gentleman has made a most interesting speech and he has been generous in giving way. Parliament is currently censored because we show what the producers choose to show. This is a serious matter, although the experiment is working interestingly. The suggestion of a continuous channel could overcome the problem. At the most recent Education Question Time, we had an important question on discipline in schools. The BBC transmission the following morning truncated that question. It did not show the question as it should have been shown and as it happened. It dealt not with the issue of discipline in schools, but with the behaviour of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). That is a serious abuse.

Mr. Grocott: There will always be difficult editorial judgments and no one disputes that. However, the survey gives a tremendous plus to the way in which the signal has been dealt with, however much we might dislike individual decisions.

The issue of a single, dedicated channel as a prerequisite is a red herring. Only a few people will be able to receive it and that is the crucial factor.

Mr. Gale: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grocott: No, as I want to finish my speech now and I have already gone on longer than I intended.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington proposes to continue the uncertainty for another 12 months. An issue dear to my heart—and one in which I am strongly in favour—is to have a Department of the House delivering the signal in due course, with staff recruited to do so, rather on the model of *Hansard*. We are, after all an electronic *Hansard*. However, we cannot even begin to think about that if there is continued uncertainty for another 12 months, which is what the amendment would mean. We cannot start thinking about all the important, permanent matters, which the Leader of the House has already spelt out in some detail. I strongly hope that hon. Members will resist the amendment, which would not produce any desirable effect that the Committee has not recommended already and which would run the risk of wrecking the whole system.

There are other issues that we must resolve in the next 12 months if the House votes "Yes" tonight. It is important to resolve the problem of serving deaf viewers. We spent a lot of time on it this year, and I hope that the Committee will continue to do so next year. We must resolve also the issue raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), in respect of the principles that lay behind the use of non-broadcast material. Those difficult questions must be answered in the course of the next 12 months.

Finally, and most importantly, we must decide on permanent arrangements for the broadcasting of our proceedings that will stand the test of time. I hope that the House will agree that the only way to do that is to recruit the people whom we need ourselves, and not run the risk of constant staff turnover, which inevitably occurs in freelance companies. We need a proper arrangement of the sort that works so well for *Hansard*.

It has been a pleasure to sit on a Select Committee that appears to be achieving results. It is a double pleasure when neutral observation suggests that its work has been successful. I hope that the House will this evening make permanent the televising of our proceedings.

7.30 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I join the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) in supporting the motion of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House, and in urging the House not to accept the amendment that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will move shortly.

It is a matter of particular pleasure to me that the House stands on the brink of the permanent broadcasting of its proceedings, as I had the honour of introducing in 1988 the original motion for the experimental televising of Parliament, and of delivering the vote to the House with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who is in his place today. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that even since then, rather than over the 20 years that the proposal has been debated, there has been a sea change in attitudes inside and outside the House. Many of the worst alarmist fears have not been realised. In true objective fashion, right hon. and hon. Members acknowledge that television represents a new form of communication that is to their advantage and to that of their constituents.

It is appropriate for at least one member of the Select Committee to express its thanks. First and foremost among the recipients of those thanks is my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House, who chaired its proceedings so ably, sensitively and with such gentle leadership. The fact that the Committee was able to achieve near-unanimity on all aspects of the report, and that our proceedings were businesslike and reflected the views of right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House, in no small way mirrors my right hon. and learned Friend's qualities and abilities.

I pay tribute also to my right hon. and learned Friend's predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham), and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), both of whom played a long and active part in the Committee's considerations. No small degree of thanks is due to them both. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has just left his place, but it should be recorded that he, too, played an active, supportive and positive role over some years in the Committee's proceedings.

Gratitude should also be expressed, as it is in the report, to the Supervisor of Broadcasting and to the co-ordinator of the technical management. They and others delivered an experiment that reduced fears among right hon. and hon. Members and promoted the repute of the House outside. We must thank also the broadcasters themselves, upon whom many aspersions were cast—and no doubt that will continue to happen. They fulfilled their role responsibly, broadly abiding by the restrictions and rules promulgated by the House. The breadth of the editorial coverage they provided has done a real service to Parliament and the public. Many proponents in the television companies themselves have experienced frustration over the years and, I dare say, in their negotiations with the Committee. Nevertheless, they have our thanks, and we hope that they will continue to play as positive a part in the future.

It is important to assess the experiment in terms of both parliamentary and public reaction. Many right hon. and hon. Members who voted against the experiment in February 1988 have since changed their minds in the light of experience. That was evident in last July's debate, when the Select Committee presented a report that the House generally felt was too restrictive. The general tenor of that debate was that a more liberal approach should be taken, and that was reflected in decisions that the Committee subsequently took, which made the television coverage mirror reality rather more. At the same time, we have guarded against giving undue publicity to disorder or to the conduct of right hon. and hon. Members other than those who catch Mr. Speaker's eye.

The televising of Parliament has not changed the House substantially. To the extent that it has, it has been for the better. Some speeches have been more pithy. Perhaps they have not been a collection of sound bites, but the experiment has concentrated minds on using simple language that can be understood not by a professional political audience but by the people whom we represent.

One aspect of the experiment more than any other that has endeared the concept of the permanent televising of the House to right hon. and hon. Members is the unexpected popularity of, and interest in, the work of Select Committees. It is not widely understood among the public yet that a large proportion of a Member of Parliament's time is spent on Select Committee work—and very important it is, too. The spectacle of a civil servant wriggling on the parliamentary hook in an inquiry before a Select Committee not only makes good television but is what this place should be about. It is one reason why proponents believed that television would help to hold the Executive accountable. If there continues to be coverage of the detailed work of the House and of the probing of civil servants and others with an authority that is not available elsewhere, the experiment will have proved the predecessor of a permanent system that will gain widespread respect.

The case for permanently televising the House will be made by those who recognise that the experiment has, above all, introduced a new dimension to the task of communicating our parliamentary system that will be seen by history as a major constitutional advance. I believe fervently that it will strengthen the power of Parliament to hold the Executive accountable, rather than rely vicariously on those who report or edit our proceedings, personalities or words. Our constituents will be able to watch and to see in our eyes the true nature of the House and witness the atmosphere in which we argue a point of view. We cannot afford to ignore that added dimension at a time when television has become the principal means of communicating with millions of households.

The spectacle of the joust at Prime Minister's Question Time, the depiction of the emotion created in the House when issues such as abortion or the future of Hong Kong are discussed, and even coverage of the House when it is deliberating on what may sometimes seem dry or boring topics but which nevertheless have huge importance for vast sections of the community, can be properly imparted only by television. The experiment has shown that we have everything to gain and little to lose by making the televising of Parliament permanent.

If we were to turn the cameras off, that action would be widely misunderstood outside the House. Nor should we entertain an amendment that would make our permanent arrangements conditional on the provision of a dedicated channel—much as I am in favour of one—that will for the moment reach only a minimal public audience. It would be widely misunderstood by a public who have come to regard the broadcasting of the House as a welcome new dimension of our parliamentary democracy.

The proceedings of the House were originally held in camera, in secret, for the good reason that it was not the practice of the House to let the monarch of the day know what was going on. That was why there was no verbatim transcript of proceedings here and why no stranger was allowed access. But that is history and the evolution of our

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

parliamentary democracy has been towards increasing openness with the arrival of *Hansard*, newspaper lobby coverage and correspondents, sound broadcasting and now television itself.

We deny our own power, we increase our impotence, if we cannot communicate. After all, half of any job should be doing it and the other half should be telling people what is being done. It is we who will suffer, in defence of the people whom we represent, if we allow Government and Parliament to have a monopoly of communication which we can choose to use and use at any time. We exercise a self-denying ordinance by not allowing a permanent arrangement.

Permanent such an arrangement must be because we have had long enough to debate the matter and to consider how best to televise our proceedings. If we fail to make that decision clearly this evening, we simply will not, in practical terms, have the investment in the equipment, skills and personnel that is needed to make a success of permanent broadcasting.

I defer to no one in my enthusiasm for a dedicated channel. I believe strongly that we shall have full representation of the House only when people can see an unexpurgated version of events, not the extreme aspects plucked from a debate, with the hotheads of each extreme shown on the news at 6 o'clock or 9 o'clock. Only when the length and breadth of the arguments are presented will people understand what Parliament is about and why Members of Parliament take the views that they do on contentious issues of public concern.

When we have—perhaps it should be mace-to-mace rather than gavel-to-gavel—coverage of our proceedings we will find a latent audience outside the House of people interested in our proceedings. First and foremost, they will be in the schools among the students of politics, those who should be able to see the way in which we operate so that they can assess our parliamentary system at work rather than through the text books. There are the farmers, the special interest groups, and the clergy. One can think of numerous groups who would like to see a complete debate rather than a report of it in *The Times* or a synopsis of it in a magazine or on television.

The experience in countries such as Canada has shown that there is a surprisingly large audience for the televised proceedings of the House and I do not think that there are any objectors to that among the proponents of the amendment. But I do not wish to imperil the permanence of our broadcasting by a condition that we must, within a finite period, have a dedicated channel. Whether we vote for that or not, the broadcasters outside are already getting on with a dedicated channel. Not all hon. Members may know that we had full coverage of the proceedings of the House in November and December last year on one of the Sky channels. As the Select Committee's report points out, later this year, with the new satellite that is being sent up from Guyana, there will be another 16 channels. There is no doubt that Sky would be able to do something about that. We hope that it will.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why Sky?

Mr. Nelson: It could be any other proposer. There are others who, even within the past few days, have been putting forward proposals for partial coverage of the House of a much more extended nature, and that is to be welcomed.

One important matter on which I may not carry every hon. Member with me, and by no means all my hon. Friends, is my strong belief that, as a matter of principle, when we eventually construct permanent arrangements for an electronic *Hansard* or for the broadcasting of the House, we should not rely on independent people from outside. It should be legitimate for Parliament to vote public money for the supply of the signal and for the televising of our proceedings. I feel strongly that at some future stage a conflict of interests may arise from the involvement of outside people. The televising of the House and the building up of an electronic *Hansard* over the years must be kept firmly within our control if we are to preserve their integrity. We should be able legitimately to say to the taxpayer that it is an essential part of democracy that we should be communicating on their behalf and that it is a proper call on public funds to do exactly that.

There may be ways in which one could rightly defray costs, such as by the selling of a licence, and I am all for that. I am all for a commercial approach, with archives selling what they can outside the House. But now, just as much as when we originally debated the matter in February 1988, grave suspicions would arise among hon. Members if we were in any sense to relinquish control over the broadcasting of the House to outside influences, however responsible they have been during the experiment. That would be dangerous.

In conclusion, we should not only be considering permanent broadcasting in the domestic context. There is a fantastic opportunity here for the proceedings of the House to be an electronic beacon to the emerging democracies from the Baltic to the Balkans, from Iceland to Tunisia. We should not underestimate the extent to which people are buying satellite dishes, the extent to which communications and broadcasting companies are taking messages and signals from satellites, and the extent to which people rely on a free democracy and communication from this House as well as from others in the EC.

It will be greatly to Britain's advantage and our proper influence in wise and world councils for us to go ahead and develop with proper and urgent speed a dedicated channel which will enable us to be seen in whole, not just in part.

The amendment would make televising proceedings of the House conditional; if we accepted it, the amendment would be seen as a wrecking one. It would have the effect of giving two bites of the cherry and extending the experimental period. Surely we have debated this enough. This is the time for a decision. The experiment has gone well. Let us have the courage of our convictions and take this historic step.

7.47 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I beg to move, at the end of the Question to add

'provided that within 12 months from the date of approval of this resolution, televised proceedings of the House are broadcast on a dedicated channel, unedited, from the start of the sitting to the rising of the House.'.

First, I proffer to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, an apology for the great inconvenience to which I put you during the debate the other evening. I apologise to you for that.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Thank you.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My problem, as has been stated by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), is that it has always been believed that I am an opponent of televising the House of Commons. Let me explain how that arose and why I have always been misrepresented.

Two years ago I went to a Granada studio in Manchester where a programme was being made in a mock House of Commons on the televising of Parliament. On that occasion I spoke against the televising of the House by way of edited excerpts and I supported the principle of a dedicated channel. The editing led to the removal of the reference to the dedicated channel and I was seen as an opponent of televising the House. As of that date, I have always been known as an opponent of televising the House when that is not the case.

I have always supported the televising of Parliament by way of a dedicated channel and that was why I moved the amendment last year which led to the accusation that we had tabled a wrecking amendment. That is precisely my motive this year in moving a similar amendment, but again we stand accused of moving a wrecking amendment. That is not our intention.

After my intervention the Leader of the House proved my case when he alluded to the Government's commitment to proceed. By inference, that means that the Government will seek to continue the televising of Parliament. He said he could not speak for his successors, by which I assume he meant a Labour Government who, I assure him, would not wish to stop televising.

The public have seen Parliament in operation. A decision has been taken and the public would not expect it to be reversed. Equally, they expect an additional service and that is what the amendment would secure. Last year I voted against television because we were not to have a dedicated channel. I wanted no other method of televising the Commons, but this year I shall not vote against the main proposition because the public clearly want television to remain in the House.

I shall continue to press my case for a dedicated channel and shall return year after year with amendments until we get it. Last year 98 hon. Members supported my amendment. I was accused then of being in the pay of Murdoch, of being employed by Sky television and of having shares in Amstrad dishes. Nonsense, rubbish and garbage fuelled the campaign to discredit my case for a dedicated channel. People thought that we were threatening future televising, but all those stories were totally untrue and sought to discredit what I believe to be the way forward.

On today's Order Paper my amendment is supported by 189 other hon. Members. During the day that list has been reduced by 23 and the reason for it is simple: once again people were fed the stories about Murdoch and Sky television and were completely misled into thinking that this is a wrecking amendment. That has never been the case. There was concern because some hon. Members think that my amendment may be accepted. Some people are angry about that and I have had some heated discussions today about it. Equally, I have been aware of the considerable pressure exerted on many of my hon. Friends to withdraw their support for my amendment.

The tactics of my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) are clear. He has said that if we do not comply with the conditions in my amendment the signals will be turned off and the right to televise will be removed. That is rubbish because that cannot happen. The Leader of the House knows that he could never publicly sustain such a decision.

Sir Geoffrey Howe *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am not giving way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. He replied to my intervention and now he may want to attach conditions to that reply. He would do well to read his reply.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman must allow me to intervene. The argument being advanced by him is his, not mine. My argument is perfectly clear and is built upon the hon. Gentleman's words. He says that until he gets a dedicated channel he will return year after year with an amendment. If his amendment is carried there would be no permanence about televising and we would have debates year after year. In the absence of such certainty there would be no confidence in the arrangements for making televising permanent. I do not think that any hon. Member is against a dedicated channel, but we want to secure a permanent commitment now. Thereafter we can have a dedicated channel as soon as we can get it. That will not be helped by the hon. Gentleman's assertions about my words.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I understood from what has been said that the arrangements for administering transmission will remain the same for the next 12 months. Therefore, we are not moving forward during that time.

Mr. Grocott: My hon. Friend knows that arrangements for the permanent televising of the Commons are quite different from temporary arrangements. They require much planning and proper recruitment of staff and the establishment of facilities. The House cannot possibly do that until it knows for certain that, without qualification, the Commons will be permanently televised. My hon. Friend's amendment would prevent that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If my amendment were accepted, I am sure that there would be some swiftly convened meetings at which decisions would be taken. They would decide how the channel was to be funded and who would meet the cost. They would construct the arrangement for the dedicated channel, if only to secure the survival of television in the Chamber after June next year. That is the sort of pressure that must be exerted on broadcasters to make them come to their senses. At the moment many of them say, "What is in it for us?"

Mr. Austin Mitchell: It is not the broadcasters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They are behind the Commons broadcasting unit and have some responsibility. The amendment places an onus on people and organisations to come up with the goods, the dedicated channel. They would respond because they would be aware of the pressure. Last year's report said:

"If our orders of reference are extended as we have recommended, we ourselves propose to monitor closely developments in this field during the course of the experiment, so that any arrangements about the arrangements for permanent televising . . . can be taken on the basis of the most up-to-date information possible."

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

We expected developments this year but nothing has happened. All the resolutions moved in Committee by the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) were defeated. The monitoring and the initiatives that we were promised last year have not occurred. The Committee will examine these matters next year, but is it any more likely that decisions will be taken then? We must exert pressure now to ensure that very important decisions are taken as soon as possible.

To those who ask whether a dedicated channel is a practical proposition I reply that one has already been in place. Most people and most hon. Members are unaware that for three weeks last year the House had a dedicated channel that transmitted from the beginning of proceedings until late in the evening. It was set up at a moment's notice because an operator dropped his commercial interest in a transponder that he had been using for transmission to the Netherlands.

Mr. Grocott: People could not watch it in Workington.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Anyone in my constituency with an Amstrad transponder receiving dish could have watched our proceedings for three weeks at the beginning of this Session. Some of my hon. Friends will endorse that. I inquired today about how long it would take me to set up a dedicated channel and I was told that it would take 48 hours.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: How much would it cost?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Within 48 hours a dedicated channel could be operating and could cover the whole of the United Kingdom on Astra or Amstrad dishes. The technology is there and the dishes are being sold. As more of them are sold we could get national distribution by way of a dedicated channel.

Mr. Mitchell: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall do so in a moment.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend said that last time.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin spoke about other ways of televising our proceedings. I understand that the Leader of the House is thinking about cable, but I do not think that my hon. Friend is considering that because he knows that most of the country will never see cable. I shall never see it in west Cumberland. It may be installed in parts of Birmingham, or Manchester and in the centre of other major cities, but we shall not see it. If my hon. Friend is thinking about other forms of public service broadcasting, he will have to talk about big money. The state will not foot that bill.

The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) talked about satellite transmission by way of an Astra transponder of which there are 16. I understand that one of those would be the cheapest way to get national coverage for the House of Commons at the earliest possible opportunity. It could come to the House within 48 hours. However, because things here move slowly, the House may take 365 days for what I could do in a couple of days. My amendment would allow 363 days of further delays, which arise out of the way that things happen in this place. I believe that we should go down that route as rapidly as possible. The technology is available. We are told that it will cost £5·5 million to hire a transponder and to fund the uplink, which I understand to be the means of lifting the technology from earth to the satellite.

Where will the money come from? The public should pay nothing. It could be partly funded through public subscription from multiple users of television equipment receiving the astral transmission. It could be partly funded through specialist advertising. It might be that, in the early years, it could be pump-primed by a small amount of public money, although I do not think that that is essential. The major television companies are used to subscription services because they use the Press Association and Reuters.

Where is the market? It will be at centres of learning, universities, schools, further education colleges, libraries, local authorities, financial institutions, corporate bodies, private viewers and, perhaps the most interesting, regional stations. Let us take the example of Border Television. Perhaps its chap in Westminster has telephoned to say that I have done a 30-second slot. Why should Border Television have to ring down to London to arrange for it to be fed up the line on some complicated basis? There could be a television in a studio in Carlisle picking up a continuous transmission from London by way of the astral satellites. The company could then select precisely what it wanted and avoid all that nonsense that it has to go through at the moment. We are going the long way round because that is convenient for people who are London based or who are in the business, and want to protect their position. I am not saying that especially about Border Television's representative in the House because I know that he has far wider duties and he does some excellent programming. There are vested interests in maintaining the present structure.

Why do we need a dedicated channel? We want more comprehensive coverage, which would help the public to gain a more balanced view of our proceedings. It would enable regional television more effectively to monitor for excerpts that it thinks are important to its local viewers. It would redress the balance between Front-Bench and Back-Bench Members by giving more exposure to Back-Bench contributions, which invariably come later in the debate. All the research shows that, to some extent, the Front-Bench spokesmen hog much of the broadcasting time. I am not saying that that is unreasonable; it is because Front-Bench spokesmen come earlier in the debate.

A dedicated channel would help to end the advantage to those who are often given preference in debates. We all know who we mean—the budding Fathers of the House. I say in the presence of my fine and right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that that applies to Privy Councillors who also receive preference. People complain, but nothing is done about it. A dedicated channel would deal with that unreasonable preference. It would provide greater coverage of Committees. The Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture said that his Committee had important business, yet often the broadcasters came only for the humdrum stuff because there were few slots available for material from Select Committees.

A dedicated channel would counteract the splitting of questions for sound bites from the Floor. I have been worried on a number of occasions because the questions asked on television are not the same as those that I heard asked on the Floor. Indeed, Ministers' answers are also

split. Perhaps those who do the editing do not think that it is important to carry the whole question, but I think that it is. It could lead to a misrepresentation of the question or of the answer. If there was a dedicated channel, at least the true text would be available.

A dedicated channel would stop the sort of incident that happened during the Public Accounts Committee debate last year. Much as I love my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—fine parliamentarian that he is—his contribution to the debate should not have received the television coverage that it did. The debate on the Public Accounts Committee lasted for three or four hours and we examined a number of value-for-money reports from the National Audit Office and from the Committee. But what was broadcast that night was an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover in which he challenged members of the Select Committee. I make no criticism of my hon. Friend because he did not select the material to be broadcast. He said to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Committee, "You are all on the Select Committee and you are all part of the cosy consensus in this place. You all work together and you are all compromised. I will not have any part of it."

That was the sole contribution from the Public Accounts Committee debate in the broadcasting of the House of Commons. That is wrong and we cannot proceed on that basis. It misrepresented the proceedings of the debate. A dedicated channel would put an end to that sort of broadcasting and people could see exactly what happened.

I ask hon. Members to support my amendment. It puts pressure on those who are responsible to set up a dedicated channel. They know that it could be done rapidly.

8.6 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): As the only member of the Select Committee who voted against the adoption of the report, I wish to place on record my appreciation of the tremendous technical work and achievements of John Grist, who ran the experiment, Patrick Harpur, the originating television director, and his camera and technical teams. I say without reservation that they have delivered a technical experiment of the finest quality in the world.

There are technical problems that still need to be overcome, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House referred to some of them. I notice that the lighting in the Chamber tonight is miraculously at a slightly lower level than usual, but it still causes problems for some hon. Members, especially those on the Back Benches who get more of the glare in their eyes. The sound system is archaic. That is no fault of the broadcasters; the system was taken over by them and has not been modified for television. It it clear that, if the televising of the House is to proceed, the sound system must be replaced urgently. That would be to the benefit both of the television audience and of hon. Members, who are finding it increasingly difficult to hear if the Chamber is full and noisy.

Hon. Members have referred to the televising of Committees. Technically, they also leave a great deal to be desired. If we are to proceed, it is high time that at least some of the Committee Rooms were equipped with the same sort of remote cameras as there are in the Chamber. I do not think that there is any doubt in the minds of hon. Members that the cameras in the Committee Rooms are obtrusive. They also take up space that democratically might be better used. It is ironic that that was especially true during the proceedings on the Broadcasting Bill, when cameras took up space that members of the public wanted to occupy.

The *Hansard* reporters have made it abundantly clear that they find the sound systems in the Committee Rooms intolerable. A balance has to be struck between the microphones being used for broadcasting and for the provision of tapes for the *Hansard* transcriptions. Those highly professional people find it extremely difficult to do their job. If we are to proceed, I hope that that difficulty will be addressed with all possible urgency. I should like to think that the sound systems in the Committee Rooms might be unceremoniously ripped out and replaced during the summer recess.

Those technical criticisms are valid, but they do not detract from the professionalism and technical expertise that has gone into the experiment. It justifies the work that the original Select Committee put into the preparation of the experiment. That Select Committee was severely criticised by hon. Members, including some who are in the Chamber tonight, for inordinate delay. Apart from those who were hellbent on getting the cameras in at any price, most hon. Members probably recognise that almost a year of preparatory work was extremely worth while. We were able to learn from the experience of others, and as a result we were able to require and be given a state-of-the-art experiment. I am most grateful to all those who took part in it.

The Select Committee report touches on some vital matters that will have to be addressed in future, but it omits others. It is still a tremendous sadness to me that we have cameras in the Chamber and in some Committee Rooms, yet we are not prepared to provide Members of Parliament with the communications and information systems that the Canadian Parliament, which contributed so much to our understanding, already enjoys.

The Oasis system is available to all Canadian Members of Parliament and is quite exceptional, but even that is becoming outdated. It is now technically possible for every right hon. and hon. Member to have in his or her office a fax machine and a printer producing, for example, an electronic *Hansard*. There is no reason for us to destroy the Amazon rain forests that are lying on the Benches now. All that could appear on screen in our offices alongside coverage of the Chamber, recalled coverage of the Chamber from the Library, the databases that are already available, and a host of other material.

One of my original objections to the experiment was that I believed then, as I do now, that it is an experiment in "info-tainment" that does very little to enhance the working lives, the abilities and the performance of right hon. and hon. Members. I am sad that the Select Committee report does not address the ways in which we may improve our performance on behalf of our constituents by using to the best possible advantage the technologies that are now available.

Mr. Nelson: One of the arguments often adduced against us having that obvious and necessary facility to represent the interests of our constituents is that the House would be less live and that fewer hon. Members would be present in the Chamber. It seems to me that all hon.

[Mr. Nelson]

Members would attend debates that they wished to attend and those who were not in the Chamber would be better informed about the debates if they had that facility. The argument is complete nonsense and should be turned on its head.

Mr. Gale: There is an irony in that. As my hon. Friend will recall, I voted against the original experiment but, when the decision had been taken, I voted for a free-for-all. I wanted the cameras to show the Chamber as it is. The House—including some Opposition Members who voted for the experiment—decided to restrict what the cameras could show, so that, were we to have a dedicated channel, the viewing public would not be aware that there are now precisely 17 Members in the Chamber.

We cannot receive what is happening in the Chamber in our offices, but I find it hard to believe that there will be fewer than 17 hon. Members here were we allowed to watch the proceedings while sitting at out desks. Quite the reverse could happen. There is a strong argument that, if an hon. Member sitting in his office saw, for example, the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) making his compelling although misguided speech, he might wish to rush down to the Chamber to intervene, so such a facility could bring more hon. Members to the Chamber.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House referred to provisions for the deaf. The Select Committee has done a considerable amount of work and has taken evidence from a number of interested bodies, including the Royal National Institute for the Deaf. If the televising of the House is to proceed, we must urgently make provision for the deaf. That is part of the Select Committee's continuing work. We cannot emphasise too strongly our strength of feeling about that important matter.

I now come to the crux of the debate—the dedicated channel. I have listened with great interest to my hon. Friends and colleagues on the Select Committee who do not share my view. I should like to retrace the history of just a tiny part of the televising debate and to recall some comments that have been made in the past 10 years.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) sought to introduce the televising of the House in a short debate on 2 November 1983. Of course, there was no experiment then. The hon. Gentleman said:

"What is the relevance to the lives of the public of a series of impressive, well-considered debates if they hear little of those debates?"—[*Official Report*, 2 November 1983; Vol. 47, c. 876.]

He used that argument for the introduction of the cameras into the Chamber. That debate was lost, but I have never forgotten those words. What is the point of us speaking here if the public can see or hear little of our debates? Now we have television cameras in the Chamber, but the public can still see or hear very little of our debates.

On 12 June 1989, we debated the first report of the Select Committee on televising the House. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) referred to a dedicated channel as an amendment similar to that on the Order Paper had been tabled. He said that most people favour it

"as soon as it is technically possible . . . Having taken part in the Committee's deliberations, I am reasonably convinced that hon. Members on both sides of the Committee want a dedicated channel as soon as that is technically possible."

Unfortunately, he also said:

"our investigations have shown that there is no prospect of achieving such a dedicated channel by the beginning of the experiment."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1989, Vol. 154, c. 618-22.].

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), who won that debate and is largely responsible for the fact that we now have cameras in the Chamber, although I do not hold that against him, addressed the amendment that was similar to that on the Order Paper today by saying:

"I will explain why the first is a wrecking amendment."

He used the same words that he used tonight.

"We are concerned with an experiment and the House is concerned that the Select Committee should bring forward recommendations for its implementation. Not unreasonably, it is trying to impose it by the autumn of this year."

He addressed the provision of a dedicated channel, saying:

"it is not a practical arrangement for the short term. If it were made a condition of the package of the main motion it may result in the whole experiment being dropped. It should be seen for what it is: a wrecking amendment which should be dismissed by the House."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. 649.]

He used precisely the same words this evening.

Earlier this evening my hon. Friend referred, as did the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), to the fact that the House has had a dedicated channel for three weeks. He put forward an extremely compelling argument for a dedicated channel. Therefore, I hope that he will support us in the Lobby. He referred to the dedicated channel experiment, and he did so with some pride. I have to confess that it was I who told the hon. Member for Workington that it would be possible to set up a dedicated channel in 48 hours. However, to set the mind of the House at rest, it is not quite that easy.

During the last summer recess, I spent some time with people at Sky Television, who were interested in demonstrating that this could be done. I also went to see the Astra television people in Luxembourg. To set the mind of the House further at rest, Mr. Rupert Murdoch does not own any shares in Astra.

The Astra television people said they were willing to provide a transponder. British Telecom was also helpful. As one of the companies that is capable of uplinking a signal, it said that it would be willing to donate its services for a trial period. To its eternal credit, House of Commons Broadcasting Ltd. was not obstructive. It said that for a period we could have the signal free.

Therefore, we had the satellite transponder, the company to handle the signal—Sky—the company to uplink it—British Telecom—and the signal from House of Commons Broadcasting. That which we were told this time last year was technically impossible happened at the start of the experiment. On day one—the state opening of Parliament—the House had a dedicated channel. However, the House did not have the courage to go through with it, because it costs money.

Much has been made of the success of the experiment. The hon. Member for The Wrekin quoted reams from a Leeds university report. He also quoted figures. It is curious that both my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester and the hon. Member for The Wrekin derided the satellite audience—800,000, they said—while quoting figures of, at the lowest, 100,000 viewers and a maximum of 1 million viewers to demonstrate that the experiment has been a success.

Mr. Grocott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gale: Of course I shall give way. I tried to intervene during the hon. Gentleman's speech for exactly this reason.

Mr. Grocott: The hon. Gentleman must compare like with like. One has to compare the number of people who are able to receive the terrestrial channels—21·5 million—with the number of people who can receive satellite and cable television, which is fewer than 900,000. He cannot compare the viewing numbers using the one system with the maximum number of people who are capable of using the other system. Who knows how few would watch our proceedings were they available on cable and satellite? That would be the real comparison.

Mr. Gale: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can quantify democracy. A large number of people are able now to receive satellite transmissions, either by dish or from satellite to cable head end, by cable. That number will grow astronomically over the next few years. That has been used as an excuse for doing nothing. The electorate have been denied the democracy that my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester and the hon. Member for The Wrekin referred to as being the reason for going ahead with the experiment.

My hon. Friend used grand words: he referred to emerging eastern European nations. He also used the word "beacon." Where is that beacon? It is available now, technically, to those emerging eastern European nations by satellite, but they cannot get it because we are denying it to them. It is time that we put our cards on the table and decided whether all that we are doing is providing clips to tart up "The Nine o'clock News" or "The News at Ten" or whether we believe in something more significant. If we do, it is time that we got on with the job.

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): My hon. Friend is enthusiastic about imposing a dedicated channel on the nation, but is he really enthusiastic about one, two or three channels? Earlier speakers have referred to the great success of televising the Select Committees. If one dedicated channel shows the proceedings in this Chamber, it appears that my hon. Friend would be satisfied to have clips from the important Select Committees and Standing Committees, which would be on a different basis.

Mr. Gale: Let me deal with that technical argument. A year ago, we were told that we could not do it at all, but we debunked that theory and proved in three glorious weeks that it could be done, and it was done. However, that was not enough. Now we must demonstrate how it can be taken forward. The train is leaving the station. The amendment is valid. If we do not move forward quickly, there will be another excuse.

We lost the Astra transmission because the last Astra transponder was sold for commercial purposes. Later this year another Astra satellite, with 16 channels, is to be launched. Some of the channels have been sold in advance of the launch. However, some of them are still available. Shall we come back here in a year's time and say, "We should love to do it, but unfortunately no transponders are available because they have all been sold"? Or shall we take the decision now and allow the electorate to see the House properly at work? It can be done. By the time that the House sits again in the autumn, it would be possible to connect us up, if we chose to do so, in a couple of days.

We have to ask how it is to be done. My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester asked a salient question. The C-Span organisation in the United States has been cited as a shining example of televising democracy. C-Span is funded by the United States Congress. First and foremost, it is paid for by the state.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: C-Span is financed by the cable industry. It takes 3 cents out of every dollar going to cable. That is how the money is provided. The signal is provided by Congress; the funding is by the cable industry.

Mr. Gale: I have to correct the hon. Gentleman. It was I who first introduced him to C-Span. He ought to be aware that originally C-Span was funded entirely by Congress.

C-Span now has two dedicated channels, not one, because it is necessary to show the House of Representatives and the Senate at work, with explanatory interviews and the work of the committees.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): And it shows the House of Commons live.

Mr. Gale: Yes, that is an irony. My hon. Friend says that it shows the House of Commons live. Is it not perverse that the American nation can see the House of Commons live more frequently than we can in the United Kingdom? The answer is that, eventually, we shall need more than one dedicated channel if we are to do the job properly, but let us try to walk before we run. Let us go for what is possible now. What is possible this autumn is one dedicated channel. There would be no great difficulty about providing it. The next argument, therefore, if technically I am right, and I believe that I am, is how it will be paid for.

I moved an amendment in the Select Committee. That is why I voted against the report. Part of the amendment was adopted. The Committee was a little mealy-mouthed about it. In the amendment to the report, I said that, as a prerequisite to the permanent televising of the House, a dedicated channel should be provided, if necessary at public expense. It will be no great surprise when I say that the words "if necessary at public expense" stuck in the craw of some people. It was unacceptable to them. Therefore, I was prepared to go part way and agree the word "adjunct" with my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester who gave me particular support. Nobody, however, could agree about funding.

It has been said, correctly, that approaches have been made to House of Commons Broadcasting. Let me put my cards on the table. The approach was made by United Artists. It approached a number of hon. Members for advice. It is investing heavily in cable systems. Originally, it was interested in supplying the House on a gavel-to-gavel basis. It would have been made available to relatively few cable viewers.

Most of us said that that was not what we wanted. We want as many people as possible to be able to see this House when they want to, not when somebody tells them they have to. Today United Artists has been talking to John Grist, House of Commons Broadcasting and various others to see whether they can come up with a proposal. That is one expression of commercial interest already.

Those of us who believe that satellite is the answer do so because it is the best and quickest blanket-delivery system. The outlying farmhouses that will not get cable for

[Mr. Gale]

a long time—the type of house referred to by the hon. Member for The Wrekin—can have a dish. However, we do not want every rooftop in London or Birmingham to be covered in dishes. We hope and believe that Britain will be cabled as soon as possible. The best way of delivering the House of Commons and many other services to those households is by satellite to cable head end and by cable to the home. The satellite is available now. We must take it before the train leaves the station and before we can use it again as an excuse for doing nothing.

That will cost money. The rough estimate is that it will cost about £5·5 million a year. Who pays? The hon. Member for The Wrekin went through a shopping list of people who might pay. It may be necessary to put public money into the establishment of a House of Commons unit and a dedicated channel. I am prepared to see that happen. If we believe that this has something to do with democracy—the House has apparently voted for the presence of the cameras on the assumption that it does —we must take that to its logical conclusion. If the public —both of those who watch—want the service, they must be prepared to vote the means. That is taxpayers' money.

I am no great advocate of the expenditure of more public funds, but I believe that the public will get their money back. I am prepared to see the establishment of a House of Commons unit and, if the House wishes, I am prepared to see the franchise offered to the highest bidder. That person will make money out of an experiment such as this and out of a dedicated broadcasting system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) asked about Committees. As we know, the House sits from 2.30 in the afternoon to about 1 am or 2 am on most nights. Occasionally it goes all night. However, on many nights there are probably about 12 hours of air time when the House is not sitting. That could be available for Committee coverage, political discussions, interviews and, if necessary, advertising. However, I do not think that we need go down that route.

The satellite system is by far the best method of delivering the signal of the House to the small independent television companies. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) is in his place. He has a particular interest in the reception in Scotland. The fastest way to get the signal to his viewers is by satellite. We all know that, if a major story is breaking in the House and the hand is sweeping round towards 6 o'clock, the big companies with the greatest clout such as Granada, Central and the London stations will have the line time. The small companies are pushed to one side. By satellite, every company can have access to what it wants when it happens. I believe that satellite delivery to independent stations and to BBC regional stations is the cheapest way of delivering the signal. It would save enormous sums on line costs, and I believe that those stations would be prepared to pay.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I ask the hon. Gentleman a simple question? He said that the transponder lines will be lost unless we take them up now. What will happen if they are lost? Are any other satellites coming on stream? When will the window open again?

Mr. Gale: The Hughes Corporation of America has said that it intends to launch a satellite with 104 channels. However, that will not be for another two years, because it intends to go for digital picture transmission and that is a developing technology. I am not saying that there are not other potential channels available to us, but if we choose to take the plunge we have a simple and ready-made system now. We know that it works because we have tried it.

In addition to the independent companies that I believe will wish to subscribe, we have those which already subscribe such as C-Span, American television which finds the House of compelling interest. In fact, it finds it of greater interest than does the United Kingdom audience. There is Canadian political television and the Commonwealth in its entirety. There will be a demand for European satellite transmissions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester said, the sooner we can show the work of this House as a democratic assembly on satellite to the developing democracies of eastern Europe, the better. We can do it now.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): My hon. Friend has listed a number of commercial television companies in this country, such as C-Span and Canadian television, which he said would pay towards the running of the highly expensive transponder. Does he have any indication from any of those companies that they would be prepared to pay? I do not believe that they would pay anything.

Mr. Gale: I am interested in the phrase "highly expensive". My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) has worked for the BBC. He will know that, in broadcasting terms, £5·5 million is a drop in the ocean. To many people that sounds like a lot of money, but to Independent Television companies and to the BBC it is peanuts. It is peanuts that are readily and easily recoupable. The answer to my hon. Friend's question is yes. I cannot remember whether he came with us to Canada when we took evidence from the Canadian House. The Canadian media get their signal free, but I am sure that he will recall that, when I asked the press gallery in Ontario whether it would be prepared to pay, the answer was an unequivocal yes.

I believe that there is a market in the City. I see no reason why City institutions and industries who find the workings of the House of value in their business life should not be prepared to pay a subscription. If we go down this road and create an additional arm to the democracy of the House, as I hope we will, the British electorate must have this service free of charge. I see no reason why those who have a commercial interest in the re-broadcasting of material should not be prepared to pay for it. The principle is well established. Commercial companies subscribe cheerfully to Reuters as a news service, the Press Association and Visnews, which produces television pictures which those companies buy. There is no reason why they should not subscribe and possibly save money on line costs.

What have we come down to? The system can be paid for by the taxpayer if the House wills it, or the money can be recouped from industry. It is technically possible now. There is nothing in the amendment, which I and another 180 hon. Members have signed, that will deny the continuation of the experiment. The suggestion that if we take this route the House will be switched off is nonsense. We are seeking to concentrate the mind of the House. A year ago, we were told that this was a wrecking

amendment. We will not buy that argument tonight. We have demonstrated that it can be done. We believe that, if it is to go ahead, the public will want it done. It can be done within the next 12 months, and we should get on and do it.

We have a chance to decide tonight either to treat the United Kingdom electorate like grown-ups and allow them to decide what television from the House they see, or we can go on allowing Auntie BBC and Uncle ITN to decide which bits of the House are fit to be seen. I believe that the former is infinitely desirable. It is possible now, and I hope that the House will vote for it.

8.38 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I welcome the success of the experiment. Congratulations have come from both sides of the House. I hope, with the exception of the amendment, that the outcome of the rest of the votes at the end of the debate will be something of a foregone conclusion in that the House will clearly show its support for putting the televising of our proceedings on a permanent basis.

The history of these debates, not least of the past two years, stretching back to when the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) was introducing Bills and agitating——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Positively prehistoric!

Mr. Kennedy: I acknowledge that fact.

It is heartening that the principle of televising is not the subject of debate and that technicalities or aspects of that principle are engendering more heat across the Chamber.

Two fears were expressed at the outset, the first of which was the intrusiveness of cameras in the Chamber. Despite the various physical problems that have been experienced from time to time, with heat more often than sound, no hon. Members have found them too intrusive. The second fear stemmed from the visit of members of the Select Committee to the Ottawa Parliament. Listening to its members increased hon. Members' apprehension that there would be a massive amount of play acting and staged demonstrations in the Chamber. That has not happened.

Constraints were placed on the much maligned broadcasters. In the original debate two years ago, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was characteristically offensive about broadcasters and made predictions of what would happen to our procedures as we became pawns at their disposal. That has not happened, despite the ludicrous constraints that we placed on professional broadcasters to produce an accurate visual image of this set. They are to be congratulated on the journalistic flair that they brought to the task, on the originality of their programmes and—this anxiety is often expressed by hon. Members—the sense of humanness and sense of humour which, where appropriate, they have injected into their coverage of events.

The broadcasters have been faithful to the character, traditions and personality of the House. All too often, pomposity attaches itself to our proceedings and certainly to some of the egos or personalities in the Chamber. When hon. Members do not like what is portrayed on the screen or how it is portrayed on the radio airwaves at 8.40 each morning at the end of the "Today" programme or in "Yesterday in Parliament", they tend to blame the messenger, to say that the fault lies in the stars and that it cannot possibly lie with us. In the portrayal of 650 hon. Members, who at times are idiosyncratic and certainly highly individualistic, one cannot blame the broadcasters for seeking to draw out that humanness. In my anecdotal experience—I am not untypical in this respect—over the period of the experiment, without missing the political messages that hon. Members try to send, without losing their ability to judge a good or an unsound argument, a Government decision that is justifiable or one to which they are not sympathetic, as much as anything else the public have responded to the human interest of Parliament. Rather akin to the lead character in "Death of a Salesman", hon. Members who live or die by their ability to sell themselves, political ideas and parties should not knock a medium that is broadcasting this institution and adding more human interest than might have been the case before.

There have been problems for broadcasters. They have made commendable contributions to regional emphasis, but none the less they have occasionally run into practical difficulties. As the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) alluded to my interest in Scotland, I again underscore the need for something to be done about the chamber at the old royal high school in Edinburgh to overcome its sound difficulties. It is a high irony that, for once, this is an issue on which we can predate the Government. If one leaves aside developments beyond what used to be known as the iron curtain, in western Europe we have the most ready-made, modern and supposedly parliamentary debating chamber in Edinburgh, but its sound capacity is absolutely disastrous for modern broadcasting requirements. At some stage, an exercise should be carried out to see what the requirements were when it was thought that if devolution was agreed the chamber would be up and running within 10 years as a modern parliamentary base.

In general, within the constraints that have been placed on them, broadcasters have done a tremendous job. The problem is that they must reflect a House of Commons that is elected by a first-past-the-post system of politics, which makes the Labour and Conservative parties predominant. The layout of the House is based on a confrontational view of politics. It is not a hemicycle, as in many European countries, so its procedures reflect the usual channels and a two-party system.

As the televising experiment has continued, it has given rise to difficulties for representatives of third parties. Although I spoke as a Liberal Democrat member of the Select Committee, I was mindful throughout that I was a representative not of my party but of all third parties, if I can so describe them. Issues and implications for televising, which perhaps members of third parties feel acutely, are, none the less, extremely relevant to Conservative and Labour Back Benchers. In the submission made by my party, which was included in the final published report of the Select Committee, we highlighted a few of the implications for the political balance and the procedures of the House. I wish briefly to deal with them because they are in the report for any Member of the House or the public to read.

There is live coverage of the House on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. We know from the monthly rotation of departmental question time that some question times will not be covered live. Questions on Wales, transport and energy are often asked on Mondays. Scottish questions, which are always on a Wednesday, are covered live in

[Mr. Kennedy]

Scotland—I am not complaining about that—but other question times that fall on Monday or Wednesday will never be covered live. Will broadcasters review their schedules—obviously, they want to cover Prime Minister's Question Time because it is the highlight of the show twice a week—or will the House revise its procedure on the cycle followed for departmental questions?

There has undoubtedly been an increase in the length of the speeches of Front-Bench spokesmen, and the figures will bear that out. The length of Opposition responses to Government statements has also increased. The net effect is that Back-Bench speeches—Second Reading debates being the most obvious example—are pushed further and further back and are less likely to appear in the main news schedules. That is true of hon. Members speaking for the Ulster Unionists, Liberal Democrats or one of the nationalist parties.

Mr. Kilfedder: And the Ulster Popular Unionist Member.

Mr. Kennedy: Or speaking as a respected Member of the House. In a debate on Northern Ireland there may be lengthy speeches by the Secretary of State, followed by a shadow spokesman and another Conservative Member. If the leader of the Ulster Unionists is called, it may be after 6 pm, by which time his legitimate viewpoint on a salient issue will not be heard. That is the practical impact, which is of concern to members of third parties, but equally it should be of concern to Back-Bench Members of the two main parties in this House. Another effect is that more people are being forced into the 10-minute rule period of debates, which I am not against in principle, but the 10-minute rule barrier now falls on speeches earlier in the evening.

Finally, televising has meant increased pressure on Question Time, and the figures contained in the report are disturbing in that respect. The extent to which non-Labour or non-Conservative Members are called within departmental Question Time appears to be suffering.

There are implications for broadcasters in the points that I have mentioned, but televising also has implications for the House—it affects the way in which we organise and run oursleves. I hope that the Select Committee on Procedure will examine that aspect. The excellent report by the university of Leeds, which refers to my party on page 14—I shall not detain the House by quoting it now—highlights the difficulties that have arisen.

I see from the Order Paper that eight of my hon. Friends have signed the amendment tabled in the name of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), which the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) spoke about in detail and with such clarity. I am prepared to go a long way down the line of their arguments because, like most hon. Members, I am in favour of a dedicated television channel. The problem is that we have to separate that principle from the pragmatics of what the Select Committee has been trying to deliver. While I remain committed to the principle, and I hope to the delivery of a dedicated channel, given the present limited spread of satellite availability in this country, I cannot see how we do Parliament a democratic service by making the service available 24 hours a day to a limited number of people, while, unsatisfactory though it is, we are delivering selected excerpts to the vast majority of people. On that basis, the amendment will not have my support.

In the past, when this place has reformed itself there have always been those who have predicted that the reform in question would mark the end of civilisation as we knew it. The debates on votes for women offer a classic example in this century. There were those who predicted much the same for televising, but I think that at the end of the day it has enhanced Parliament and made it more accessible. When one's constituency is as far from London as mine, that is an overwhelming vote in its favour. People's votes elect Parliament, people's taxes pay for it, so surely the public have the right to see what is being done in their name. Added to that right is the right of the deaf community to follow our proceedings. That has been the subject of attention—I hope that it will give it continuing attention—by the Select Committee.

I hope that we shall become more relaxed about and more trusting in the professionalism of British broadcasters, and drop the remaining restrictions. Anyone sitting in the Strangers' Gallery of the House can see with his own eyes what happens on the Floor of the House. The same right of access to that information must be given to someone sitting in the comfort of his own home with the television switched on. We cannot continue to deny people that.

Despite my concern about the impact of television coverage on Back Benchers and third parties, I shall certainly support the Select Committee report tonight, if only in the hope that it will act as a spur to bring the entire institution of Parliament into the 20th century just as we begin to head towards the 21st.

8.54 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I shall endeavour to keep my remarks brief and to the point, as I certainly would not wish to deprive fellow hon. Members of air time on this important issue.

I believe that the one-year experiment in televising the proceedings of the House has been a television success but a political failure. I certainly endorse the points made by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). Televising has provided entertainment at low cost for the television stations. Edited highlights appear on the evening news bulletins, enabling the political correspondents to spice up their coverage of the proceedings of the House.

If all that the intrusion of television cameras in this place had produced was a handful of happy journalists with a few innocuous highlights on the evening news, I would have been happy to vote to keep the cameras here. But, as every hon. Member knows full well, that is not the end of the story. For example, the arrival of television has had a strange and unforeseen effect on the behaviour of many hon. Members. None of us is blameless, but all of us are dealing with a powerful force beyond our control. Television has brought out the worst in us all. Hon. Members are not, even at the best of times, publicity shy. Indeed, as we all know, there has to be a streak of the actor in every hon. Member. The successful politician certainly cannot afford to eschew publicity. To succeed in politics one has to get noticed—on the hustings, in speeches, on

television or on radio. There is nothing that the average politician likes to hear more than the sound of his own voice.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Or her voice.

Mrs. Roe: Yes, with respect to my colleagues, his or her voice. Until the arrival of television cameras in the House, there was a series of moderating influences on what might be called the theatrical tendency. New Members of Parliament learn that certain forms of behaviour and dress are unacceptable in the Chamber. The House of Commons is the nation's most important forum for serious debate on matters of the utmost importance to our future. It is not, as some cynics derisively claim, a talking shop. What is happening in the Chamber matters.

Attention-seeking tactics are out of place in such an environment, and time-wasting exhibitionists have little real contribution to make to serious political debates. Until now most hon. Members have recognised that fact. Those hon. Members who are incapable of doing so—wilfully or through sheer dimness—have to contend with the wrath of the Whips, or with you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the ultimate sanction against cases of what are, in effect, political exhibitionism was the fact that it was unlikely to get much publicity. It was pointless and puerile, and that was so until the arrival of television cameras in the House.

Now the rules have changed, and the effects have been largely inimical to serious debate and good government. I disagree with the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott). The arrival of the television cameras has given show-offs the big audience for which some of them certainly yearn. More than that, as my right hon. and learned Friend mentioned earlier, television has forced many perfectly sensible Members of Parliament to go to absurd lengths so that they can be seen "on the box". The average television viewer, seeing his Member of Parliament on the screen, will assume that such a sighting is mere chance. In fact, it is more than likely that the hon. Member carefully positioned himself—or herself—so that he would be picked up by the television cameras.

Little does the unsuspecting viewer know the lengths to which certain hon. Members will go to be seen on national television. It is a sad fact that hon. Members check up on who is asking the Prime Minister questions beforehand so that they can sit next to the questioner and be guaranteed to appear on television screens in millions of homes during the evening news bulletins. Other hon. Members gravitate towards Mr. Speaker's Chair so that they can be seen when the television cameras zoom in on you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

None of that is especially surprising; now that the cameras are in the House, it is understandable that hon. Members should want to be seen doing their job by their constituents. I am sure that many hon. Members who are here tonight have participated in lengthy debates, only to be asked by a constituent after the event, "Where were you?". The answer is that the hon. Member was there all right, but in the 90-second package for the 10 o'clock news—which condenses six hours of debate, with perhaps 20 different speakers and as many interventions—not every contribution is covered.

The sight of hon. Members scrambling to sit within camera shot reminds me of those outside television broadcasts in which an interviewer speaks to camera with a couple of young children bouncing up and down pulling faces in the background. Who, after all, can resist the lure of publicity?

In addition, to those who merely scheme and plot in an honest fashion to appear on camera, there are the hon. Members who deliberately try to draw attention to themselves. Every Back Bencher knows that the contribution most likely to make it through the cutting room to the evening news is the absurd, the insulting, the provocative or even the jocular, and it is well known that outrageous points of order raised after Prime Minister's questions have a very good chance of finding their way on to the television screen.

The past year has proved that good television and good government are not synonymous, although I attach no blame either to broadcasters or to hon. Members. Hon. Members are merely responding to the introduction of a medium that forces them to behave differently; broadcasters are merely giving the viewers the choicest morsels of the day's proceedings to keep them entertained.

The failure of televising the House in its present form can be summed up in two words—design and money. If the Chamber had been specifically designed to accommodate television cameras, things might be different. A modern circular Chamber, with every hon. Member assigned a place, would help to get round the ludicrous problem of hon. Members stalking round the Chamber trying to find a spot where they are likely to be seen on the box. As for the other problem—money—the broadcasters say that they cannot afford the substantial set-up and running costs of a dedicated television channel. But if a television channel were set aside for the proceedings of the House and its Committees, the public would be able to see a far more balanced picture of what happens here. As it is, all that the great majority of the population see are a few brief edited highlights on the evening news. As well as giving the public a much fairer view of what hon. Members do, I suspect that a dedicated television channel would have the advantage of encouraging hon. Members to behave in a slightly less publicity-hungry fashion.

I do not wish to be wholly negative about the televising of the House. I believe that it is good news that a wider audience has been able to witness the exchanges between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition every Tuesday and Thursday: those weekly sessions have contributed to my party's continuing popularity in my constituency.

9.3 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): There are many ways in which this issue can be examined. One is the purely technical one about the changes in technology that would make it possible for more people to see more easily what happens here and elsewhere. There has even been the introduction of a financial element, in terms of the investment opportunities that might be created by a dedicated channel.

I am primarily concerned with the politics of the matter—the effect the cameras have on the relationship between the electors and their representatives. People have often spoken about the rights of hon. Members, but it has always seemed to me—indeed, I wrote an article in *TV Times* in 1957 calling for the televising of the House of

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Commons—that the real case for it is that the electors who sent us here would know what we were doing in their name. I think that that is the most important point.

It is long overdue. What a terrible loss to posterity that former hon. Members such as Winston Churchill, Clement Attlee and so on were not filmed. We would have had them on archive. Now that we have introduced the televising of our proceedings, I do not want to run any risk of terminating it because of the difficulty of establishing a dedicated channel.

Despite what was said by the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), most of the fears about the behaviour of hon. Members have been laid to rest. No one who knows the House or its history believes that only television caused disturbances. The King came here when there was no television and tried to arrest five Members of Parliament. He was not seeking publicity. There have been disturbances on many occasions. My father used to tell me about the fighting that occurred when the Irish Nationalist Members were here. Charles Bradlaugh was brought to the House. The other day I visited the room where the Supervisor of Broadcasting works. It is the prison cell where Bradlaugh was imprisoned for trying to take the oath although he was an atheist.

Some hon. Members are slowly beginning to discover that if they want to be given attention they should not put on a new suit, get a clean shirt or have a better hairdo; they should raise the quality of their argument. If that message gets across, it will entirely justify televising.

Enormous tributes have been paid to the mass media. I am an old broadcaster. I started work after the war as a BBC producer and I still have an interest in it. We must recognise that there is a conflict between those who claim the right to speak because they work in the media and those who claim the right to speak because they have been elected. That is the essential conflict that has been tilted in our favour by the televising of Parliament.

To appear on "Question Time", we have to be invited by the producer. We are made up. The microphone is placed behind us so that no one at home can see that it is there. We are interrupted by Robin Day all the time. But in the House it is not like that at all. We are lucky to be called. If we are called, Mr. Speaker does not name an hon. Member and say, "Now it is time for a speaker from the hard left", or, "Now it is time for an hon. Member from the Tory wets." We are called by our constituencies. People can make up their minds about us according to what we say. We are not made up and we are not interrupted. It is important to recognise that there are important differences.

I often think about the qualifications needed to be a Member of the House of Commons. What is so marvellous about it is that there is none. That is why it is such an interesting assembly. The only qualification that we have is that we have been elected. I got my calculator out today to find out how many people had voted for me since I arrived in the House. I can tell the House that 379,056 people have voted for me in the 14 parliamentary elections in which I was elected. Those are my only qualifications, but they are the qualifications that every hon. Member has to be heard. That is what is important.

Although it is true that it has been much better to have our proceedings televised than not, I share entirely the view that exchanges on Tuesday and Thursdays between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are simply transmitted to zip up the evening bulletins. Previously we were given a picture of the people speaking and perhaps some of the sound broadcasting. Now we have the whole exchange. Television material has been an opportunity to illustrate the way in which the media want to cover politics. That is very bad. That is why I am strongly in favour of a dedicated channel, which I shall deal with in a moment.

Some examples have been given today. Let us take the debate on embryology and abortion, which aroused strong feelings. Views for and against were not confined to one side of the House. It would have been much better to have produced an edited version of the debates and made them available not only on the air but in videos which could be used by sixth forms, universities and so on.

In a debate before Christmas the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) was lucky in the ballot and moved a motion stating that socialism was dead. It was the first time that I have heard socialism discussed since I have been in the House. Certainly, a debate on socialism has never been promoted by my party. A few of us got together and tabled an amendment. It was, dare I say it, a marvellous debate. The hon. Member for Tatton was provocative. The chairman of the Conservative party came in. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) spoke. All sorts of hon. Members spoke.

A few days later I met two young women who run a video company, 20th Century Vixen. Being rather slow on the uptake, it took me a long time to realise the parallel with 20th Century Fox and that they were feminists. They edited the five-hour debate on socialism and called it "The Commons on Socialism". It was an absolutely brilliant job. Every speaker was included and the balance was absolutely fair. I wrote to the Leader of the House about it, and showed it to the Supervisor of Broadcasting and the hon. Member for Tatton, but the Committee did not turn its mind to such projects.

It is absurd that our speeches are not freely available on video because, dare I say it, the quality of the debate, when one forgets the partisan exchanges on Tuesdays and Thursdays, is of a high order. People do not get here just by accident; they have experience and when hon. Members choose to speak they usually know what they are talking about, but many of those contributions are left out because they are not newsworthy.

I hope that the ban on the use of material is lifted. Hon. Members will be aware that anyone can buy a five-hour video tape for £20—that is what I paid for "The Commons on Socialism". If hon. Members buy such videos or want to make them available to sixth forms, what is wrong with that? People might argue that such videos would be selective, but *Hansard* is available without any copyright restriction. If one had a 40-minute summary of the debate on socialism, which was held that Friday and with it went the copy of *Hansard*, made available to sixth formers or students of the Open University, it could be a useful resource. The video I purchased offers an important precedent and it is worth while developing it.

I hope that the Committee will consider a wider use of our material. I understand that it was afraid that people would use such videos as a vehicle for advertising or to make fun of hon. Members, but, as Harry Truman once said, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen".

We cannot stand on our dignity if people want to see our proceedings and nothing could be more amusing or damaging than "Spitting Image" is.

A lot of other things that go on in the House should also be considered for broadcast, for example, the relationship between hon. Members and their constituents. Is there any reason why the full, mature life of an hon. Member should not be reflected when they are lobbied by pensioners, war widows and the like? The record of our parliamentary debates should not just reflect hon. Members' speeches—they represent a fraction of our work in comparison with the correspondence into which we enter, and the petitions and lobbies we receive.

We must also look at the House itself in the light of this new opportunity. I know, Mr. Speaker, that with your wig you are extremely popular all over the mid-west of America. I believe that C-Span has made you known from Ohio to Wyoming.

A party of sixth formers from a school in my constituency went round the House the other day with a guide. When I met them I asked them what happens in here and there was an awfully long pause before they could answer. The intelligibility of this place is not improved by its quaint methods and procedures.

Without going too far beyond the subject of this debate, in the years that I have been here the House has lost many of its powers. There are 30,000 American troops stationed here over whom we have no control whether or not we pass the annual Army order. Brussels has taken responsibility for our legislation and we cannot reject it when it comes back to us. The International Monetary Fund and perhaps the Bundesbank will increasingly take responsibility for our financial affairs. What does the House have left? The answer is that it is the great forum of the nation.

On Monday I had a discussion with you, Mr. Speaker, so far as it was in order so to do, about whether we should discuss the interview given by the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on Germany and the European Community. We have our rules and procedures which you interpret, Mr. Speaker, as you are required so to do by our Standing Orders. I do not believe, however, that the public understood why the one place—here—that could not discuss that matter was the place where the action was. We should have more contemporaneous debates because if we do not discuss what the people are considering, we shall become irrelevant as a forum as well as a legislative body, which is already happening fast.

When we come here as hon. Members we have certain clear things to do. The first is to represent our constituents, and any hon. Member who rises to his feet to defend a constituency interest is doing his job and should be respected, even if it is badgering, as it sometimes is, or disorderly, and I have known that to happen too.

Secondly, we have a duty to explain what is happening, because it is a puzzling world and I find that there is today a great thirst for understanding which in many respects is not best met by the mass media, which want to oversimplify or in some way to mystify. The media sometimes put up the experts or present matters in such a way that an incident here is only a party battle. People want explanations and we are, in a strange way, uniquely qualified to give them.

But, above all, this House—if it could get through to the public on a dedicated channel—could recover democracy for the people from the media. Politics in Britain is now a spectator sport. People stay at home, watch television and wonder who will win the World Cup. Or they watch "Newsnight" and wonder who will win the general election. They do not see any difference between their role in the World Cup—because not everybody can play the game—and their role in the election.

The media, the pollsters, the people who hype it up and the public relations people who engage in politics have taken the democratic process away from us and made it something that highly paid experts want to manage for us. This House is made up of people whose commitment to politics is real because we are answerable to our constituents. When I am in Chesterfield tomorrow, everybody I see will be my employer. That is the difference between our role and pleasing a producer so that one may get on the telly. We meet our employers.

The House has an opportunity to do something about that state of affairs, particularly if it demands a dedicated channel. I would have redrafted my hon. Friend's amendment. I do not want to make it conditional, so I would simply have amended it to read,

"and instructs the Committee to finance and provide a dedicated channel by this time 12 months."

Had my hon. Friend worded it in that way, I would have voted for it. I fear that at present the amendment might be interpreted as demanding a pause instead of a decision.

Whatever we do, let us remember that this place is a talking shop, a place where people's ideas can be heard and where debate can be real. The older I get, the less impressed I am by the abuse and the tricks played between parties, because I want to hear the argument. I want to know what the case is for and against the ERM or any other issue, and how we should deal with the debt crisis and so on. I suspect that people sitting at home, not being engaged in the daily business of these affairs in the way that we are, want to know what we really think.

The hustings are enough for the election. But the people want to know our views, and television offers a unique technical opportunity. It has come too late for my satisfaction, but it is providing us with a chance to do something. It must, of course, be under our control and not handed over to someone to make money, because it is possible to make a lot of money. We should control and finance it. If we give every candidate free postage in a general election so that all the candidates, including those who lose, can get their views over to the general public, why cannot we finance, for educational purposes—for our education as much as theirs—a dedicated channel?

I urge my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) not to make the amendment conditional. A dedicated channel is essential, or we shall simply become new pawns in a media game in which they will use the bits that they think fit their pattern. In many cases they are writing dramas in which we are allowed to play our part if we fit their script, but not if we do not. I have described what should be the basis of our approach to this issue.

9.18 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I subscribed my name to the amendment standing in the name of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), consistent with the way in which I voted when this matter previously came before the House. I voted wholeheartedly for the televising of our proceedings, for the simple reason mentioned by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr.

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

Benn)—that the people of the United Kingdom are entitled to hear and see what is being done in their name. They have the right to see what is happening in this Chamber. That is why I believe that a dedicated channel is essential and that that channel should be completely under the supervision of the House.

Democracy can flourish only with open government, when the people feel close to Members of Parliament and to what is happening here at Westminster. There can be no doubt that, in the constant battle between the Executive and Parliament, the televising of our proceedings must help to give some muscle to hon. Members who wish to impose some restriction on the powers of the Executive. I am wholly committed to the permanent televising of the House.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I understand my hon. Friend's long attachment to the televising of Parliament. Did he catch the important point made at the end of his speech by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)? He made virtually the same point that my hon. Friend is making, but he also made the distinction that to link the permanent televising of the House with a dedicated channel within 12 months could make the amendment a wrecking amendment for the permanent televising of the House. If those who say that a dedicated channel may not be possible are proved right, the amendment will turn out to have been a wrecking amendment. We must be cautious about the amendment in its present form.

Mr. Kilfedder: I want to emphasise that the amendment is not a wrecking amendment. No hon. Member who has added his or her name to it wants to wreck the possibility of televising Parliament. What the hon. Member for Workington and all hon. Members who subscribe to the amendment are doing is showing that we are determined to get a dedicated channel. The only way to do that is for us and for Parliament to flex our muscles. In that way, as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) said, we should be able to have a dedicated channel within 12 months. Even if it did not come within 12 months, the televising of Parliament would proceed. However, the only way to get a dedicated channel is by showing our determination to have one.

As I made clear in my intervention, I am not satisfied with the present broadcasting of the House. People outside see on their television screens only what the television producers and editors permit them to see, and that is contrary to the democratic principle. Why should we permit the media manipulators to censor the televising of our proceedings? What is taking place now is censorship. That applies to all parts of the United Kingdom, but especially to my own region of Northern Ireland.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) will agree that the coverage of speeches made in the House by most Northern Ireland Members is limited and, in some cases, non-existent. I have spoken in the Chamber on a number of occasions since television was introduced on matters that I regard as important not only to my constituents, but to everyone in Northern Ireland. Yet none of those speeches was broadcast by local Ulster Television or by BBC Northern Ireland, although they say that they are providing the people of Northern Ireland with a proper record of what is taking place in Parliament.

I should have thought that Northern Ireland, of all parts of the United Kingdom, needs to have Parliament projected into the homes of all its people—not only because of the terrorism there, but because we are being ruled by direct rule, an undemocratic system of government which can be given some democratic flavour only by the fact that the people of Northern Ireland hear what Members of Parliament are saying and what contributions they make to debates in the House.

Whatever the reasons for that shortcoming, the people of Northern Ireland are being denied proper coverage of the proceedings of this House and of contributions by Ulster Members of Parliament. That is not true in all cases. There are exceptions. Ulster Television is very fond of giving coverage to my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) whenever he contributes to our debates here.

I have consulted Scottish and Welsh Members and with Lobby correspondents covering those areas of the United Kingdom, and it is beyond doubt that those Members of Parliament, together with others throughout the United Kingdom, receive proper coverage. Why is the same not done for those representing Northern Ireland constituencies? I speak not only of Unionist representatives. For example, I know that the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), who represents the SDLP, makes a similar complaint. It is wrong that Northern Ireland Members of Parliament should be discriminated against in that way.

I do not know why UTV and the BBC fail to provide proper coverage, but that matter ought to be investigated. It is an appalling situation, and I trust that the Leader of the House agrees that there should be a review of the coverage given by BBC Northern Ireland and by Ulster Television of our proceedings, especially of the contributions of right hon. and hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies.

The only way that we can ensure that the people of Northern Ireland and of the rest of the United Kingdom do not suffer a form of television censorship is to have a dedicated channel. There could then be no tampering with transmissions to the public, with coverage confined to snippets on the one o'clock or six o'clock news. Instead, the public could view the whole proceedings and hear everything that is said. Until such a service is provided —and the sooner the better—we shall not be allowing the public to enjoy parliamentary democracy in its fullest sense, which they deserve.

9.27 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I do not believe that a debate on the experimental televising of Parliament should degenerate into an orgy of self-congratulation, perhaps with the exception of the remarks of the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). Nevertheless, I admit that such self-congratulation is deserved because the experiment was a great success, and ours is a healthier democracy because of it.

I may add, however, that that success was entirely predictable and predicted. All the findings of the

Independent Broadcasting Authority, Leeds university, Aston university, the BBC and the Hansard Society say that it is a great success, but the researchers have the air of parents congratulating their child on being toilet trained at the age of 10. I am not sure what the usual age is—or what it was for my kids, because in those days fatherhood was not a life sentence—but it is much younger than that. The question is why it took us so long to do something so necessary and so right, which has enhanced our standing, increased interest in Parliament among the public, and provided us with a feedback that strengthens our case against Ministers. The televising of our proceedings allows us to do our job better in testing the cases made by Ministers for their policies, and in putting the arguments before the public.

All the quibbles about whether the behaviour of right hon. and hon. Members has degenerated, whether they are wearing brighter ties, or whether some have been given a franchise to become egomaniacs are simply silly.

I hope that we shall surrender tonight the veto that we have over television. What is of importance is not how television may change this Chamber—and the changes have been minimal—but the effect that it has outside, which is uniformly beneficial. That is what we should be talking about.

We have achieved that success as much by good luck as by good management. We have evolved a rather curious, ramshackle structure for our television, part public, part private, which was produced at the last minute after the Committee had wasted nearly a year. I make no criticism of the contractors. They have worked brilliantly, particularly the contractor responsible for the Committee coverage, which has been a major success.

Technically, the coverage is the best of any legislature that i have seen and the efficiency of the touch screen system and the quickness of response is brilliant. But the structure has turned the mother of Parliaments into a scrounger, looking to other people to finance the service that we should be providing ourselves as part of the public's education, as part of doing our job.

That service should be provided, as *Hansard* is provided, free of charge. What we are providing is a *Hansard* in the electronic medium from which people obtain their news and information on current affairs. We should be financing the service, not looking to the BBC or ITV, which are already strapped for cash, largely as a result of Government policy. That makes us dependent on them and it makes it more difficult to move to the next stage, which is dedicated coverage. The people to whom we could look to finance that are now using such sums to finance the coverage that we should be paying for.

Far too much time has been devoted to the amendment. It took an hour to make a point that was Jesuitical in its casuistry. We should of course have a dedicated channel. We always should have had a dedicated channel. It always was essential and we should now set out to provide it with urgency. But it is not an alternative to the coverage on existing channels through news and current affairs programmes.

As a supplement to what has been done already, we need a public affairs channel in Britain, like C-Span in the United States, on satellite and from that into cable, which will carry the Commons, the Lords and the Committees, full time, gavel to gavel—or gabble to gabble in my case. When Parliament is not sitting, that channel could carry public affairs, whether in the form of conferences, press conferences, lectures, seminars or any other form of public affairs.

Such a channel would give to the political nation its own channel in the same way as the sports enthusiasts, the movie buffs and the news freaks have their own dedicated channels. That would allow them to watch what they want, to follow the argument without interposing the authority of television producers, who have been overwhelmingly effective and sensible in their choices but who, nevertheless, are interposed between us and the public.

It must be said that television producers do have a preference for the show biz, the sensational, or, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said, the gambling horse race element in politics. That is one reason for the excessive coverage of Prime Minister's Question Time rather than the coverage of the job that we do well, which is testing the argument, in many cases to destruction when it comes to this Government, through serious contribution to the debate.

I support, actively and energetically, a dedicated channel, but I am suspicious of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington and the hon. Member for Thanet, North coming bearing in gifts. They have been opposed to the principle of television on the terrestrial channels for so long that I cannot help seeing their amendment as another means of carrying on their old and dead arguments against coverage.

The amendment is a pistol to the head of the House and I do not want to endanger the game that we play in any way at all. I want to achieve a dedicated channel. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield that it would have been better if the Committee had had a deadline of a year and been told to achieve it and provide it. It should have been left at that and not been made dependent on anything. It is the next great advance and is all about an educated, involved and informed democracy that knows what is being done in its name by its elected representatives. I hope that achieving that dedicated channel, which is the next thing that we need, does not take as long and is not subject to as many frustrations as the achievement of what we are commemorating today.

9.35 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I fully recognise that as a consequence of my speech I shall receive less regional television coverage. I doubt whether in any future capacity I will receive an offer to chair a chat show.

I regret that we ever embarked upon this experiment and I certainly do not think that it has been a success. That is because politicians by their very nature are not modest creatures. For whatever reason, we have allowed ourselves to be seduced by the media. Increasingly, the House seems to be more media-driven than the other way round, and I regret that. Some hon. Members seemed to think that if we were seen on television we would be better loved by our constituents. Politicians all want to be loved, but over the last year I have not seen anything that has improved our esteem.

Some of the claims in favour of televising our proceedings were flawed. First, it was said that television would bring hon. Members back to the Chamber. It has certainly not done that tonight. People crowd in here only

[Mr. David Amess]

at peak TV times and it is difficult for Back Benchers to squeeze into the key positions that enable them to be seen by their constituents.

A distinguished hon. Member said that this place is a theatre. I resent that description, because anyone who knows anything about the theatre knows that it is bad television. The House is a special place. This is the mother of Parliaments and our proceedings have been copied by countries all over the world as a shining example of how things should be done.

Television has spoiled the special atmosphere of the House. It is extraordinary to define democracy as the ability of people to watch their Member of Parliament on television. Many people do not watch television, and many do not wish to watch it. I do not support an experiment that has not even improved the general standard of behaviour. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), who said in her excellent speech that Prime Minister's Question Time is popular. However, I do not know how on earth my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister can hear the questions put to her above the noise and the racket. Not many people will be impressed by that.

We have trivialised our proceedings, and Members of future Parliaments will never know how this place used to be. Although I am opposed to the televising of our proceedings, if we must have television cameras in this place I should like people to see us warts and all. That is why I support the amendment calling for a dedicated channel.

9.38 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): As one of the members of the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House, I should like to be associated with the expressions of thanks and appreciation voiced by hon. Members for the work carried out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons and by his predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. They ably chaired the Committee, kept us all at work and helped us to produce constructive findings. Equally, I wish to be associated with the thanks expressed to Mr. John Grist, the Supervisor of Broadcasting, and to Professor Blumler of Leeds university. Mr. Grist advised on the technical aspects and Professor Blumler on the measure of interest and support among both Members of Parliament and the public. Without those people working with us, our job would have been exceedingly difficult.

There is no doubt that the experiment has been a success, and that was stated in the Select Committee's report. One clear piece of evidence for that is the very lack of large numbers of hon. Members in the House tonight. When we had a major debate on the matter two and a half years ago, initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), the Chamber was full and there were some lively contributions. A number of those came from the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), who took the view that televising this place would lead to the frothy bits going out on the air and the whole procedure being high theatre. He certainly thought that that was the intention of the producers, and that the House and the public would get nothing out of it other than high theatre.

During that debate, I made a speech that since has characterised me as an opponent of the televising of the House. I share the desire of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to clarify the position. I said that the only way to televise the House was through a dedicated channel, from the beginning to the end of our proceedings. I said that we were probably four or five years too early and that, eventually, technology would reach a point where such a service to the public could be provided—not only through satellite, but through more terrestrial channels. Indeed, the phrase used this evening—and it was used in that previous debate—was "a *Hansard* of the air." That should be our objective. We could then deliver to the British public information on the workings of this House in exactly the same way as they would receive that information if they came to sit in the Gallery to listen to our debates, or if they were to read the *Official Report*.

Although I said in that debate that we were conducting the experiment too early, and I voted against it for that reason, I accept that it has been successful, and that it has proved a number of things. First, it has proved that the cameras are not intrusive. The Select Committee took longer in its deliberations than the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) would have wished. He said a number of times in the press, on television and on radio that we were dragging our feet. He also said that he was up to his ankles in envy because he was not serving on that Committee. No doubt he would have made some valuable contributions.

Although our deliberations took a long time, we drove forward the technology, so that the manufacturers of the cameras and a great deal of the other equipment seriously took on board the fact that we did not want cameramen and all the other encumbrances of television in the Chamber. We wanted the smallest possible cameras and the most sophisticated lighting. Because of the time the Select Committee took and the study that it made, we have achieved that.

Where do we go from here? Like my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and the hon. Members for Workington and for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder), I want to make it clear that I am not associated with the amendment as a wrecking amendment. I am sure that others who have put their names to the amendment would share that view. The House now has to focus precisely on where we go from here. If setting a time limit such as 12 months will make the House focus on a dedicated channel, we must do that.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am listening to the debate with great interest and with some uncertainty about how I shall vote on the amendment. Can my hon. Friend explain what would happen in the event of a dedicated channel not being in place after 12 months, despite the will of the House?

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend was not here earlier when that matter was raised. A perfectly acceptable view has been put forward that, because the House appears to be universally devoted to continuing televising proceedings, a motion will be tabled to extend the operation of televising. I do not want to speak for much longer before we hear again from my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House.

Mr. Grocott: We are Members of Parliament, and our trade is words and language. If what the hon. Gentleman is saying is true—that voting for the amendment will not in any way risk the continuation of the present televising arrangements—why does the amendment not say that? Why were those words not put specifically in the amendment when it was drafted? Why is the amendment being proposed and seconded by those who have consistently opposed the televising of the House?

Mr. Tracey: Unnecessary paranoia is creeping into the debate. Many of us have said quite clearly that we want to improve the televising of the Chamber and make it more available so that people can see our proceedings without selective editing or in selected parts.

My constituents and others who know that I am a member of the Select Committee have told me that they wish to see far more live televising of the House. The only proceedings that they know will be live are Prime Minister's Question Time on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and possibly special occasions such as the Budget. Otherwise, most people do not know of precise live transmissions from the House. I do not believe that too many people want to get up at 8.30 in the morning to watch the workings of the House of Commons.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House said, it is unfortunate that there is no late evening programme on the major terrestrial channels, although there may well be one on BSB, as we heard from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) earlier in the debate. Apart from the recorded extracts and the pull-together programme with commentators, the public want to see live transmission of the House, and the more of it the better, judging by the remarks made to me by people in industry and in the City. I was with a leading industrialist from the defence industry today, who said that it would be useful to see an entire transmission of a Question Time that was particularly relevant to that industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester was arguing against the amendment, but told us that he believed that schools and universities would very much welcome a dedicated channel and continuous broadcasting. From my point of view, and that of my hon. Friends, the amendment was tabled in good faith. We want to improve the televising of the House so that the British public can see us absolutely as we are and listen to the development of arguments. I rest my case on that premise and I invite hon. Members to vote for the amendment.

9.49 pm

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I thank hon. Members, in particular my hon. Friends the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) and for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), for the thanks that they extended to me and in particular to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Malden (Mr. Wakeham) for our chairmanship of the Committee. Our report laid a good foundation for the debate. Virtually nobody argues against the televising of the proceedings of the House being put on a permanent basis. However, there had to be one exception—my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). I am glad that the breed is not wholly unrepresentative, but that puts the matter in perspective.

I thought for a moment that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) was joining the same camp. She set out a substantial catalogue of television's characteristics: that it is selective, that it is entertainment, that it is trivial. Has she never read the parliamentary sketch writers? What does she think about their selectivity and the entertainment that they provide? The same characteristics have always applied to the press. I thought that her arguments were adequately rebutted—I rarely say this—by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). Let us therefore assume that most hon. Members want the televising of our proceedings to be made permanent.

A number of topics have been raised by hon. Members in all parts of the House, and the Committee will have to apply its mind to them. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and other hon. Members referred to the need to improve the quality of sound in the House. Yesterday, the sound in the Edinburgh chamber was bad. We must improve the facilities for the deaf and provide adequate access to the archives. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield should not imagine that we have rejected, without having thought about it, his request for an edited video of debates. The Committee has not yet been able to agree on a set of guidelines that would reconcile the legitimate demand for wider access to our proceedings with the need to protect the rights of the House and individual Members. We shall certainly consider that important point.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) referred to the television coverage of Northern Ireland debates as an example of unfair regional coverage. The general verdict on regional coverage was favourable. We received no evidence on that point from Northern Ireland. The Leeds group did not exempt Northern Ireland from its generally favourable verdict on coverage. If, however, my hon. Friend the Member for North Down wishes me to do so, we could ask the Leeds group to re-examine its raw data on that question and find out whether there is any cause for concern. In any event, we shall keep the matter under review.

Different views were expressed about the rules of coverage. As the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) suggested, they will be kept under review. Political coverage will be a matter of permanent and continuous interest to us all. All those matters will form part of the Committee's agenda in the months ahead.

My final point, which is at the heart of the debate about the amendment, is that the discussion takes place on the premise that all hon. Members are dedicated to a dedicated channel. No hon. Member has said that he does not like what we have now. However, all of us would like a channel that carried the whole of our proceedings from beginning to end, for reasons that to me make entirely good sense.

Everyone who has access to the channel will receive an uncut, unedited and completely comprehensive presentation of our proceedings. Those who say, "I shall vote for the amendment because I want a completely dedicated channel," are missing the point of the debate. We all want a dedicated channel. Paragraph 172, which was referred to by the hon. Member for The Wreking as well as by me, could not put it more plainly. The wording takes account of suggestions made by the hon. Member for Thanet, North:

"We reiterate our belief in the need for a dedicated channel providing continuous, unedited coverage of the House's

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

proceedings and we recommend that his should be provided at the earliest opportunity, as an adjunct to the permanent televising of the House."

—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is muttering that we said that last year. I do not want him to rise to his feet, however, so he can mutter from his sedentary position.

During the year, we have been looking at all the possibilities for promoting a dedicated channel and we shall go on doing so. The case for a dedicated channel is accepted. The case against the amendment is that it makes permanence conditional. The extraordinary wording at the beginning of the amendment says:

"Line 2, at end add 'provided that within 12 months from the date of the approval of this resolution'".

The question that must be resolved once and for all is whether television stays in the House. Wording such as that in the amendment would achieve what the hon. Member for Workington wants, which is the prospect of a debate every year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sorry, but I will not give way.

If that were hanging over the industry, confidence would disappear and uncertainty would take its place.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sorry, but I will not give way.

The Committee and I have been taking part in discussions with organisations already as to how we can move towards a dedicated channel. We want to address ourselves to the question whether we have an independent unit for the House or a House unit. The Committee has to get such questions under way. We have to decide on promoting arrangements, who shall be in charge, recruiting people and arranging for them to be recruited. If all that were to be subject to an annual debate in the same way as the Army Act, which was abolished some years ago, it would be absurd.

If we vote in favour of the amendment, the press and outsiders will see it as a vote for uncertainty. We need to achieve a permanent answer to the question whether television stays in the House.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) put the issue simply when he said that we are not required to choose. We are all saying that we want to have permanent dedicated television and we do not want it to be subject to a hangover condition such as that contained in the amendment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I understand that there is to be a free vote tonight. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure me that Ministers are permitted to vote in different Lobbies? That is all I seek.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This matter has always been the subject of a free vote, and it will be no different tonight. It has also been the subject of consideration by mature Members from both sides of the House over the past 12 months. As I said when the matter was last voted upon, seven of the 20 on the Committee considering the matter voted against it but, as a result of our work together over the past 12 months, all except one have concluded in favour of the words recorded in our recommendations—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North campaigned against it and, to be fair to my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton, he was not there when we had the critical vote. However, the overwhelming majority of the Committee, having thought about it carefully, said, "For heaven's sake let us go ahead with it." That seems to be the right conclusion to reach for both sides of the House.

For the benefit of those who were not here a moment ago I shall repeat the phrase that the hon. Member for the Wrekin and I have both emphasised. In our recommendations upon which the House is invited to vote tonight, we said:

"We reiterate our belief in the need for a dedicated channel providing continuous, unedited coverage of the House's proceedings and we recommend that this should be provided at the earliest opportunity, as an adjunct to the permanent televising of the House."

That is the objective to which I, with the help of the Committee, shall dedicate myself. We want to achieve it as quickly as possible. That would be made more difficult if my hon. Friends and others were to vote for the charter of conditionality which begins:

"provided that within 12 months from the date of the approval of this resolution".

We want not a proviso for permanence but permanence itself, and I ask the House to vote for it.

Question put That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 67, Noes 94.

Division No. 308] **[10 pm**

AYES

Arbuthnot, James
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Cran, James
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Fallon, Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Ground, Patrick
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Janman, Tim
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marlow, Tony
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Portillo, Michael
Roe, Mrs Marion
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Amess and
Mr. Clifford Forsythe.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Batiste, Spencer
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*

Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cryer, Bob
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fisher, Mark
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Haynes, Frank
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lilley, Peter
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meale, Alan
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Morley, Elliot
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ruddock, Joan
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Thorne, Neil
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Wallace, James
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Austin Mitchell and
Mr. Anthony Nelson.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 131, Noes 32.

Division No. 309] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bottomley, Peter
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cryer, Bob
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fisher, Mark
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, John
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lilley, Peter
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pike, Peter L.
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ruddock, Joan
Sims, Roger
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Wallace, James
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Austin Mitchell and
Mr. Anthony Nelson.

NOES

Amess, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Chope, Christopher
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Janman, Tim
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Maclean, David
Malins, Humfrey
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Patnick, Irvine
Pendry, Tom
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Ward, John
Wells, Bowen
Wilshire, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Marlow and
Mr. James Cran.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House agrees with the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House in its First Report (House of Commons Paper No. 265—I).

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS SHIPPING SERVICES

That the draft Undertaking by the Secretary of State for Scotland with the consent of Her Majesty's Treasury and of Orkney Line Ltd. and Shetland Line (1984) Ltd., which was laid before this House on 28th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Undertaking by the Secretary of State for Scotland with the consent of Her Majesty's Treasury and of Shetland Line (1984) Ltd., which was laid before this House on 28th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

SEA FISHERIES

That the draft Sea Fish Industry Authority (Levy Powers) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 27th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

LEGAL AID AND ADVICE

That the draft Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 12th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

GAME AND RABBIT MEAT

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9825/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 2nd May 1990, relating to game and rabbit meat; and supports the Government's aim that any Community measure resulting from this proposal provides consumers with adequate public health safeguards but does not impose unnecessary burdens on game producers and processors.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Radioactivity

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

10.25 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I raise tonight a question of importance not only for my constituency but nationally. That question is radiation, and hon. Members will agree that it is a sensitive subject that causes concern to everyone, and in particular to those involved with its containment.

To that end, I cite the Baxter report, which was commissioned by the East Yorkshire health authority as a result of a cancer cluster problem in my constituency. That report requires public comment by the Government—by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and by the National Radiological Protection Board—because the report's recommendations, if they are correct and scientifically based, raise national implications for the exposure to radiation of the work force in non-nuclear industries.

I am not a scientist. The report was actioned by a collection of scientific heavyweights, led by Professor Baxter, a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He has a personal chair at Glasgow university and has 24 years' research experience in the area with which we are concerned. He was aided by Dr. East, Dr. MacKenzie and Dr. Scott, all of whom have similar backgrounds and scientific credentials.

A critique has been prepared on the subject. It has been sent to me—not by the National Radiological Protection Board, because it was prepared for that board by Mr. Hipkin, Mr. Stather and Mr. Wilkins—and it says on the front page:

"This document has been prepared for internal use within NRPB. The contents should not be quoted or the document made available outside NRPB without the consent of the Head of Industrial Operations Department."

My constituents cannot read the report because, as I say, it is confidential. But they can read the Baxter report, so the Government and the agencies that represent the Government in this area must come out into the open with their conclusions about what the report says. The Baxter report and the NRPB critique illustrate the great difficulty for the public when experts on crucial matters such as this fall out. I have no option but to elicit a response from the Government by quoting those recommendations.

The first recommendation is startling. It is that there should be an urgent reassessment of the radiation exposure limits for employees in industries such as mining, coal-fired power generation and chemical production. That means that, according to Professor Baxter, there should be a re-examination of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 and particularly of the exemption orders. A governmental response is required. The upshot of all that is that Professor Baxter says that after 30 years of improved scientific understanding—and this is the important point—that means that the old statistical limits are several hundred times too high. That is a considerable order of magnitude and has considerable implications, if true, for the workers who are exposed to radioactivity at work at normal industrial companies.

The whole issue is illustrated clearly in my own constituency in the case of a company called Capper Pass. That company has been the subject of investigation for radiation emissions before. I must make it clear that the

company has always observed the advice it has received from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and from the National Radiological Protection Board, so no blame attaches to it. The question is what advice the company is being given. If Baxter is correct, it would seem that the work force in that company and in similar companies throughout the country are being exposed to radiation limits that could—I emphasise that word—be too high.

The additional problem with the 1960 Act is the many exemptions attached to it. Baxter says that the provisions do not cover the great majority of Capper Pass feed materials—that is, the raw materials going through the works. Yet he points out that, in 1984, the NRPB assessment of those very raw materials suggested that workers could be being exposed to radiation doses that were 10 times the present public level. If true, that is extremely worrying. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able either to reassure me and say that the report does not have any credence or to say that it does, and that he intends to act.

Baxter also says that there is another considerable problem in relation to these companies and to the way in which the raw material is processed, which is that there is inadequate attention to what is called the ALARA principle—as low as reasonably achievable. That merely means internationally agreed requirements that attention has to be paid to the reasonable minimisation of exposure to radiation. Baxter says that, if attention had been paid, the consequences of the growing obsolescence of the 1960 Act, to which I have already referred, would have meant that the whole question would have been less significant. It seems, therefore, that, if Baxter is correct, he may raise questions about the official advice that companies are now being given.

The scientific validity of the Baxter report is clearly open to some dispute if the critique prepared by the NRPB is correct. I am not quoting that report here, because it is confidential, even supposing that I might be able to do so. I am not quoting it, because my constituents cannot read it, so I am looking to my hon. Friend to tell me why the scientific validity of the report is unsupportable.

Baxter says that there has been a dramatically improved understanding of the same radio-nuclides as in the Capper Pass raw materials. It is now believed that the exposure radiation from these is 30 times greater than was the case 30 years ago—which, coincidentally, is when the 1960 Act was passed.

Baxter is saying clearly and roundly to the Government that the 1960 Act needs clear revision. He says that it is outdated, that it does not take account of the latest scientific advances, and that therefore the Government should act. The Act permits large-scale handling of ores, of intermediates and of waste products, some of which may contain uranium and thorium, which will expose workers to radiation beyond the recommended limits. I know perfectly well that my hon. Friend is sufficiently aware of the requirements for health and safety. If he were convinced that that was the case, he would act. The question is whether or not the advice that we are being given is accurate.

I do not have time to discuss this highly technical subject in the depth that I would like, but I hope that I have imparted to my hon. Friend the Minister the importance of the issue for health and safety reasons. There can be little doubt about that, and the Government must make up their mind as to whether or not the report is correct.

From a constituency point of view, the excessive radiation exposures at Capper Pass may be relevant to the cancer cluster problem in my own constituency. I remind the House that the recently-published Gardner report highlighted the apparent association between the incidence of leukaemia among youngsters at Sellafield and the radiation levels to which their fathers were exposed at the Sellafield station. If Baxter's conclusions are correct, perhaps they should not necessarily be confined to just the nuclear industry.

The problem is a serious one for my own constituents, but it also raises national issues. Little has been heard from the relevant bodies, including the Government. I do not criticise them for that, because time is needed to assess conflicting advice and to move public opinion along at the same time. Nevertheless, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister for a statement on the Government's current position, and what they feel that they should do for the further protection of workers in non-nuclear companies in this country.

10.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): I very much welcome the opportunity that my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) has provided to review the controls that are exercised over exposure of workers to radioactivity in what is termed "non-nuclear industry". It is not a single industry but covers a range of commercial and service activities that either intentionally utilise the properties of radiation and radioactive materials or involve incidental exposure to them.

Much attention has rightly been given, in this House and elsewhere, to the civil and defence applications of nuclear material and the exposure to radiation that can result. Many forget the wide range of activities that "non-nuclear industry" embraces. They include, for instance, medical, veterinary and dental practices. We are all familiar with the use of x-rays for diagnostic purposes, but these days radioactive preparations are also administered to people as a diagnostic aid. In addition, controlled exposure to very powerful radioactive sources is a well-established form of treatment for certain forms of cancer.

In industrial manufacture, various plant and consumer products contain radioactive sources, such as measuring gauges, smoke detectors, and emergency signs. Also, the medical preparations to which I have referred must be manufactured before they can be used.

There is also industrial radiography, in which powerful x-ray or radioactive sources are used to radiograph welds in pipelines and other heavy metal fabrications, to ensure their integrity. Such work is carried out either in purpose-built facilities or on site, in fields, or even offshore by divers checking North sea oil platforms.

All those activities involve the intentional use of radiation, but there are other activities where the exposure to radiation that arises is incidental to the process. Examples are metal smelting, to which my hon. Friend referred, in terms of his own constituency, and to which I shall return, where there are radioactive impurities in the raw materials, and some forms of mining—especially tin

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

mining—where there are accumulations of the naturally occurring radioactive gas, Radon. As discussed recently in the Select Committee, Radon can also occur in significant quantities in above-ground work places.

In the last two or three years, there have been pressures to take action to reduce the legal dose limits controlling exposure to ionising radiation. Those pressures have been resisted, for reasons that I shall explain fully in a moment.

Occupational exposure to ionising radiation is possibly the most closely regulated of all occupational exposures to harmful agents. The legal provisions have a firm, internationally agreed, scientific basis which is, quite properly, subject to review and, if necessary, revision as technological changes or relevant new data become available. I think that it would be helpful if I briefly placed that in context. Since 1985, all work with ionising radiation, whether or not it is part of the nuclear industry, has been regulated by the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985. Those regulations replaced earlier legislation made under the Factories Act 1961. They extended the legislative cover to include all uses and users of ionising radiation, such as university research, which were previously unregulated.

The Ionising Radiations Regulations lay down an annual exposure limit for workers of 50 mSv a year. A particular feature of the new regulatory framework is a requirement to keep doses as low as reasonably practicable, and not merely below dose limits. In addition, doses that exceed 15 mSv a year must be investigated. The dose limit for members of the public is 5 mSv a year.

In practice, most public exposure to radiation from work activities arises from the disposal of radioactive waste in its various forms. Disposal of hazardous wastes requires authorisation from Departments other than mine, but I understand that those authorisations impose tight requirements which result in doses very much lower than the 5 mSv limit that I have quoted.

The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, under which the regulations were made, requires the views of all interested parties to be sought and considered before any proposals for regulations are submitted to Ministers. Moreover, the structure of the Health and Safety Commission, the statutory body responsible for proposing such legislation, consists of members who represent the interests of employers, workers, local authorities and—a recent welcome addition—the public. That ensures a fair consideration of all views and legal provisions that have been accepted as appropriate and workable by those most affected.

In addition, we have the National Radiological Protection Board, statutorily appointed in 1970, to advise Government of the acceptability of the international recommendations on which, as I have said, our regulations are based.

The dose limits currently in force correspond to those in the European directive, known as the basic safety standards, that the regulations implemented. In turn, those were based on the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection that were current at the time that the directive was agreed by member states.

However, since then there has been further international revision of the scientific basis for the estimates of the risk from exposure to radiation, largely as a result of more evidence becoming available about the survivors of the Japanese atomic bombings.

The ICRP is therefore reviewing its recommendations in the light of that later information and in February this year issued revised recommendations in draft form inviting comment on its proposals. It hopes to publish its finalised recommendations early in 1991.

The next step will then be to revise the basic safety standards; again we will consult widely within the United Kingdom to agree the line that our permanent representative will pursue during the negotiations to ensure that the revised directive contains suitable and acceptable provisions. There will then be further consultations before the provisions are finally translated into national legislation.

The Health and Safety Commission issued a consultative document in February this year containing proposals for interim measures pending receipt of revised recommendations from the ICRP. That would focus attention on those relatively few workers who still receive higher doses—defined as more than 15 mSv in a year. That action was in response to advice from the National Radiological Protection Board that it would be prudent for employers to constrain their workers to no more than an average of 15 mSv a year over several years in the light of the changing views on the estimates of risk from exposure to radiation.

I make those points to show that there are ample opportunities for people with differing views to try to influence the final product. I am pleased to say that, since 1985, worker exposure in all industries, nuclear and non-nuclear, has generally decreased. The picture is generally satisfactory, and bears out our belief that there is no need for precipitate action to change the legal dose limits.

My hon. Friend mentioned his interest in the Capper Pass smelting plant, which is well known. His concern about radiation is understandable, as smelting of tin is one of the activities I mentioned in which the presence of radioactive material is incidental to the process carried on.

The consequences of that type of activity for the work force, for the general public, and for the environment are complex. Some of the points made by my hon. Friend related to pollution and public health. He will understand that they are more properly the province of my right hon. Friends in the relevant Departments. I shall try to respond to my hon. Friend in terms of my responsibilities for the health and safety of the work force and the general public. I shall specifically draw the debate to the attention of my right hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment and the Department of Health.

The Capper Pass smelter uses a range of natural ores and recycled by-products as raw materials. That means that a wide range of materials other than tin pass through the process. They include lead, cadmium, arsenic and also polonium, which is radioactive. The presence of polonium came to light in 1984, when a customer found traces of it in some alloys supplied by Capper Pass. Extensive tests and measurements were carried out, by the Health and Safety Executive and other organisations, which established that existing controls were adequate to control any radiological risk to workers or members of the public.

Health and Safety Executive inspectors have visited the Capper Pass plant on numerous occasions both before and since the detection of polonium. They have considered the

full range of potential health problems at the plant, not merely those connected with radiation, and enforcement efforts have concentrated on those problems judged to have potentially the most serious consequences. These were the general standards of occupational hygiene and dust control throughout the plant. A survey of the plant by the executive's inspectors was undertaken in September 1989.

There has been public concern about the risk of radiation from the plant and, as we know, in 1988 the East Yorkshire health authority commissioned a study by Professor Baxter of the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre to review radioactivity in and around the Capper Pass smelter. Professor Baxter's report was delivered in March and it was followed by the press statement by the health authority. It brought fresh attention to possible problems of radioactivity arising from the smelting processes.

It has been suggested—my hon. Friend has raised the matter—that there may be an association between the clusters of leukaemia in the locality and radioactive emissions from plants such as Capper Pass. At this stage I can do no more than quote from Professor Baxter's report:

"We cannot, in any way, attribute excess cancers to the practices at, or discharges from, the plant.

All we can say in summary is that there is far too little information on which to form a sound judgment."

In response to the concern about the plant, the Health and Safety Executive has undertaken further surveys, which will be followed by the executive's inspectors in the usual way.

To place the issue in context, my hon. Friend will recall that, in response to one of his questions in 1988, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, our hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), said that an assessment by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution of samples from the main chimney stack at Capper Pass indicated that the most exposed member of the public would receive less than 1 per cent. of the dose received from natural radiation. I think that my hon. Friend said as much in opening the debate.

In a debate such as this, there is obviously a limit to the detail and the extent to which we can go into the subject. I hope that I have been able to assure my hon. Friend that the Health and Safety Executive continues to take a keen and active interest in this matter. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the way in which he has raised in the House on a number of occasions the concerns expressed by his constituents about Capper Pass.

As I have said, I shall draw the debate to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and to the attention of my right hon. Friends in the Department of Health. If, on reflection, my hon. Friend feels that there are matters within my responsibility that he would like to take up with me, I shall be pleased to see him.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 20 July 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Good Health

9.34 am

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I wish to call attention to the importance of promoting good health, and I beg to move,

That this House, noting that good health is to be valued and enjoyed, recommends the adoption of healthier lifestyles to help protect against major disabling and premature death causing conditions such as heart disease, stroke and cancer; and urges the National Health Service to increase its efforts to promote such good health, through increased use of preventive measures such as vaccination and immunisation, screening services and the widespread dissemination of advice and information.

This Session we have spent a good deal of time discussing the proposed reforms of the national health service. Inevitably, there has been a great deal of emphasis on the treatment of injury, illness and disease. This morning I am inviting the House to turn its attention to steps which can be taken to avoid the incidence of injury and particularly of illness and disease.

The concept of preventive medicine is not new. The House will recall that in 1978 the World Health Organisation in the declaration of Alma-Ata issued a challenge to the world under the heading:

"Health for all by the year 2000."

That involves a continuous programme of action. In 1985 the European office of the WHO defined 38 targets for the countries within its region. I have a copy of the booklet which summarises those 38 targets with me today, but the House will be relieved to learn that I do not intend to work my way through them all. Many of those targets concern aspects of preventive medicine.

The Government fully endorsed the principles underlying the "health for all" strategy, and issued a monitoring report covering the period 1985 to 1988. That report is available in the Library and I commend it to hon. Members as an impressive account of what has been done so far. When my hon. Friend the Minister for Health contributes to the debate, I hope that she will be able to assure us that there is a continuous programme aimed towards the targets of health of "Health for all by the year 2000", and tell us whether there are plans to issue another monitoring report to show what progress has been made.

I want to put two propositions to the House. The first is that each individual has a responsibility in deciding what to eat, what to drink, how to conduct his personal life—in short, to use the jargon, to determine his or her life style. The individual has a responsibility to use available knowledge to minimise the likelihood of disease and illness and to maximise good health. My second proposition is that it is a Government duty to introduce and to implement policies that will encourage healthier living and discourage harmful activities. The Government should issue advice and information as freely as possible so that people can make informed decisions.

I am not this morning—or, I hope, at any other time—preaching or advocating nannying. I am reconciled to the fact that I will be accused of both those things, and probably of trying to restrict the freedom of the individual. There is a certain amount of double thinking on these issues. If we tell people that smoking can kill them, that excessive alcohol is harmful or that too much fatty food is bad for them, they tell us that we are trying to interfere with their private lives. However, if salmonella or listeria come to light or a drug is found to be harmful, the Government are immediately criticised for not making more information available, for not taking action and for not taking action sooner.

Surely it is right, and the responsibility of Government, to alert people to the facts and to tell them the consequences of their actions. If people choose a life style that is harmful, that is up to them—it is a free country—as long as they know what they are doing and, of course, they are not causing harm to other people by their actions.

However, a healthy life style benefits the nation as a whole. Human misery apart, disease involves heavy cost in terms of the lost productivity of goods and services, and the cost of treatment. The cost to the national health service of treating smoking-related diseases, to take just one example, is £500 million per year. What could we do with that sort of money in the health service?

One way of promoting good health is through health checks. Some companies have schemes for their employees—we are fortunate in having a similar scheme in the House. In any event, an increasing number of doctors are now offering what my own general practitioner rather delightfully calls "MOTs". It is curious that we think it important that, after a certain age, cars should be regularly checked to ensure that they are roadworthy, but that we do not encourage such checks on their drivers. It is now the usual practice for GPs to carry out basic tests such as on blood pressure, when seeing patients, regardless of the reason for which the patient is attending the surgery.

This week I was interested to note that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has issued for discussion the report of the Standing Medical Advisory Committee on blood cholesterol testing, which has examined the cost-effectiveness of opportunistic cholesterol testing. That means that, whenever the opportunity arises, such as when a patient visits a doctor, the patient should be tested for blood cholesterol. The report is interesting, and suggests that such opportunistic testing would be well worth while. I hope that that idea will be pursued.

The new doctors' contract encourages doctors to provide health clinics and to give patients free yearly check-ups. The contract obliges doctors to carry out such checks on the elderly. I find that admirable, although it is difficult to reconcile it with deterring people from having eye and teeth checks by charging them. I have demonstrated my views on that issue previously both in speeches and in my votes, and I shall not labour the point now, although I live in hope that Ministers will come to see the inconsistency of their policies on that.

The new contract also encourages child immunisations and cervical screening. The Government are developing programmes for both cervical and breast cancer screening. The patient's involvement is voluntary, but one cannot

[Mr. Roger Sims]

over-emphasise the importance of women over 20 taking advantage of the cervical cancer screening facilities which are becoming increasingly available, and of women over 50 taking advantage of the breast cancer screening facilities. However, when a women is tested, she should know the results within one month. That is the deadline that has been laid down by the Government. A delay of three months is simply unacceptable.

The House will recall that, last year, the Public Accounts Committee drew attention to coronary heart disease and urged improvements to the campaign to prevent it. The Committee made some telling comparisons between the costs of that campaign and the costs of treating the disease. In the context of coronary heart disease, the blood cholesterol report to which I have referred emphasises the importance of other factors, especially smoking and diet.

The House will not be surprised if I say a few words about smoking, which is the largest avoidable course of illness and premature death. It is estimated that 110,000 people each year die before their time through smoking and that 90 per cent. of the deaths from lung cancer, bronchitis and emphysema are due to smoking. The evidence of the harm caused by tobacco products is overwhelming.

Happily, the incidence of smoking has declined, but as one third of the population still smoke, that proportion is still far too high. Especially worrying is the extent to which smoking is prevalent among young people, particularly girls. I commend the efforts of the organisation Parents Against Tobacco, with which my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) is much involved. That organisation concentrates on ensuring that the law that makes it illegal to supply children with cigarettes is enforced. If the tobacco companies can encourage children to smoke, the chances are that they will have customers for life. There is no doubt that, if tobacco were invented now, it would never be allowed on the market.

We must be realistic: it would not be practical to ban the sales of tobacco products completely. But what are the Government doing to try to reduce the extent of smoking? The Government spend £5 million per annum through the Health Education Authority and ASH on persuading people not to smoke. The tobacco industry spends £100 million per year trying to persuade people to smoke.

Why do the Government allow smoking advertisements? I grant that the present advertising is subject to controls, but how are those controls decided? We are told that they are decided by voluntary agreement, but that means that the Government and the industry sit around the table and have a cosy chat. The Department of Health officials say what restrictions they would like and the tobacco industry suggests the restrictions that it is prepared to wear, and a compromise is reached. That is not a voluntary agreement; it is negotiated agreement. The fact is that the Department of Health is party to a negotiated agreement about how to promote the sales of a product that we know to be deadly in its effect.

I should like a complete ban on tobacco advertising and its promotion, especially when that promotion is associated with sport, which seems particularly cynical. I favour far stricter controls on advertising. I was sad that the Government opposed the EEC directive on health warnings. A draft directive is now under discussion, which involves strict controls on advertising. Only two Community countries are now opposing the proposals—West Germany and the United Kingdom. Why is the United Kingdom opposing the terms of that directive?

The increase in the tax on tobacco products was welcome, and one hopes that it will be steadily maintained. There is no doubt that increasing the cost of cigarettes dissuades people from smoking. Incidentally, it is worth reflecting that, at present, 1p on a packet of 20 cigarettes brings in about £40 million. In the next Budget, how about increasing the cost of cigarettes by at least the rate of inflation plus that extra penny, and devoting that £40 million to health education? While we are about it, would it not be sensible to take cigarettes out of the retail prices index, because it is illogical to include them?

Meanwhile, I welcome the increased adoption of non-smoking areas and, in some cases, of complete non-smoking policies in workplaces, restaurants, pubs and public places and such recent prohibitions on the underground and suburban trains.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the hon. Gentleman join me in commending the British Medical Association, which recently sent out an invitation to a large number of doctors to attend a reception? It said on the bottom, "Black tie, no smoking." Does he share my anxiety about the number of doctors in practice today who smoke?

Mr. Sims: Yes, I endorse both the hon. and learned Gentleman's comments, but particularly the latter one. Doctors do not set a good example.

The more organisations and places that have no-smoking policies, the better. I was delighted to learn that this week Air Canada decided to introduce a complete ban on smoking on all its flights.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Has my hon. Friend noticed that it is increasingly difficult for passengers who arrive comparatively late and check in perhaps only 40 or 50 minutes before take-off, to book a non-smoking seat? It seems that airlines are behind the public demand for smoking and non-smoking seats. Is not there a case for the Department of Health to suggest to Transport Ministers that they and their counterparts in other countries should discuss with airlines how airlines can keep ahead of the public demand instead of behind it and allocate more seats for non-smokers?

Mr. Sims: Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. Another interesting example is the London surburban trains on which I travel daily. The trains used to have three non-smoking carriages and the fourth was a smoking carriage. Increasingly, one found that the only carriage in which one could get a seat was in the smoking carriage because more and more people wanted to sit in the non-smoking one. Now British Rail has recognised the very point that my hon. Friend makes and the train is completely non-smoking. I have not received any letters of complaint and I have not heard that any have been written. The arrangement has been generally accepted. Such policies discourage smokers. That must in itself be good. It certainly makes life more pleasant and healthier for others. There is increasing evidence of the harm that can be done by inhaling other people's smoke—passive smoking, as it is called.

I also mentioned diet. That can be more difficult. At times it is hard to distinguish between advice from experts and advice from eccentrics. Fashions change. Different reports come from different quarters and can cause confusion. At different times we have been told that butter and sugar are either good or bad for us. The latest advice this week is that we should all eat garlic. That is an interesting suggestion but an anti-social one.

The Government have their own advisory bodies on foodstuffs. Perhaps we should consider a way in which the definitive, authoritative recommendations on food matters can be given wider publicity. Some basic principles have been established. As a general rule, we should limit our consumption of fatty foods, sugar and salt and eat plenty of fibre. The House will be pleased to note that porridge has now been established as particularly good for us.

The Food Safety Bill now going through the House deals with the marketing of food products. It is important that we should know what we are eating and its quality. It is equally important that in legislation from the House or in EEC directives the restrictions are not such that they prevent producers from making legitimate claims for their products.

The House will be familiar with the "Look after your Heart" campaign, which recently celebrated its third anniversary. I was pleased that the booklet about the health service, which has been put through every door and has caused some controversey, on which I shall not comment, includes the "Look after your Heart" pamphlet. The pamphlet incorporates some particularly useful and easily read quick-reference guides on matters such as eating, exercise, alcohol, smoking and so on. I hope that it will be widely read. Perhaps even those who are not completely in accord with the Government's NHS reforms will realise the value of inserting the "Look after your Heart" campaign pamphlet in the booklet.

I mentioned alcohol a few moments ago. The booklet to which I referred reads:

"Drinking can be enjoyable and safe, as long as you don't overdo it. But too much alcohol can be bad for your heart and liver and cause problems at work, with family and friends."

Perhaps I should declare my interest. The House will be aware that I am parliamentary adviser to the Scotch Whisky Association. I can say with every confidence that the association would wholeheartedly endorse that advice.

Moderate consumption of wines and spirits does one no harm. Indeed, it may do one good. I am sure that I am not alone in occasionally enjoying a whisky at the end of a busy day. But there is no doubt that excess is harmful. I also enjoy a glass of beer from time to time. I am glad to see the increasing popularity of the low-alcohol beers and lagers, which I now find quite palatable. It is encouraging to see the extent to which young people drink low-alcohol drinks and soft drinks, particularly if one of a party intends to drive.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, increasingly, problems are surfacing among young people as a direct result of over-consumption of alcohol, often by people who are below the legal age to drink? Does he further agree that that is partly due to the continuing glamour and style of presentation of alcohol in advertisements? Young adults continue to believe that it is glamorous to drink hard drinks and that it makes them look like the glamorous people in advertisements. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the rules on alcohol advertising should be tightened?

Mr. Sims: Yes. Of course, spirits are not advertised on television. Some of the drinks that are advertised on television or elsewhere are given a certain aura and glamour, which is not appropriate. It is a pity that some young people are influenced by those advertisements. Young men in particular seem to think that it is manly to drink far more than is good for them. It does them no credit. It makes them rather disagreeable socially and does a great deal of harm to the health.

I wonder whether we should consider doing more to support youth clubs and other facilities. I am sure that one of the problems in some areas is that pubs are the only place for young people to go. Of course, when one goes to a pub one has a beer, then another and then another. That is something that we should examine.

We must accept that, sadly, some people become addicted to alcohol. I commend the work of the alcohol advisory services, such as my local one, which are often started by volunteers. They merit support from the district health authority, which mine receives, because their work is saving national health service expenditure. The issues surrounding alcohol have been addressed by the ministerial group on alcohol misuse. Perhaps when my hon. Friend the Minister speaks she can tell us a little about its present work.

Another factor in health promotion is exercise. All credit to some of our parliamentary colleagues who take part in the London marathon. It is a little beyond most of us. Within the precincts of the palace we have a gym, which is a valuable facility used by many members of staff. There are an increasing number of private gyms in places such as the City, which are well used. There is an argument for giving some sort of financial incentive to employers to provide gyms for their staff. The extent to which private gyms are used suggests that the facility would be much appreciated. Indeed, it would be in the interests not only of the staff, but of the company to keep its employees fit.

Jogging is a simple form of exercise that appeals to some. I enjoy a weekly swim. The problem there, as with several other sports, is the limited number of facilities and the expense of providing them. Some of the best sports facilities are in our schools. Although some schools make their facilities available to the community, others lock their doors evening after evening and throughout the weekend, which is a pity. With the introduction of local management of schools, some governors may consider making the facilities on the school premises more available to local people when they are not needed by the school. In that way they would make a contribution to the community and to community health. They could reasonably make a modest charge, which would add to school funds.

One of the themes of my motion and my remarks is the need for our fellow citizens to be well informed about health and how to promote their own good health. One source of advice is one's general practitioner and another is the local pharmacist. He or she is always ready and willing to play a part in promoting good health in the community and to give advice and information. Chemists are also a valuable means of disseminating a whole range of good material produced by organisations such as the Health Education Authority and the British Heart Foundation, whose pamphlets are reflective, well presented and readable. I am sure that hon. Members will be familiar with the publication "Pharmacy Healthcare".

[Mr. Sims]

It is the report on a scheme to provide freely information on health care issues through community pharmacists. It has done well and is worth expanding.

Whatever steps are taken, injury, illness and disease will occur and sometimes unexpectedly, for example, an accident in the home or on the road or a heart attack. If someone who happens to be on the spot can render first aid, it may literally make the difference between life and death. The July issue of *Which?* carries an interesting article on first aid. It explains how easy it is for people to take a variety of courses in first aid. People should be encouraged to do so. Again, perhaps employers could give employees time off for a course to ensure that several people within the company are well trained and able to carry out first aid, should the need arise, as is happily the case in this building.

I have had some correspondence with my local director of education on the matter and I was rather surprised to learn that

"there is no statutory requirement for a First Aider to be present at Schools.".

He did go on to say:

"We do obviously feel that this is beneficial and we encourage both teaching and non-teaching staff to participate in the First Aid training."

I had asked him to what extent first aid training was available to pupils, to which his reply was:

"There is not a lot of time to encourage First Aid with pupils."

With the new curriculum, that is understandable, but I should have thought that it would be valuable if first aid training was made available to pupils immediately after school. I am sure that many youngsters would be interested in it. Certainly, St. John Ambulance or Red Cross would be happy to provide instructors.

I have taken the advantage of having won first place in the ballot of private Members' motions to address the House for longer than should normally choose. I am aware that even then, I have not touched on a whole range of issues that are relevant to health promotion. Acquired immune deficiency syndrome, for example, almost merits a debate on its own. On the whole, the Government have conducted a good campaign in an extremely sensitive area. Whatever they said or did, they were bound to be criticised.

I have not mentioned housing, which is relevant to health, or pollution. In the past day or two we have seen some of it and the figures show the frightening amount of pollution over London because of the present weather conditions. Family planning is an important part of health promotion. All those are relevant factors and perhaps later in the debate some of my hon. Friends will address themselves in greater detail to those topics.

Mr. Jessel: I have agreed with almost all of my hon. Friend's speech until now. Can he explain why family planning is relevant to health promotion? It is not a disease for a woman to give birth to a baby.

Mr. Sims: How long do we have? I should have thought that plenty of examples spring to mind, where the general standards of health of a family and its individual members are lower than they might have been, had the mother been able to take family planning advice and restrict her family. Any health visitor could answer my hon. Friend's question in great detail. He may well wish to pursue the point later.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I intervene so that we can have a woman's voice in this, as family planning generally concerns women more than men. Before we had family planning, the most frequent cause of death for women was from illegal abortions. Just one statistic is that 5,000 women a year died in that way. Dr. Marie Stopes and other pioneers introduced family planning because such deaths were the cause of misery and large families had difficulty raising their children. That is how the family planning movement began. For women, it is one of the most beneficial developments in preventive medicine that I can think of.

Mr. Sims: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that intervention, which confirms my point that family planning is an aspect of health promotion. Other hon. Members may deal with that issue later in the debate.

I hope that I have demonstrated that, as I suggested in opening, there is much that the individual can do to enjoy a healthy life and to minimise calls on the national health service, that there is much that the Government are already doing, but that there is plenty of scope for them to do more. That is the message that I endeavour to convey in my motion, which I hope commends itself to the House.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I agree with the statement:

"The best prescription for good health is decent housing, pure water and clean air—all of which need a government committed to good public services and high standards for the environment."

That is a quotation from the Labour party document entitled "Looking to the Future", which will be the basis of the policy of the next Labour Government. During my remarks I shall refer to some of the points made in that document.

The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) was right to refer to housing. I appreciate that he could not deal with the issue at length because, as he said, he has raised a many-sided subject and time is limited. But I wish to emphasise that many families are desperate because they are homeless. I refer not simply to the young homeless but to those who are statutorily homeless, people with children and pregnant women. It is impossible to be healthy and homeless. It is a contradiction in terms. Yet the capacity for local authorities and individuals to tackle the problem of homelessness is constrained at all points and made virtually impossible to resolve because of the squeeze on local government finances.

Many families suffer from overcrowding. Again, one cannot be healthy, physically or mentally, if one is living in overcrowded conditions. Many people's homes are in a bad state of repair. Repair and improvement grants have helped, but they have never been easy to obtain. They became even more difficult to use when the Conservatives removed tax relief from loans for improvements, which made it harder for people to make the necessary contribution to the cost of repairs, which they must make in addition to any grant that they obtain. It is impossible for people to be healthy if they are living in poor, and perhaps damp, conditions.

Let us not forget those whose homes are satisfactory but whose health is affected because they are stressed by the fact that the amount they must pay to live in their homes has increased almost beyond recognition through increased mortgage rates. In other words, even people who thought that they had solved their housing problems are facing difficulties and stress.

There are so many facets to the subject that the hon. Member for Chislehurst has raised that it is difficult to know where to draw the boundaries. For example, I recall a discussion with a group of women members of my trade union, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. Although the discussion was about health, particularly women's health, it soon developed into a discussion of wages.

They decided that a major cause of ill health among them and their fellow workers was stress, caused mainly by the fact that they did not earn enough. Because they were working and were also poor, they were suffering from the poverty of low income and the poverty of time. In other words, they were suffering both material deprivation and stress. Clearly, a discussion of health can easily develop into a discussion of low pay.

Coupled with the stress of low pay is stress caused by working conditions and employer attitudes. I have spoken previously in the House about the conditions of supermarket check-out operators, and I do not apologise for raising the issue again. I have observed that occupational health, injury and disease is usually regarded with the male stereotype in mind, and, for example, accidents in mines and on construction sites. But the health of many women workers doing ordinary jobs, such as supermarket check-out operators, is impaired because of their conditions and hours of work. They suffer back strain and repetitive strain injury from the sheer spread of the operation and the fact that employers are determined never to allow them a moment even to glance round. The supermarket owner allows his customers to build up into large queues rather than risk a check-out operator not having a queue waiting to be dealt with.

When I last raised this subject in the House I spoke of the time stress imposed on supermarket check-out operators. Even in a well-organised trade union shop, they may be expected to work to a norm of processing 20 items a minute. A target such as that is incredibly stressful, mentally and physically. It is positively bad for a person's health and the members of my trade union suffer, especially after doing that type of work for several years.

That state of affairs could be corrected by supermarket owners easing up on the speed, by offering more variety of work to the staff and by providing more reasonable working hours and better wages, enabling employees to take advantage of the better hours. A shop worker recently told me, "The employer thinks he owns you body and soul." People who are driven to feel like that may be prevented from enjoying a good state of health, mentally or physically.

I agreed with much of what the hon. Member for Chislehurst said, particularly about smoking. Stressful conditions encourage people to smoke, in that they seek escape from stress by smoking. I myself believe that it adds to life's stresses, but that is not the way in which many people see it on a day-to-day basis, so they make a wrong decision and smoke. The hon. Gentleman was right to say that at least a part of the answer would be to ban advertising and sports sponsorship and promotion by tobacco companies. We do not simply need exhortation, and we certainly do not need to spend large quantities of taxpayers' money on a counter-advertising campaign. As a non-smoker, I resent my taxes going on counter-advertising when it would be easier, simpler and more effective simply to ban advertising in the first place. I agree with the hon. Member for Chislehurst about that.

As long ago as 1986, in a Labour party document called "Women and Health", the Labour party committed itself to prohibiting the advertising of tobacco except at the point of sale. That is one item that receives some cross-party support. I guarantee to put pressure on the Labour Government, after the next general election, to stick to that pledge. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Chislehurst is trying to persuade the Conservative Government to have a similar policy—albeit unsuccessfully.

Child health is also adversely affected by poverty and bad housing. It is an uncomfortable fact that at present in our society people with children are relatively worse off than those without children—that applies whatever the level of income. I am not talking about the most poverty-stricken people, although their problems are the greatest. At all levels of income, having children makes people less well off than others with similar jobs and salaries.

Although I think that children bring a great deal of joy, the logic escapes me as to why children should be regarded as necessarily having to bring with them a poorer lifestyle, which affects not only parents, but the children themselves. It means that, in families with children everyone involved is relatively worse off than others from the same social background, without children.

I am pleased that, within its first year of Labour government, my party will increase child benefit at least to make up for its loss of value since 1987. It is disgraceful that increasing child benefit has not been a priority—indeed, it simply has not occurred; child benefit has been frozen. If we are really concerned about wanting children to live in healthy families, we must improve families' incomes. Child benefit is the way to do that throughout all levels of society. If anybody is worried that child benefit also helps the rich, we can increase taxation on the rich and get the money back that way. We should not destroy the universality of such a splendid benefit. I commend Conservative Members to pressurise their Government to lose no more time in restoring the level of child benefit. They should not leave it to Labour. We shall do it and so reap a great deal of credit. I shall be pleased about that, but I do not suppose that Conservative Members will be.

The provision of well woman centres is particularly important in the provision of health services generally. I call them "centres", not "clinics" because that is a less clinical, more welcoming name, which suggests a blurred edge to the function of such centres. That is important because women can be deterred from seeking medical help if their anxieties are vague or they are not sure that their complaint is a matter for the doctor. They might have a worry that is impinging on their health and could be helped by some other means, for example, other professional advice, or a self and mutual-help group. Well woman centres are important because they can serve that function, and the woman does not feel that she is "wasting the doctor's time"—a phrase that is often heard when people, especially women, are wondering whether they should go to the doctor, but fear that they might be wasting his or her time. Most doctors would probably agree that patients who worry about that are precisely the ones whom they would like to see and are least likely to waste their time. The provision of informal well woman centres, where women can go if they have worries that are

[Mrs. Audrey Wise]

vague and anxieties that straddle medical and other problems, is an excellent idea. There is no doubt that there is a huge demand for such centres from women.

As long ago as 1986, in our document "Women and Health", we talked about the promotion of well woman centres and made pledges to enable women to see women doctors. Such a policy could not be brought in overnight because there would have to be changes in training arrangements and in doctors' career structures to enable there to be large numbers of women doctors at all levels and in all specialties of the profession. That objective will need some work, but it is necessary because many women are deterred from seeking medical advice as they find it difficult to locate a woman doctor to see. That is intolerable.

It is also important for people to get a good start. I believe that preventive medicine begins even before conception. The Labour party "Women and Health" document states:

> "Pre-conceptual advice, pregnancy testing and parent craft classes should be provided and ante-natal discussion groups and post-natal support groups encouraged by group practices of midwives based in the community."

Pre-conceptual advice and thought is one of the new, valuable advances in preventive medicine that should be encouraged, and we are pledged to do so.

The maternity care that the mother receives after conception, the birth and post-natal care also have a great effect on the start given to the baby and the family unit. We want such care to be greatly improved. It is wrong that women and babies should have unnecessary hurdles to overcome because they have had a bad start. The Opposition believe that more research is needed into post-natal depression. A baby cannot have a good start if it is born to a mother who becomes deeply clinically depressed as a result of the baby's birth. There is not half enough research into that problem. As with many factors affecting women, it is neglected.

The Opposition also believe that continuity of care should be provided for expectant mothers. Starting with anti-natal care, and carrying on through the birth into post-natal care, every women should have a midwife with whom she can identify. The midwife would have the opportunity to exercise her professional skills to the full because she could watch that woman's progress and the birth of her baby from the beginning of pregnancy to the end of the post-natal period. That would be a vast improvement on the present, hopelessly fragmented approach to maternity care.

I was somewhat disappointed that the hon. Member for Chislehurst did not mention the need for free eye and dental checks, which I know he supports——

Mr. Sims: But I did.

Mrs. Wise: In that case, I apologise to the hon. Gentleman: I must have missed it. So we agree. The Opposition find it a paradox that the Government claim to favour prevention, yet put a financial hurdle between people and two of the most proven preventive procedures. I should have thought that people face enough discouragement from consulting a dentist through their own fears. They do not need charges to make matters worse.

My son is an optometrist, and a week or so ago he saw a lady who, he discovered, was suffering from a detached retina. He feared that it had been detached for some time. Detachment does not necessarily happen in one fell swoop, obvious to the patient. It can commence, then worsen. My son referred the woman for immediate hospital treatment, and I am pleased to say that she was operated on within a day—but the hospital did not have any great expectation that it could save her sight. So she was given expensive operative care, which the hospital is duty bound to carry out as long as there is any hope—but how much more sensible it would have been—and how much better a use of resources—if the woman had been seen several months earlier when her problem was only beginning. Then, the operation would have saved her sight.

The lady told the hospital that although she had been worried about her sight she had worried even more about her capacity to pay for an eye examination. It was the cost of the examination that had deterred her until her anxiety became so acute that she decided to seek advice. At that stage it was too late. That is tragic for her and it is a waste of the resources of the national health service. It is also distressing for the professionals who have to care for such patients. It upset my son that he had not had a chance to see her earlier and it undoubtedly upset the surgeons too. We should not burden our health professionals with extra stress of this sort. I look forward to the election of a Labour Government and the fulfilment of our commitment to restore free eye and dental checks.

A couple of days ago an interesting press release about the conditions in which food should be kept emerged from the Department of Health. The Government propose to introduce temperature controls to food retailing and delivery—a good step. I am sorry to have to criticise that good step, but I must do so because the Government are also acting as a brake on the speed of introduction of their own new controls. They are phasing in the temperature controls to ensure that retailers can bring their equipment up to standard. Fair enough, but the time scale is outrageous.

The first requirement is that from April 1991 food must be kept at no more than 8 deg C; so far so good. However, much perishable food should really be kept at 5 deg or less, as the Government acknowledge. They are laying regulations to that effect, but they will not come into force until April 1993. It is one thing to say that retailers need time to bring their equipment up to standard, but it is disgraceful to allow them nearly three years during which people, including pregnant women, may continue to eat food contaminated with listeria organisms, which can keep growing at 6, 7 or 8 deg.

I am sorry that the Government are spoiling their initiative that way. Of course retailers need time, but not three years. The application of technology and of money —there is plenty of that in the grocery trade—could ensure that the process is carried out in much less time, given the will to do so. I shall regard the Government as being directly to blame for cases of listeria that occur between now and 1993 because food is not kept below 5 deg. The Government know what should be done and are wilfully allowing too long in which to do it.

The Government's move is also an insult to large sections of the retail trade. If the equipment of some retailers is in such a bad state that it needs three years to bring it up to a scientifically reputable standard, I am appalled at the lack of thought that those retailers have

given to food storage. However, I believe that the best retailers could meet a much tighter deadline, and it is unfair to them to allow their competitors to get away with inadequate food storage arrangements for close to another three years.

The reported figures of cases of listeria infection may represent only the tip of the iceberg. It is not an easy disease to diagnose or to trace back to its causes. But it is scientifically accepted that listeria organisms can grow under refrigeration, and that food must be stored at less than 5 deg C to protect us from this common organism. Precautionary action should certainly be taken before April 1993.

The promotion of good health is a many-sided subject. Of course people must make good personal decisions about their life style. It is sensible not to smoke; it is sensible to take exercise and to try to eat as healthy a diet as possible—although that is sometimes ruled out by a lack of income. But individual decisions in the matter, although important, are by no means the whole story—they are not even the main story. Without collective action and provision it is impossible for people to protect their health to the extent that we should all wish. In food storage, for example, we rely on Government regulations on retailing. We can make our own decisions in some ways; I have decided that I do not want to buy anything stored at more than 5 deg C, but how do I know it has been? I must make another decision—to cut out of my diet a whole range of foodstuffs that are perfectly healthy in themselves, provided that they have been stored properly. But I cannot make a personal decision that can cover that—just as we cannot make personal decisions that satisfy the housing needs of the population or ensure that we will all have adequate incomes. We rely on trade unions, employers and Governments to do those things.

The promotion of good health is the responsibility of all of us; however, it is especially the responsibility of the House and of Governments not only to encourage but to facilitate good health, through the provision of improved standards in all the areas that we are discussing this morning.

10.40 am

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on both his choice of subject and his speech. The non-sermonising "Jimmy Young" note that he struck was exactly right. I also commend him on the large number of subjects that he managed to cover. As he hinted, his choice of subject is timely.

For much of this year, the health debate has revolved around the role and structure of the national health service and how it should respond to changing patterns of demand, changing types of illness, new treatments and changes in medical technology. This morning my hon. Friend has righly switched the spotlight away from the national health service, and back to the role that the individual must play in improving standards of health.

I strongly believe that we have reached the point of diminishing returns in trying to secure improvements in the nation's health through investment in traditional curative medicine. Of course we must maintain that investment, but the improvements in health that all hon. Members want to see are far more likely to result from changes in individual life styles than from an increase in throughput in our hospitals.

What does that mean to a party whose traditions might suggest that it should not intervene in individual life styles, and whose instincts might lead it to the view that, if people do not wear seat belts, or if they want to smoke, that is a matter for them and not a matter in which Government should intervene? I do not agree with that view. One does not have to be a socialist to appreciate that, if the resources available to the National Health Service are finite and if those finite resources are used to treat avoidable illnesses, there will be fewer resources left for unavoidable illnesses.

A consultant at St. George's hospital—before it moved from Hyde Park corner—summed up the position very well. He was about to operate on a patient who suffered from a serious but not acute illness, and who had a rare blood group. The consultant had assembled, with some difficulty, sufficient quantities of blood of that group to enable the operation to proceed. However, just before the patient was anaesthetised, there was an accident on Hyde Park corner and a motorist who was not wearing a seat belt was rushed into the hospital, critically ill. He had the same rare blood group as the consultant's patient; and, inevitably, the supplies were diverted towards the motorist and away from the patient.

That graphically illustrates the point that my neighbour's life style is of consequence to me. We live in an interdependent society, and when health care resources are rationed, we all have a stake in how they are spent.

I do not regard it as tenable for any party to claim that it should be neutral on the question of individual life styles. How a party then discharges its legitimate interest in individual life styles is another matter. An individual should be encouraged to make sensible decisions about his or her life, but it cannot be left to the marketplace, although many of my hon. Friends might like to do that.

Let us take the issue of smoking, which was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst. If it were left to the marketplace, the information that an individual received would be wholly one-sided, and any decision based simply on that information would inevitably be wrong. For an individual to reach a relevant decision about his life style, he must have all the relevant information. As the tobacco industry will not provide that information, inevitably the Government are drawn in. They can either do what was suggested by the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) and simply ban the advertising of tobacco—with which suggestion I have some sympathy—or they can make available to the individual the contrary information, so that he has access to both sides of the equation before he reaches a view.

The same is true of the promotion of alcohol. The Government have a legitimate interest in ensuring that the information on which an individual bases his decision is well balanced. The notion that the Government should be neutral and stand back on those issues is not one that I can support.

The Government set the parameters for many of the decisions that are made. It is the Government who decide by whom alcohol should be consumed, at what age, where and at what times. The Government fix the price for both alcohol and tobacco: that is another reason for them to take a sensible and coherent approach to these issues.

As was implied by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst, this is not just a matter for the Department of

[Sir George Young]

Health. All Government Departments have a stake in many of the issues that he touched on. The Department of Trade and Industry may have a policy on helping firms that happen to manufacture tobacco to set themselves up to manufacture something else. How does that relate to the Department of Health's interest, which is perhaps aimed at reducing the consumption of tobacco? The Department of the Environment has a role to play in sports sponsorship, to which I shall return in a moment; the Treasury has an interest, in relation to its fiscal responsibility for setting the price.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst rightly prioritised some of the issues surrounding smoking when he drew attention to the 110,000 premature deaths that occur each year. This is the area where investment in health promotion can produce the best returns. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will draw on the reserves of good will that she has at her former Department—the Department of the Environment—to secure a passage in the White Paper on the environment about passive smoking.

For millions of people, pollution is not acid in rain, lead in petrol or the hole in the ozone layer; it is other people's smoke. If we as a Government are to be credible on the macro-issues we must be credible on the micro-issues, of which passive smoking is one.

People with asthma or chest complaints find that other people's smoke makes their condition worse. For millions of people it is an irritant. In the immortal words of Frank Sinatra, smoke gets in your eyes; but it also gets in your clothes and hair. I applaud Air Canada's decision—mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst—to ban smoking on all transatlantic flights, but the White Paper should sketch out the Government's role in establishing space in public offices as non-smoking areas.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The hon. Gentleman is right to praise Air Canada's policy. Will he join me in deploring the policy of Lufthansa, the German airline? One tends to find smokers on one side of the aisle and non-smokers on the other, effectively sitting alongside one another.

Sir George Young: That is a wholly unreasonable approach for any airline to adopt. I think it would be best not to book tickets with that airline, and I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for giving me notice of which airlines to avoid.

The canteens in Government Departments would be nicer if non-smoking were established as the norm. The Government have a role to play in helping to promote a society where non-smoking is the norm, and where there is a presumption that a public area is somewhere one does not smoke. People should not have to wait for the no-smoking sign before knowing that they are in a no-smoking area. The whole debate has to be turned around now that non-smoking is the majority activity.

It also makes good business sense for pubs, restaurants and other areas of public entertainment to develop non-smoking areas, because that is what the majority of their customers want. I hope that the Government will look at a code of guidance for employers who want to know how to tackle these sensitive issues, especially where some employees want to smoke while others do not. There is now a threat, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, from those who suffer from passive smoking. The Government have a role to play in this.

The hon. Member for Preston mentioned sports sponsorship. When the advertising of tobacco on television was banned, the tobacco industry, in a cynical move to get round the restrictions placed on it by Parliament, began sponsoring sport. It is sad that sport is as addicted to tobacco as many smokers. We have to do more to find alternative sponsors for some of the sports that get sponsorship from the tobacco industry. We also have to look carefully at the rules. If tobacco manufacturers want to sponsor sport, rather than using the brand names of cigarettes, they should use manufacturing names, which would weaken the association. It is cynical to link sport, which is essentially healthy, with smoking, which is essentially unhealthy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst mentioned the voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry and implied that discussions about it were cosy. When I conducted those negotiations, they were far from cosy. However, if the tobacco industry knows that the Government will not legislate, what it volunteers is the voluntary agreement, because the Government have no negotiating power. We should allow the House a free vote on the advertising of tobacco and sports sponsorship by the tobacco industry. The Government resolved libertarian issues such as the use of safety belts and crash helmets through a free vote on a Government Bill. I hope that, in the next Session, there will be a Bill with a provision that will allow a debate, such as this, that can end with a free vote on whether we should phase out the promotion of tobacco, save at the point of sale.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst spoke about the problem of doctors smoking, but the problem among health professionals is not so much with doctors, among whom the consumption is declining, as among nurses, among whom the incidence of smoking is high. I hope that the NHS can do a little more work on why it is that those who must be aware of the consequences of smoking, smoke disproportionately.

Mrs. Wise: Stress:

Sir George Young: It may be stress. I welcome the initiative of Parents Against Tobacco, which has valuable support not only from my hon. Friend the Minister but from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It is endeavouring to shield children from the pressure to smoke until they have grown up and can take a rational decision of their own. Members of Parliament had a helpful meeting with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, who said that he was planning legislation to tighten up the regime that controls the sale of cigarettes to children. Perhaps the House of Commons can do something in this. It has always seemed crazy that the House should validate an activity of which, by and large, it disapproves by selling its own brand of cigarettes in the kiosk downstairs. I hope that the Services Committee will have another look at this to see whether we should validate this activity by putting the insignia of the House of Commons on cigarette packets.

Cycling has a role to play in promoting good health. There has been a substantial increase in cycling over the past 15 years. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst said that some activities are inaccessible, because the

facilities are not there, but this argument does not apply to cycling. Some 90 per cent. of men and 67 per cent. of women can bicycle and there are now over 15 million bicycles in the United Kingdom—as many bicycles as cars.

A growing number of Members of Parliament use bicycles to get to and from their places of work. I claim some credit for this, because I established the House of Commons bicycle pool, way back in 1975, to promote this activity. I am not sure what happened in 1979, when this Administration came into office and I lost track of it. I think that it was privatised and that the assets were sold to the Members in accordance with the principles of that Administration.

Mrs. Wise: Will the hon. Gentleman mention the need for more cycle tracks?

Sir George Young: Yes, but there is no point in installing cycle tracks if all that happens is that motorists park in them, which is what tends to happen in London. I am all in favour of cycle tracks and routes through Royal Parks to make cycling more attractive and easier, but there has to be more observation of the cycle tracks once they have been painted, because otherwise the motorists assume that they are delineated places in which to park their cars. That is what has happened in the Uxbridge road in my constituency, where we have a cycle track that is no longer visible because of parked cars.

Cycling has great health benefits. It is a form of vigorous exercise in that, in the words of doctors, it is dynamic aerobic activity involving free movement of large muscle groups—larger in the case of some people than in others. Some interesting research was done by Dr. Tuxworth, who analysed 1,394 middle-aged factory workers. He discovered that cyclists in general enjoy a level of fitness equivalent to being five years younger, and for regular cyclists, the level of fitness was equivalent to being 10 years younger.

It is estimated that the training effect of cycling four mile each way to work at 12 mph is the same as 10 minutes wrestling, 30 minutes of squash, 50 minutes of singles tennis or 24 holes of golf. The effect is doubled if one increases the speed from 12 to 17 mph. Cycling has the advantage over jogging, swimming or some of the other activities mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst, in that it is easier to incorporate into one's daily routine without it being a time-wasting chore that eats into valuable time. For those who are worried about the constraints on cycling and who think that it rains all the time, I can say that, on average, it rains between 8 am and 9 am on 12 days in the year.

Dr. Kim Howells: I am not sure whether those figures refer to Wales. I am interested in the statistics that the hon. Gentleman has given us. However, given the dangers presented by traffic, especially in great cities such as London, could not cyclists be prematurely 20 or 30 years dead as a result of cycling on some of the busiest roads?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman is right. The statistics for cycling accidents are far too high—I think, about 300 deaths a year. However, when these cycling statistics are compared with those for other forms of transport, they are somewhat misleading in that cycling statistics include children, whereas motoring statistics do not. Once one isolates that and looks at adults on bicycles as opposed to adults in cars, the statistics are not so disadvantageous.

When one then allows for the fact that much of the motoring is on motorways, where the cyclist cannot go, and then looks at cycling in cities as against driving in cities, the statistics become more reassuring.

It is safer to bicycle from home to the station, take the train and then bicycle the other end than to drive a long way, so the bicycle, taken in conjunction with public transport, is safer than it may seem. However, as the hon. Gentleman emphasises, we must make cycling safer and reduce the constraints.

A combination of the NHS reforms that have just reached the statute book and the emphasis on the role of the individual given by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst should ensure that we enter the next decade, at the beginning of the year 2000, a fitter, healthier and happier nation than the one that entered the 1990s.

10.59 am

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): As I lay in a hot bath this morning trying to unravel an episode of backache, as, a little later, I looked in a mirror—the credibility of which I doubted, and have done for some considerable time—and as I opened my post and looked at it with ever-wearying eyes, I reflected on the fact that perhaps hon. Members are not especially qualified to teach the nation what it should be doing about its state of health.

There can be few jobs that are as unhealthy as that of hon. Members—too much hot air and too many free meals are hardly a recipe for a healthy life. Indeed, I suspect that even those like the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir George Young)——

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Britoil (Special Share)

Mr. Speaker: Statement—Mr. Morrison.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not usually the case that statements on a Friday must be exceptional, urgent, or agreed through the usual channels? It is not true that the making of a statement today has not been agreed through the usual channels? The statement is not urgent and it does not require any exceptional treatment.

Britoil is a Scottish company and the bulk of the people employed by it work in Scotland. Most people affected by the statement are Scottish. To have such a statement on a Friday in July makes it especially difficult for Scottish Members of Parliament. When the last statement on Britoil was made, no fewer than 15 Scottish Members of Parliament, of all parties, raised points. They are now being deprived of that opportunity by this shifty means of making a statement today.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West) *rose*——

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I can deal with this matter. The Standing Order provides the opportunity for statements to be made at 11 o'clock. I am not informed of the contents and I have no idea whether they are urgent. However, it is perfectly in order for a statement to be made at this time on a Friday.

In relation to what was said by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), I can say from experience that I very much hope that the business of the House can, in general, be arranged through the usual channels. We proceed in good order if there is the consent of both sides of the House.

Mr. Alan Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your ruling. As it is virtually the last week before the recess, there will be no opportunity to debate the matter before October unless we can do so next week. Is it not true that virtually the only opportunity for debate next week would be the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill? Is it not also true that, because this statement is being made without notice, it is now too late for any hon. Member to table this matter for debate under the Consolidated Fund procedure?

Mr. Speaker: Of course, in addition to the Consolidated Fund—the ballot for which has already been held—there is a three-hour debate on the summer Adjournment motion on Monday. Furthermore, there is still time for the right hon. Gentleman, if he so wishes, to apply for a debate on the Adjournment on the last Thursday.

Mr. Allen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I very much hope that you have a long and relaxing recess. During that time, would you consider the way in which the Government, not only on this occasion, but on a number of occasions during recent weeks—this is becoming more and more evident to hon. Members on both sides—have sought to use the opportunity to gain television coverage to manipulate and extend the boundaries that hitherto were agreed by all sides? Would you consider how Parliament could recapture some of its lost time?

Mr. Speaker: There was an interesting debate last night on the televising of the House and since it is now agreed that the House will continue to be televised. I can now come clean and say that I think that it has been a considerable success. However it is not for me to speculate on how time is used when the cameras are on. Our Standing Orders allow the opportunity for statements to be made on a Friday, and Friday is of course, a working day.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last week and the week before, there were discussions in the House, in which you were involved, about the way in which the House was being used, without the usual negotiations between the usual channels. You made a statement to the effect that the practice of using the House of Commons in that way was not good enough. The Government do not listen to your words. They think, "It doesn't matter now; a week or two has passed so we will do it again."

There comes a time when you, Mr. Speaker, must use some authority. Unfortunately, your recent words were not good enough, because the Government have decided to treat them with contempt. At some time, you must make it abundantly clear to the Government—especially as they are now using the opportunity of television—that this sort of business must stop. Never mind about Back Benchers, never mind about the Opposition—you must make that clear to the Government. You know that there are occasions when some hon. Members are present but others are not.

It is clear that those hon. Members whose constituencies are 300 or 400 miles away and who have an interest in this matter, face more difficulties than someone like me, whose constituency is only 150 miles away. I have always recognised the fact that some hon. Members, who are up in the Shetlands and elsewhere—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Outer Hebrides.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, and the Outer Hebrides. Some of our people actually live in Scotland. I suggest that you, Mr. Speaker, make it clear to the Leader of the House, no less, that this sort of business must stop, and follow that with a report to the House on Monday. The Government are railroading through the business and treating the Opposition, Back Benchers and yourself with contempt.

Mr. Speaker: Not at all. The hon. Gentleman is here regularly on a Friday and he well knows that it is a full working day in the House of Commons. However, undoubtedly it would have been for the convenience of hon. Members with Scottish constituencies if they had known that the statement was to be made this morning.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that I can take any more points of order. What can I say about it?

Mr. Spearing: I shall explain that, Mr. Speaker.

Is it not true that, habitually, Ministers making statements, of whatever importance and with whatever agreement, preface their remarks with the words, "With permission"? Is it not also true that those words are nothing but a courtesy and that, in fact, they are empty of meaning? When I investigated, I discovered that not even

you, Mr. Speaker, or the House has to give permission. Therefore, I suggest that it is inappropriate that it be sought.

I am a London Member, and I resent my Scottish colleagues being treated in this way. Should we not refer the question of statements to the Select Committee on Procedure? For the time being at least, should those words that are empty of meaning be not uttered by the Minister? He does not have the permission of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to refer that matter to the Procedure Committee, he should certainly do so.

11.7 am

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): With permission, Mr. Speaker——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the light of what has been said, I am not sure that that is helpful.

Mr. Morrison: I should like to make a statement on the Britoil special share. A number of substantial benefits to Scotland and to the development of the United Kingdom's oil and gas resources have been secured as a result of BP's compliance with the assurances that it gave to the Government when it acquired Britoil in 1988.

The reserves of Britoil's producing fields have been upgraded by 67 million barrels, a 24·5 per cent. increase, and well over the 5 per cent. that was promised. The drilling rate on Britoil acreage increased significantly in 1988, and again in 1989, and this year is expected to be approximately double the 1988 level. British Petroleum has confirmed to me that its plans for drilling in 1990 are designed to secure that 87 wells are drilled on acreage held by BP or Britoil at the time of the acquisition, and that it is confident that £310 million will be spent. A further £30 million is being spent on exploration-related research and development.

British Petroleum is pressing ahead with the development of a number of major fields, including Miller and Amethyst, and has made detailed proposals for the development of Bruce. In Scotland, Glasgow has now been established as the head office for BP's upstream business throughout the whole of Europe. This year alone, BP Exploration will be spending approximately £1 billion, more than half its worldwide spending, on activities run mainly out of Scotland.

The numbers employed by BP Exploration in Glasgow and Aberdeen have risen significantly, mainly as a result of the enhancement of Glasgow's role. In addition, the expansion of Kinneil is expected to generate an extra 2,500 jobs and the Bruce project 500 jobs—all of them in Scotland. BP's commitment to Scotland has been underlined by its establishment of a Scottish advisory board chaired by the chairman of the BP group.

When BP gave the assurances, the Government undertook that after a period they would review, in the light of the way that they had operated, when the special rights preference share in Britoil should be redeemed.

BP has fully implemented the assurances, which have now been working satisfactorily for some time. They have also been the subject of an inquiry by the Select Committee on Energy.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are satisfied that BP has lived up to its word and that the Government's objectives in obtaining assurances have been met. I am therefore taking immediate steps to arrange for the special share to be redeemed.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): As there were at least 10 references to Scotland in that statement, the protest by my hon. Friends and myself was entirely justified.

The statement is the last nail in the coffin of Britoil, which the Government privatised as an independent oil company and which used to be Scotland's largest publicly quoted company. When Britoil was originally put up for sale, the then Minister of State for Scotland, Mr. Hamish Gray, now Lord Gray, said that the arrangements that the Government had arrived at would contain effective safeguards for Britoil's independence. The golden share was a vital part of those arrangements. In 1988, Britoil was bought up by BP. The then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) said:

"The existence of the special share has enabled the Government to secure from BP these wide-ranging, valuable public assurances."—[*Official Report*, 25 February 1988; Vol. 128, c. 150.]

Those assurances covered the amount of exploration and development work to be undertaken and the level of employment in Scotland to be provided by both companies, the sale of assets of former Britoil property, and the structure of the board.

The Minister told the House today that those assurances have been kept, but that is simply not true, He said:

"they have also been the subject of an inquiry by the Select Committee on Energy."

They have, but the Minister forgot to mention that the Select Committee recommended that the golden share should be retained for the time being. The Committee also said that it was not convinced that BP had acted in the spirit of the assurances given about employment in Scotland. It is simply not true that the assurances have been kept.

The Minister's carefully worded statement, obviously drafted by a first-rate Sir Humphrey, said:

"British Petroleum has confirmed to me that its plans for drilling in 1990 are designed to secure that 87 wells are drilled on acreage held by BP or Britoil at the time of the acquisition'".

Some of that acreage is no longer held by BP or Britoil but has been disposed of. How can the Minister accept an assurance from BP that it has kept its promise when the company is counting in assets that it no longer owns? That is a preposterous concept.

Will the Minister confirm that if the acreage sold off is excluded from the calculations, the expenditure commitment on exploration and on wells drilled has not been kept? Will he answer that specific question?

Will the Minister confirm also that BP's plans for work next year will mean that its activities will be cut by half, and that the Government's surrender of the golden share will allow the company to dispose of Britoil assets exactly as it wishes and to invest the proceeds abroad, rather than in North sea activities? Will the Minister confirm that both may happen if he gets rid of the golden share?

What are the tax implications of today's statement? Is it not true that BP will be able to shift assets around from

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

one company in the group to another? BP itself calculates that this development will help to reduce its tax liability by between £75 million and £100 million this year. Is that counted in the current public expenditure round, or is it just another of the privatisation sweeteners that the Prime Minister seems happy to hand out?

The golden share existed to enforce the assurances that BP gave. They were given partly to the Scottish people, but they have not been honoured. Surrending the golden share will give BP an entirely free hand to do what it likes with Britoil's assets and staff. Frankly, for the Minister to give up the golden share at this moment is like throwing in the towel before he has even climbed into the ring. There should be much more resistance to the action that BP is covertly trying to take.

If the Minister does not know what BP is up to, he should resign for being incompetent. If he does know, he should resign for collaborating with it. His announcement will harm the ecnonomy, our efforts in the North sea, and the people of Scotland. It has one saving grace—it will also harm the Government.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and I are at variance about the reason why the golden share existed in the first place. If the hon. Gentleman examines the original wording on that subject, I think that he would find it impossible to use the share in the way that he wants, for intervening in the running of BP or Britoil, or both. I do not believe that it is right to intervene in any company. The North sea has prospered substantially since 1979, for the simple reason that we have allowed companies to get on with running their own businesses, rather than interfering.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that my statement was

"the last nail in the coffin of Britoil",

but that is utter rubbish. As my statement pointed out, there are now 500 more jobs than would have been the case in 1988. The hon. Gentleman also talked, perfectly fairly, about the acreage—

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): My hon. Friend can talk about whatever he wants.

Mr. Morrison: I agree with the hon. Lady.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the acreage that is now not owned or operated by BP. I can give him precise figures. Of the 87 wells to which I referred, 39 will be operated by BP, 28 will be partner-operated, 10 will be farm-outs, and 10 will be Oryx. The sale of some Britoil assets was carefully examined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and myself several months ago.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras will be pleased to know that, where a well is not to be operated by BP, we have received a categorical assurance that the wells will be drilled—so that assurance has been honoured.

The hon. Gentleman referred to BP's tax situation. I have not paid any attention—on reflection, nor should I—to that aspect, because it is a matter for BP and the Inland Revenue. I considered carefully the letter that Sir Peter Walters, the then chairman of BP, wrote to Sir Peter Middleton, permanent secretary to the Treasury, to determine whether the company's assurances have been honoured. That was a long and detailed letter, and it was a tough negotiation at the time, and I assure the House that they have all been carried out.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the targets set for the company two years ago were extremely tough and that all the Government's expectations have been exceeded? Is it not true that, in general, the North sea has seen tremendous success in its exploration and development over recent years?

Mr. Morrison: I can confirm that the targets set were tough. For example, in 1988 52 wells were drilled between BP and Britoil and that figure is now just under 90. I can also confirm that the level of activity in the North sea was, I am glad to say, of a high order. New investment is at an all-time record of £3·7 billion this year, and the exploration and appraisal of wells is of a high order. As a result, the number of jobs—good jobs, too—created in Scotland is much higher than two years ago, and I am delighted by the progress of the oil and gas sector of the Scottish coast and on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that the Minister will accept that there has been a number of job losses since the take-over of Britoil by BP, particularly in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). There has also been a significant number of job losses in my constituency with the withdrawal of BP from its oil supply base at Lerwick, about which I have seen the Minister. Many people will wonder whether the golden share is worth anything at all when a Government who proclaimed the independence of Britoil when it was privatised and believe in competition were unable to use it to stop the takeover of Britain's largest independent company by one of the biggest companies in the United Kingdom as a whole.

In the Select Committee report there was a suggestion that BP had brought forward oil drilling into 1990. The Select Committee specifically recommended that his Department should monitor BP drilling in 1991 and beyond. What powers does he now have to take action if that level of drilling in 1991 and beyond falls far short of what would have been expected from the assurances given by BP at the outset of the take-over?

Mr. Morrison: I fully accept, as the hon. Gentleman said, that there have been some job losses. However, as I have said, there have been some job gains, and just over 500 is the net figure of the increase. I am sure that he will agree that the proper structure of the organisation—the way it balances its labour force and so on—is a matter for BP. The net figure has more than met the assurances.

The hon. Gentleman said that he does not believe that the special share was of any particular use. The letter written two years ago by Sir Peter Walters to Sir Peter Middleton giving the assurances demonstrated precisely what use it was. That would have been no good on paper if the assurances had not been met, and in practice they have been. The letter referred to the period "up to 1990". That is the period we have had to consider and monitor carefully. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we have done so.

As for the future, BP will be able to operate in the North sea in the same way as any other international oil company and, if I may say so, it should be able to do so.

It is because of the freedom of movement that so many major international oil companies, including BP in a big way, are pouring literally tens of millions of pounds into further exploration on the United Kingdom continental shelf and particularly the North sea. The interest I have found in the 12th and frontier rounds is of a high order and I suggest that that is because of the free market we operate. Those companies could just as easily put their money into Indonesia or offshore Brazil or Australia. They choose to come here because, subject to the licence and a tough safety regime, they are allowed to be free agents. We should welcome that.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is exceptionally good news for Scotland for investment, expansion and the long-term future of the oil industry? Does he agree that the Scottish Office and my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for industry have played a part in achieving it? Can my right hon. Friend give a breakdown of jobs in the future? How many does he anticipate being in the headquarters in Glasgow and how many does he anticipate in the north-east, particularly around Aberdeen?

Mr. Morrison: I can certainly confirm that the discussions that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office and I have with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy about the North sea are perhaps not on a daily basis, but they are on a weekly basis. We could not work more closely together. I agree with my hon. Friend that the news for Scotland, as well as for the United Kingdom as a whole, is unadulteratedly good in terms of what is happening in the oil and gas sector and the knock-on effects that brings with it in terms of the supply company, the fabrication yards and so on.

I have with me the most up-to-date figures I have for the number of jobs in Glasgow and in Aberdeen, and I hope that it will be helpful to my hon. Friend. There will be 3,500 in Aberdeen, 1,155 in Glasgow and 880 in places such as Sullom Voe and elsewhere. In total that is 5,545. That is direct BP employment. There will be related jobs because of BP orders being given to the yards and so on.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I came in quite by chance just as the Minister was getting to his feet. It is a disgrace that this statement has been made this morning. It is far from the action of a decent and honourable Government to do such a thing, given that so many of my colleagues are in their constituencies in Scotland.

The offshore oil and gas industries have not made Scotland a land of milk and honey in terms of employment. My constituency has had a long and often not very happy relationship with Britoil. It will surely agree with the comment made by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) that job losses were suffered by constituents of mine who worked for Britoil. For many people in and around Glasgow who work for Britoil—the Britoil-BP company is chaired by a Greenockian, Sir Robin Duthie—the golden share was seen as a sort of insurance policy. It was seen as a guarantee that their interests would be cared for.

With regard to jobs, has BP given an assurance that orders for offshore structures will be placed with Scottish companies? There is still under-capacity in the offshore yards in Scotland, particularly at Scott Lithgow. The Minister has not played the game with people in Scotland today.

Mr. Morrison: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman feels that it was a mistake to make a statement. In previous announcements about golden shares, there have been statements and written answers. I offered the Opposition a statement if that was what they preferred, because I realised that there was considerable interest. That is why I have come to the House to answer any questions that hon. Members may wish to put.

The hon. Gentleman said that the employees of Britoil in Glasgow lay much store with the special share. That is true. They thought it important at the time of the takeover that the assurance should be sought and given and should be adhered to. That is precisely what was happened. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, a week or so ago, BP announced that it was to form a Scottish advisory board under the chairmanship of the chairman of the BP group, with Sir Robin Duthie as the deputy chairman. I believe that I am right in saying—I will be corrected if I am wrong—that that advisory board has been welcomed. It was welcomed in an editorial in *The Scotsman*.

With regard to the terms of reference of the advisory board, the chairman of BP said:

> "I believe it is important that decisions relating to our Scottish activities should get the benefit of sound advice from a Scottish perspective. The Advisory Board will achieve this and also help BP to meet its wider obligations to the Scottish community."

That is a strong and firm commitment to Scotland by the chairman of BP.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the level of United Kingdom content of services, including fabrication, for the North sea is just over 80 per cent. By any stretch of the imagination that is a lion's share, and we have achieved it because we happen to be more competitive, more professional and better than our international competitors. I would not expect any company operating in the North sea to give a categorical undertaking that it will always buy British. If I did expect that, I would frighten those companies away and they would not spend the hundreds of millions of pounds that they do spend on exploration and appraisal, and the 12th and frontier rounds would not be a great success.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to bear it in mind that this is a private Members' day. I will endeavour to call those hon. Members who are rising, but we should get back to private Member's motion in 10 minutes. I ask hon. Members to be brief.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Would my right hon. Friend confirm that the Select Committee on Energy very carefully considered BP's takeover of Britoil? The Select Committee took all the evidence, saw all the documents and concluded that the accusations that BP had not met its original agreements and commitments were totally unsubstantiated and quite contrary to the misleading statements made by the Opposition Front Bench Spokesman, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). As I am the only member of the Select Committee present in the Chamber today who worked on that report, I hope that my right hon. Friend

[Mr. Peter Rost]

the Minister will persuade the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras to withdraw his quite misleading comments.

Mr. Morrison: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He will recall that I was a witness before the Committee. When the Committee had considered carefully what BP had to say and considered how the Department was monitoring the assurances, it reached the same conclusions as those drawn by my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost). I am afraid that I cannot make the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who speaks for the Opposition, withdraw his remarks. I am not responsible for him, no matter how wrong he may have got it in this case.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does not the Minister realise that the Government will be seen as cowardly and shifty for making this statement without warning on the last Friday before three months of parliamentary recess? Is not the impact of the Minister's comments today the fact that, having sold off an important national asset, he has now given away the last protection of the national interest? Will he spell out what the taxpayer will get in exchange for this surrender? Will he also give us a clue about the future? After the next reshuffle or election, which ex-Minister can we expect to see joining the board?

Mr. Morrison: I do not think that coming to the House and making a statement is either cowardly or covering up. I have allowed myself to be cross-questioned by Opposition Members. I cannot look into the crystal ball and say what benefits might accrue in future in terms of BP and its contribution to the economy. However, BP is wholly committeed to its investments in the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom Treasury benefits substantially from the company's success and the profits.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the golden share mechanism is a blunt instrument which has no part to play in the longer term structure of a company? Is it not surprising that Opposition Members have made no reference to the Opposition's oil policy? Does my right hon. Friend recall the busted flush or five-legged camel known as the British National Oil Corporation? Does he agree that, since 1979, the Government have freed the oil industry? My right hon. Friend's announcement today will continue to free the oil industry, and that is a great benefit to workers and taxpayers.

Mr. Morrison: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that in this case the special share had run to the end of its useful life. I have seen what one Opposition Front Bench spokesman has had to say about the Opposition's policy on oil and gas, and I quite understand why the Opposition now want to cover it up as fast as they can.

Mr. Skinner: Now that the golden share has been removed and any participation by the state has been lifted, will the Minister guarantee that no ex-Tory Minister, Cabinet or otherwise, will get a job on the board? Will he also give a categorical assurance as an ex-vice chairman of the Tory party that the Tory party will never collect funds from BP or any of its subsidiaries? Will he give us that guarantee?

Mr. Morrison: My answers to the hon. Gentleman are no and no. Of all people, the hon. Gentleman likes freedom and it would be wholly wrong for me——

Mr. Skinner: Are you going to moonlight?

Mr. Morrison: He likes freedom and it would be wholly wrong of me to restrict anybody from being asked or joining any particular board.

Mr. Spearing: Can the Minister give any reason why his statement could not have been made on Monday or any other day next week? Does he agree that, while statements and other actions in the House may be important, actions that go against general understandings are not acceptable unless there is very good reason for them? Is it not clear that, if the Government cannot properly give a square deal to the nation of Scotland, which is part of our United Kingdom and Union of nations, we cannot expect the Government to properly defend the interests of England, Scotland, Wales and Ulster in any wider union of nations that may be proposed?

Mr. Morrison: On the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, outside of London and my constituency, I visit Scotland more than any other part of the country, and rightly so.

Mr. Dobson: You own part of it.

Mr. Morrison: No, my eldest brother does.

The contribution which the oil and gas sector makes to the Scottish economy is significant and we want that regime to continue in the way that I have outlined.

With regard to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, it is not for me to meddle in matters of business management. Suffice it to say that I gather that there are a number of statements pending for next week and I thought that it was best, as I have said, to come to the House as soon as the decision had been made to be cross-questioned by whomsoever wished to put questions to me. I informed the Opposition last night.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Would not most independent analysts conclude that, with the sophistication of the international oil exploration markets, blocking mechanisms like the one we are discussing today have outlived their usefulness?

Is it not also rather depressing that some hon. Members according to the exchanges in the Chamber today do not seem to have learnt the lessons of the past 10 years? Large companies like the one that we are discussing really must be allowed to run their own affairs. Despite all the glitz and glitter of Labour party documents claiming that Labour has understood that, the Opposition clearly have not. They want to go back in history, interfere and return to the bad old days. My right hon. Friend's announcement today is very timely.

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend is 100 per cent. right. However much the Opposition protest, they would not for a second stop interfering in the activities of many oil companies operating off the Scottish coast. That would lead to much less investment in exploration and appraisal and that would lead to fewer jobs.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does not the Minister accept that any sensible Government would have retained the golden share to maintain an influence on this country's energy policy and on investment in jobs in Scotland? Has

the right hon. Gentleman not put party dogma first and sold those down the river today? Has he not sent out a clear signal to the other industries with a golden share that that share means nothing at all because the Government believe in market forces and not in the prosperity of the country as a whole?

Mr. Morrison: There is nothing dogmatic about doing what one said one would do. We said that, once the assurances had been met, we would release the golden share—the special share—and that is precisely what we are doing today.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, apart from spurious assets, some of the other comments expressed today have been unfair to the biggest and most profitable British company, which is one of the top four companies in the world? The taxation income brought in by British Petroleum and the thousands of millions of pounds that it has invested in North sea oil brings us huge tax revenues, huge sums of which go to support the Scottish economy. Have we now reached the stage where Scotland does not look upon itself as part of the United Kingdom, but wants to operate only in this little narrow vessel, which is what makes Scotland so unappetising to many industrialists?

Mr. Morrison: I agree with my hon. Friend. The frightening thing is that the international oil companies will read what has been said this morning and will therefore see what the Labour party would do in the unlikely event of it coming to power in, say, the year 2020. A significant number of hon. Members still want to intervene in the North sea in a major way, and that is what will drive away lots of investment and cut the labour force substantially.

Mr. Allen: There is not a great deal of family silver left to sell, but with the Government's economic problems, it is pretty clear that they will sell off every thing they can. I ask the Minister to talk to his colleagues, and I ask him and them to give the House an assurance that the golden shares and other Government shareholdings in British Telecom, British Aerospace, British Steel Enterprise Ltd., the water companies, Jaguar, Sealink, Cable and Wireless and other companies will be retained. Many of us feel that this announcement is a prelude to the grand closing down sale of the Thatcher Government.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to give such an assurance because, as he appreciates, all the golden shares to which he has referred are matters for my right hon. Friends the various Secretaries of State concerned. That is how the matter lies. In future each will be looked at over a period on its merits.

Mr. Dobson: As the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) has cast some doubt on the accuracy of what I said about the report of the Select Committee on Energy, will the Minister confirm that, as recently as 13 December last year, the Select Committee on Energy stated of the employment assurance:

"we are not ourselves convinced that BP's recent policy is fully in accord with the spirit of that assurance".

It also stated:

"The Special Share in Britoil should remain in existence for the time being."

In what the Committee then described as its "main conclusions"—those are the Committee's words, not mine—it stated:

"It is debatable whether the proposed asset sale to Oryx can properly be considered to be 'in the ordinary course of trading'. Further substantial asset sales would not be consistent with the assurances."

Will the Minister confirm that, by removing the golden share he can no longer prevent further substantial asset sales and, indeed, that that is a likely consequence?

Finally, will the Minister clarify what he said and confirm that the decision taken on the golden share by the Secretaries of State for Energy and for Scotland, which may cost the Treasury as much as £100 million in lost revenue, was taken without any consideration being given to that loss of revenue?

Mr. Morrison: On asset sales, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that, when there is a change of ownership, there is a process within the Department by which the Department looks at it carefully and either approves or does not approve it. In that respect, the Department will keep some control, as it would be for any asset sale in the North sea—and rightly so, because the licences were given to a particular group, which gave certain undertakings in its application for the licence.

It would be wholly inappropriate for me to delve into the matter of——

Mr. Dobson: Why?

Mr. Morrison: Because I am concerned about whether Sir Peter Walters's assurances were or were not met. That is what the special share was about and that is what I have adhered to, taking into account the Select Committee's thorough consideration of the matter. I have concluded, with my right hon. Friend's, that all the conditions have been met and that is why the special share will be redeemed.

Mr. Speaker: We now return to the——

Mr. Wallace: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's colleague, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) is on his feet——

Mr. Wallace: I shall be very brief, Mr. Speaker. You will have noted that the Minister said that he had informed the official Opposition last night that this statement would be made. While my hon. Friends and I do not expect to be consulted about whether a statement is to be made, do you agree that it would have been a courtesy to tell other Opposition parties about the statement, especially since my party and hon. Members from the Scottish National party represent constituencies that have a significant interest in the oil industry.

Mr. Speaker: That will have been noted by those on the Front Bench. We now return to the debate on the importance of the promotion of good health. Mr. Alex Carlile.

Good Health

Question again proposed.

11.45 am

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am grateful for the opportunity to resume the sentence that I was in the middle of when we reached the statement.

I had been just about to commend the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) for his well publicised energy on a bicycle. He has done much for the image of those hon. Members who strive to draw attention to the need for public health awareness. However, I fear that, like many cyclists, the hon. Gentleman finds riding a bicycle in central London a risky business not only because of traffic problems, but because of the incredible pollution that hits every cyclist as he tries to cycle along the roads of London.

Nevertheless, cycling is undoubtedly a healthy activity and everthing possible should be done to enable cyclists to use the streets of London in a far more congenial way than is available at present.

One thing about cycling concerns me on safety grounds. I am referring to the prevalent use of Walkmen by cyclists. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Acton listens to a Walkman as he cycles——

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Carlile: I am glad to see the hon. Gentleman shaking his head about that. It seems dangerous for cyclists to ride in the rush hour listening to loud music which obscures the sound of the approaching traffic. Even as a car driver, I find it useful to hear the sound of the traffic around me, and I am sure that cyclists should find it even more useful.

This Friday morning, right hon. and hon. Members who are smokers are conspicuous by their absence—with one or two exceptions. I wonder whether they find that a four-day week is about as much as they can manage, whereas those of us who do not smoke can also leap to our feet in the House on a Friday morning.

We face an incredible number of hazards to our health, which are increasing daily. We have heard quite a lot this morning about tobacco advertising and about the sponsorship of sport by tobacco companies. It is extraordinary that a cigarette company should sponsor a grand prix for racing cars, for example, because if one were to light up a cigarette in the pits, I suspect that one might run the risk of causing a major disaster.

Equally, it seems extraordinary that the most energetic form of county cricket—not the form that I prefer, which is the slower five-day variety—is sponsored by a tobacco company. I doubt whether some of our more athletic young cricketers who score the largest amount of runs on a Sunday would find it easy to achieve their greatest successes if they were heavy smokers.

The increasing use of tobacco by young people, especially by those under 18, is a particular hazard to their health.

We have all heard the evidence about the number of young people in that age group who become alcoholics before they reach the age of 18. That is a shocking fact.

In my years as a criminal lawyer, I have noticed all too often how crime is committed by young people who have drunk to excess. It is committed not by people who are blind drunk—they are usually incapable of committing crime—but by people who have simply had rather more than they can safely manage which makes them, to use the psychiatrists' word, disinhibited, to the extent of committing crime. Such people tend to ask their lawyers to tell the judge that they were drunk, as if that was a mitigating factor.

Young people ought to understand that crime is just as serious if it is committed when they are disinhibited by drink as at any other time. The Government—indeed, all political parties and all groups with an input in education and which have contact with young people—should stress that alcohol leads to crime. There is a direct relationship between alcohol and crime. I am not talking about shop windows being broken. I am talking about the commission of offences such as rape and robbery as a result of young people becoming disinhibited by taking drink.

We continue to face increasing hazards to our health in the workplace as a result of industrial practices. The Health and Safety Executive, under its excellent chief inspector of factories Mr. Linehan, has done a great deal to improve the position. However, the funding of the Health and Safety Executive still leaves a good deal to be desired. I should like the executive to send factory inspectors out on a much more frequent random basis, particularly to smaller factories and workplaces. It is often in smaller workplaces that the worse practices are followed —for example with machine tools—which lead to many wholly unnecessary accidents.

I represent an agricultural constituency. Indeed, I believe that it is the most agricultural constituency. There are far too many agricultural accidents. A better funded agricultural safety inspectorate could do much to obviate that.

A more general issue affecting public health is town and country planning policies. They way in which they are operated causes a great deal of anxiety. Although there is a tendency to allow areas which were not traditional industrial centres to be developed—I commend the success of the Development Board for Rural Wales in my constituency and neighbouring areas on that score—town and country planning policies continue to concentrate jobs in conurbations. That compels huge numbers of people to travel to work on congested routes, which often leads to accidents, stress and consequent disruption of family life.

Those of us who sometimes drive alone in the rush hour from our London homes to this palace—I admit with some shame that I am one—are all too accustomed to the flash of anger which the rush hour can cause as one sits in one's car surrounded by other people who travel to work alone in their cars in this great city of London. I should like far more energy to be spent on finding imaginative ways of improving our public transport system. The state of London Regional Transport is very bad, as those of us who use it frequently can testify. The buses are unpredictable and infrequent——

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): And filthy.

Mr. Carlile: —and filthy.

The underground is unpredictable, sometimes infrequent, and filthy. Indeed, recent weeks have seen the virtual closure for several days of the District line, a line used not only by many Members of parliament, but, more importantly, by vast numbers of members of the public who try to lead reasonably well-organised lives in London. The consequence of that closure is that they all get into

their cars and sit in queues in the rush hour suffering stress and anger with all the consequences to the health that that causes.

The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) mentioned homelessness and the consequences for people's health. When I first came to the House in 1983, there was no homelessness in my constituency to speak of. There may have been a small handful of people who were homeless, but if people in need came to me and asked me to help them to obtain a house of flat, the Montgomeryshire district council or the Development Board for Rural Wales could generally help within a reasonably short period. That is no longer so.

Newtown is the largest town in my constituency, with about 11,000 inhabitants. There are at least 50 young people living rough there, many of whom have good, regular jobs in factories and service industries in Newtown. There is a waiting list for homes of between 400 and 500. That is only part of the constituency. It is a reasonably affluent rural area. It has low wages but low unemployment, so it is reasonably affluent, taken overall. We have a waiting list for rented accommodation of about 1,000 people: those are the ones we know about.

I have one of the smallest electorates in the House, although I have one of the largest constituencies geographically. If we have long waiting lists in Mongomeryshire, what on earth is it like in other places with much denser populations? From what I have read, it seems that, particularly in London, the problem of homelessness is desperate.

We know what homelessness does to young people, because we can see it for ourselves. There is a risk that young people who are homeless will be driven on to the streets, into crime, into drink and, in some cases, into prostitution. Of course, it does not happen to all of them;. but the real risk does not seem consistent with the housing policy of a Government seeking to promote public health seriously. If young people are to be healthy, it is vital that they are given a reasonable prospect of having a home.

I am also worried about the privatised water industry. Again I can relate the matter to my constituency. The privatised water companies have inherited a large and elderly sewerage burden. In Montgomeryshire, in the town of Welshpool there is an historic problem of poor drains and decrepit sewers. A further problem which affects areas such as mine must be tackled. A statutory responsibility has rightly been placed on the district council to ensure the cleanliness of private water supplies. I am willing to lay a substantial bet that most of the private water supplies in Montgomeryshire are a good deal more healthy than the public water supply yet it is right that we should be sure. I make no complaint about the public water supply as such, but there are some excellent private water sources.

In my constituency, over 4,500 dwellings have a private water supply. That is an extraordinarily high proportion when one considers that the area has a population of not much more than 50,000. To fulfil its statutory responsibilities, the district council will have to foot an enormous bill, running into hundreds of thousands of pounds. It cannot meet that bill. It simply cannot pay for its responsibilities unless the Government are prepared to devote substantial extra resources to it. I have written to the Secretary of State for Wales and he has set up a consultation exercise to deal with the matter. We await the result with keen anticipation.

I hope that the Minister and her colleagues in the Department of Health will pass on to the Secretary of State for Wales the view that it is extremely important that resources should be made available to enable a district council, such as Montgomeryshire, to test private water supplies, without detriment to the other services which it provides. In other words, extra money should be supplied for that purpose.

I join in the congratulations to the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on choosing this important subject for debate today. He and I have the privilege of serving together as appointed lay members of the General Medical Council. Although our appointment is fairly recent, I know that he, like me, already takes it seriously and regards it as extremely interesting and important. We have the opportunity to learn a good deal about the way in which modern general practice operates. Certainly, I did not know much about it before. Some of it has been a source of pleasant surprise, but some of it has caused me a good deal of alarm.

The health of the nation is not assisted by the prevalence of a substantial number of single-handed general practitioners, particularly in our cities. I do not want to run down every single-handed GP because undoubtedly, some are among the best. Generally speaking, a practitioner who is working on his own is forced to use contractual on-call services for night visits and days off, with all their unpredictability. Generally, they are unsatisfactory. He is not providing the same level of service to the community as a practitioner who operates in a group practice, which has duty doctors on call, most of the time at least, servicing the patients of the practice.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): As always, I agree with a great deal of what the hon. and learned Gentleman says. In my constituency, there is an abnormally high level of single-handed practitioners. One result is that constituents who are unhappy with the idea of going to a locum doctor if their GP is on holiday, spend far too much time going to the casualty departments of local hospitals. That is putting a huge strain on local hospitals. My constituents then complain that the waiting lists in casualty departments are too long. It is hardly surprising if the health service is misused in that way. That flows, at least partly, from the prevalence of single practitioners.

Mr. Carlile: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. It is not merely casualty departments that are affected. Recently, the professional conduct committee of the GMC heard a case—in which, I hasten to add, the doctor was found not guilty—of serious professional misconduct. A family was anxious about the mother—the wife of the complainant. The patient, having had an unsatisfactory response from an on-call service, twice called out an ambulance. The family was uncertain whether to ask the ambulance to take her to hospital or to wait for a GP to turn up. The end result was detrimental to the patient's health.

There are two important aspects to this GP problem. First, it is a matter of sheer management common sense in relation to the organisation of a medical practice to have group practices. I speak with some indirect experience, because my late father was a GP. When I was a child he worked single-handed, and as I grew up he went into what is now a well-developed and successful group practice in

[Mr. Carlile]

the north-west of England. My friends in that practice undoubtedly offer a far better-organised service than was offered in the early 1950s. It is much better for the patients and more efficient for the doctors in management terms if they are working in a group.

The second aspect can be highlighted by an analogy with the Bar. The Bar is a collegiate profession, as are most modern solicitors' offices. Practitioners work together in groups and exchange ideas. We are sometimes accused at the Bar—my wife always accuses us of this—of being a gossipy profession; in a sense, that is true, but it is only a symptom of the fact that, when problems fall on to our desks, we share discussion of them.

It is certainly of great benefit to the client that we can bounce large numbers of ideas and problems off our colleagues. Senior colleagues have experience, and junior ones are full of ideas. Medical practice, particularly general practice, would benefit greatly from an increase in size of group practices, so that collegiate aspect of the learned profession of medicine could be more effective.

The personal relationship between the individual patient and the individual doctor has diminished, because it is often difficult to see the doctor on whose list one is registered. That does not matter greatly, unless a patient is seriously or chronically ill, in which case most practices ensure that one doctor sees the patient regularly. Much can be gained from allowing that one-to-one relationship to slip a little and replacing it with medical efficiency and patients' confidence that the doctors will know about the problems which they are asked to treat. That is important for all of us.

Over the years, we have seen a considerable shift of emphasis within dentistry. At one time one thought of the dentist as the person who pulled teeth; now he is the person who saves teeth. Dentistry has made enormous strides, from treatment to prevention. In the years to come, the same can be done with general medicine. The right place to invest money for the future, while maintaining a good treatment service, is in the prevention of illness. I urge the Government to invest ever greater sums in that direction.

12.7 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The whole House has heard the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) with great interest. I warmly agree with his support for the concept of larger, joint general practices. They will come about increasingly and will assist in preventive medicine. I was interested in his reference to dentistry. Although he did not tell the House whether he was in favour of the fluoridation of water, I noticed that earlier in his speech he mentioned water, which is important in preventive medicine.

I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on his motion on preventive medicine. The House and the country are in his debt. The central part of his motion is that this House

"recommends the adoption of healthier lifestyles to help protect against major disabling and premature death causing conditions such as heart disease, stroke and cancer".

Our prime object must be to delay or defer death for as long as possible. In the Gilbert and Sullivan opera "The Yeoman of the Guard" the character Fairfax, who was under sentence of death, began his famous song:

"Is life a boon?
If so, it must befall
That Death whene'er he call,
Must call too soon."

Fairfax, a young man when he sang that, was awaiting execution. One often hears the young say, "I do not want to live over 80". They may feel differently on reaching 79. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) will chat to her hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) a little more quietly because I am finding it distracting.

Enormous improvements in medicine have occurred this century, and particularly in the last 10 years. The Library informed me this morning that the average expectation of life for a child born in 1986—the last year for which accurate figures are available—was 72·1 years for a boy and 77·8 years for a girl. Apparently girls and women have an expectation of life five and three quarter years more than boys and men.

That differential has greatly increased in recent generations. For example, a boy born in 1932 had an expectation of life of 58·7 years, and a girl, 62·9 years. That gave an average difference of four years, where as today it is five and three quarter years. It is not clear why that should be the case, but it is clear that the expectation of life has improved substantially for both sexes.

There has been a remarkable improvement in the infant mortality rate in the last decade—and the Minister may have up-to-date figures. The trend given in the Library figures shows that in 1981, the infant mortality rate was 11·2 per thousand and in 1989, projected, it was 8·4 per thousand. It is remarkable that the infant mortality rate should have dropped by about a quarter in the eight years 1981 to 1989.

There have been other significant improvements in mortality rates. I note in the analysis of causes of death given in the official year book for Britain that, for example, in respect of bronchial disease, the number of deaths from pneumonia dropped from 54,000 in 1981 to 26,000 in 1988, a fall of more than half in the number of deaths from pneumonia in seven years. The number of deaths from bronchitis and emphysema dropped from 17,000 in 1981 to 9,000 in 1988, a drop of nearly a half. It seems highly likely that preventive health measures had much to do with that improvement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing Acton, (Sir G. Young) who I am pleased to see has returned to his place, referred in his interesting speech to the wearing of seat belts. In 1981, the year when seat belt wearing in the front two seats of cars became compulsory, the number of deaths from road accidents was about 5,500. By 1988, that number had dropped to 4,500. I have no doubt that in the significant drop of 20 per cent. in the number of deaths from road accidents during those years the introduction of seat belts played a part.

One could go on giving examples of improvements, but there remain two great killers, cancer and heart disease. The number of deaths from heart disease amounts to nearly half of all deaths. In 1988, it was 268,000 out of 568,000. The number of deaths from cancer of all sorts totalled about 144,000, or about a third of all deaths.

We must all die at some time and from some cause, but undoubtedly those two areas of illness provide great scope for preventive medicine. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst is right to refer in his motion to heart disease and cancer. He is also right to advocate

"the widespread dissemination of advice and information" in the context of the national health service.

In welcoming the increasing emphasis on preventive medicine I commend the excellent work of the Maddison clinic at Teddington in my constituency. It was founded by the late Dr. Maddison to enable elderly people to have regular health checks and be given information about, among other things, what to eat to protect their health. It is a highly popular institution which is widely patronised.

There are occasional rumours about the clinic closing. Such rumours were circulating seven years ago. We conducted a great campaign, and it was saved. There have been rumours in the past few months to the effect that it might close, but I am glad to say that the general manager of the Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton district health authority has confirmed to me that the clinic will remain open.

I hope that the Minister will note what I have said about the valuable work done by that clinic and what the district health authority has said about it not closing. I emphasise that because some local general practitioners have shown a noticeable lack of enthusiasm for the clinic; they prefer patients to receive all the health checks from the GPs and not from the clinic. I repeat that the clinic is extremely valuable, and I hope and believe that it will long remain to serve this and future generations of elderly people resident in my constituency.

The concept of preventive medicine contains a large proportion of what can be done to reduce the incidence of premature death. I would not object to an element of compulsion, as occurred with seat belts, or as would be the case with water fluoridation. We need more discipline in preventive medicine, as well as compulsion, and we need more incentives. We should pay doctors more to achieve a high target of immunisation of babies against diphtheria and smallpox. That is part of the purpose of recent legislation, which we were right to pass, because it should be compulsory for babies to be immunised in that way. Parents who are so ignorant as to seek to prevent immunisation should be overridden by the law, as in the case of seat belts.

Mrs. Wise: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that vaccination against smallpox no longer takes place?

Mr. Jessel: Well then it ought to take place, and so should the immunisation against diphtheria because one never knows when such things will break out again. There should also be other vaccinations.

I can tell the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) of the greatest episode of compulsory immunisation in recent times when I was on a delegation in 1971, 10 million refugees went from Bangladesh to India because they were being ill-treated by the Pakistan army, based in West Pakistan. A massive number of refugees had to live in the most appalling conditions, in the ditches and fields in the open, when they went into India. The Indian Government wanted to feed those 10 million people, look after them and protect their health until they were able to get back into their own territory of East Bengal.

But there was a terrible threat of a cholera epidemic. The Indian Government insisted that every one of those refugees was injected against cholera and produce a certificate of inoculation before being entitled to receive a food ration card. That must sound tough, but it was toughness based on the motive of compassion. It forced everyone to have an inoculation against cholera before they could get food. That was done and in that way, the number of deaths from cholera was kept down to 3,000 out of 10 million refugees. Without that policy, probably hundreds of thousands of people would have died of cholera. That is what I mean by compulsion in preventive medicine. The Indian Government were right, and that episode made a great impression upon me. Ever since, I have believed that there is little place for freedom in preventive medicine, and there should be more compulsion, discipline and inoculations where necessary.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am listening to my hon. Friend with increasing nervousness. About two centuries ago, if my hon. Friend's philosophy were followed, it would have been compulsory to have cupping and blood-letting of everyone as a matter of course. Medical science moves on, and from time to time things that are thought to be good are later thought to be bad. If such progress can be achieved through encouragement and incentive, that is all to the good, but doing it through compulsion makes me wary.

Mr. Jessel: I am sure that if my hon. Friend had been a Member of the House in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he would have voted against the compulsory wearing of seat belts. We had passionate debates on that subject when people who thought like my hon. Friend thought that it would be a monstrous interference with individual liberty for people to be compelled to wear seat belts and people should make their own decision about it. The other argument prevailed, and we are saving 600 or 700 lives a year, preventing 10,000 serious injuries a year and saving the National Health Service £8 million or £9 million a year from treating people who would have been severely injured on the roads and might, in some cases, have been human cabbages and taken up beds in national health service wards, which are now available, instead, to other people who need the treatment.

I am, at heart, as much of a libertarian as my hon. Friend, except in health matters. That may sound inconsistent, but my hon. Friend should remember the wise words of Emerson:

> "A foolish consistency is the hob-goblin of little minds,"

and . . .

> "Speak what you think to-day in words as hard as cannon balls, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said to-day."

It is a most barren and foolish form of politics for people constantly to try to look for remarks, quotations or attitudes that are in conflict with what someone has said or thought in a different context or at a different time. We have to say what we believe is right at any particular time. It seems monstrous that young babies should not be protected against the risk of diphtheria because they happen to have a misguided mother. It is better to make a few mistakes than to make a lot.

I remind the House that a few years ago we were constantly being told that there were 2,000 deaths a year from cervical cancer in women and being asked why the Government and the House of Commons were not doing more about it. People said that something must be done about it. We have done something about it in the recent legislation. We have introduced targets for general practitioners to ensure that a certain percentage of women have checks, cervical smears and screening against cervical cancer. Now, those same people who were saying that we

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must do something about it are beefing and complaining, whining and whingeing—the usual lobby—saying that it is an interference with their professional liberty. We should disregard that sort of lobby and get on with what we believe to be right. It is wrong to pay too much attention to people who complain in that way. In public life, sometimes we must lead public opinion and not just follow it. It is right to do so in this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst, who introduced the debate, was one of the supporters of compulsory seat belts, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Acton. If I may say so, I was also active in that. That was the right philosophy and I regard the prevention of accidents as part of preventive medicine.

Much of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst was devoted to smoking. He is famous for the lead that he has given in that subject. He should have more backing from the House as a whole and from within my party. In an intervention in his speech, I mentioned that it is more difficult to book a non-smoking seat in a crowded aircraft than a smoking seat. I suggested that he should invite the Minister of State for Health to make representations to Ministers with responsibility for transport that there should be international co-operation among Transport Ministers from different countries to remind airlines that they should keep ahead of the public demand for that instead of lagging behind it, and ensure that there are more non-smoking seats available to meet that public demand in view of the decreasing proportion of people who habitually smoke when travelling.

There should be higher taxation on cigarettes. The tax on cigarettes should go up in every Budget systematically and regularly so that over a period of five or 10 years cigarettes become at least relatively twice as expensive as they are. Whenever they have gone up a little, due to tax changes introduced by successive Chancellors of the Exchequer, there have been complaints from tobacconists in my constituency, but never by more than three or four of them. People quickly settle down to a 5p or 10p increase in the price of cigarettes. The Government then have the extra revenue to spend on the health service or whatever they and the House believe to be right. I should like the tax to be increased progressively, year by year, until cigarettes become much more expensive. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst that cigarettes should not be included in the cost of living index.

I am greatly concerned about the number of children who smoke, and particularly about girls at school, who seem to smoke more than the boys. I do not know why that is and I would be grateful if anyone could throw any light on it, but it is a worrying trend. I am glad to have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Acton that the Home Office intends to tighten up its regime for the prosecution of shopkeepers who sell cigarettes to minors.

Cancer remains a major cause of death, and within the total figures there has been no significant reduction in the number of deaths from lung cancer. There were 35,000 in 1988, compared with 34,000 in 1981. That remains a great cause for concern because it is preventable to a large extent.

I turn now to heart disease. We are all told these days that we must cut down the proportion of cholesterol in our diets. My hon. Friend's motion refers to

"the widespread dissemination of advice and information."

But in some respects there is not yet enough information about diet. I could not help noticing when there was anxiety about beef three months ago and about eggs 18 months ago—*[Interruption.]* I must ask my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) to whisper a little more quietly as I find her distracting, too——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): That is a sexist attack.

Mr. Jessel: It is not. I am always interested to hear what my hon. Friend has to say——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): But the hon. Gentleman would prefer to hear it when the hon. Lady takes the Floor and makes her own speech.

Mr. Jessel: Absolutely, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am grateful for your assistance.

I could not help noticing when we heard so much about eggs in the winter 18 months ago or about beef in the spring of this year that hardly anyone mentioned that eggs and beef contain a high proportion of cholesterol, which enters into people's diets.

Fish are another area of diet. We are all told to eat more fish, but there is little reference to shellfish. It is far from clear whether a healthy diet includes shellfish in the same way as it includes flat fish, white fish or oily fish. At least one eminent heart specialist, who is a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, has written that shellfish are just as healthy as white fish and that there is no reason why we should not all eat a large amount of them. But that is not reflected in the information put out by the societies that advise on diet, so there is a conflict of information.

We should remember that if we are told to reduce our intake of milk, cream, butter, cheese, eggs and meat, there is not much left that does not contain those foods. We cannot live all the time on kippers, cabbage and aspirins. If people could include a substantial proportion of shellfish in their diets that would add to the variety of what they can feel free to eat.

There are two main classes of shellfish: crustaceans and molluscs. Crustaceans are crabs, lobsters, shrimps, prawns and crayfish. Molluscs include winkles, whelks—which are described as sea snails on menus in France—clams, mussels, cockles and oysters. It is sometimes suggested that shellfish, whether crustaceans or molluscs, are luxuries, but I see the hon. Member for Peckham in her place, and I hope that she will not mind my mentioning that in 1964 I was the Conservative candidate for Peckham; indeed, I had been the prospective candidate there since 1960, which may well be before she was born. When I was there I had a drink in every pub in Peckham. They then numbered 117, and at least 20 of them had shellfish stalls outside. Peckham is not one of the richest areas in the country, as I am sure the hon. Lady would not deny. The consumption and enjoyment of shellfish was widespread throughout the whole of society in Peckham.

Of course there can be tremendous changes in relative food prices. We all know that salmon has come down in price. I was told by the main fishmonger in Twickenham, Mr. Ray Sandys, that the price of salmon last week was lower than the price of cod. That is absolutely astonishing: no one 10 years ago would have believed it possible. We all know that chicken is now much cheaper than beef, and 50 years ago it was the other way around. The same applies to certain shellfish.

When Lewis Carroll wrote "The Walrus and the Carpenter" in the 1880s, the oysters which feature prominately in that poem were a dish regularly and frequently eaten by working men in London. It would not have been surprising in those days for carpenters to eat oysters; these days, oysters are more likely to be consumed by yuppies. I believe that the wheel will turn full circle because, owing to improved fish-farming methods in Brittany and all along the west coast of France—methods which I hope will be extended to include places like Whitstable and Colchester in this country—the price of oysters has gone down. One can now buy 12 big ones at a fishmonger in Brittany for 20 francs, which is £2. I believe that it will not be long before some enterprising business man finds a way of importing oysters into Britain far more cheaply, so that their dissemination can be much more widely enjoyed among the population as a whole. In the context of preventive medicine, it is all the more important that we should know whether oysters are good for health and ought to be enjoyed as much as possible.

Next, I turn to eels. When we are told by health experts that we all have to eat more oily fish, they invariably mention herrings and kippers, but they make little mention of eels. Jellied eels are a traditional British dish, and they can be bought outside pubs in Peckham and outside a few pubs in Twickenham, which I have the honour to represent.

We should be told whether the consumption of eels ought to be encouraged to promote health, as well as that of kippers and herrings. They are high in calories—that is known—but they are a delicacy that is enjoyed less and less often than used to be the case, because so many people have a snobbish attitude towards eels. They think jellied eels in particular a proletarian dish, although smoked eels are considered more smart—or eels in a green sauce, as one would eat them in Belgium or Holland. I want my hon. Friend the Minister for Health to obtain departmental advice, and to let me know in writing whether eels are as healthy as herrings and kippers. I shall make the result of this inquiry known in my constituency.

I now turn to lobsters. I spoke of food farming in relation to oysters which could make them much cheaper here. Recently I was on a visit to Canada, where I was representing the Council of Europe at a conference in Ottawa on global warming and the ozone layer. I flew back via Toronto. There is in the heart of Toronto a restaurant where one can eat as much lobster as one likes for 24 Canadian dollars, which is about £13. It is analogous to the carvery that one might come upon in a British restaurant, where people can eat as much pork or beef as they want for a certain sum.

I went into this place, and I must confess to the House that I ate seven lobsters for 24 Canadian dollars. I had never had more than half a lobster in my life before, so it was a tremendous treat to eat seven lobsters. They told me in that restaurant that the record was 35 lobsters. I did not aspire to emulate that; I might have expired if I had.

I have never felt better than I felt on that occasion. Lobsters have become much cheaper in Canada because there is farming of lobster taking place, either in Hudson bay or Newfoundland—I do not know where exactly. If it takes place there, presumably it can take place around the coast of Scotland and I think that lobster will become much cheaper here in future years. We should be told whether lobsters are a healthy diet so that in future we know, because if we are not told, we shall not know.

Mr. Arbuthnot: My hon. Friend has several times mentioned fish farming, but I wonder whether this is the best route to healthy eating. Some of the fish farming in Scotland produces, for example, salmon that are fatty because they do not have the proper lifestyle of wild salmon. They do not taste nearly as good, and presumably they are not nearly as healthy for us as wild salmon. I should have thought that the same would apply to lobsters. While I am sure that one and even two lobsters would be a healthy part of one's diet, 35 are probably not.

Mr. Jessel: I did not eat 35, I ate seven. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention because he raises an important point to do with whether farmed salmon are a healthy part of a diet in terms of preventive medicine. As I said earlier, the country has been advised by the Department of Health and oily and fatty fish are good for health, and it mentioned herrings and kippers. I asked my hon. Friend the Minister for advice about eels, but now my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) asks about fatty salmon. He believes that salmon that are farmed are more fatty than salmon caught in the wild on the River Tay. In view of the fact that the price of salmon fell last week below the price of cod, the public should be told whether salmon, albeit slightly fatty salmon, is as healthy as other types of salmon or other fatty fish such as herrings, kippers or, dare I say it, eel.

I think that I have said enough about fish and I now turn to the important subject of back pain. The national headquarters of the Back Pain Association is at Teddington, in my constituency, where it was founded by Mr. Stanley Grundy CBE, who happens to be the patron of my constituency Conservative association. He is an industrialist, and he is extremely fit. The Back Pain Association has been running for about 15 years. This is a subject in which my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) takes a great interest, because he has the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic in his constituency.

I believe that much more can be done to relieve the country of the scourge of back pain, by preventive health measures. People do not usually do anything about back pain until they are hurt and afflicted by it. If only people learnt to bend in the right way when picking up heavy articles, and were trained at an earlier age in physical recreation and physical training classes at school, the incidence of back pain would be greatly reduced. Much can be done to prevent it.

For example, far too many nurses—I mention them in particular because this has to do with the national health service—suffer from back pain because, when they are lifting patients, they do not follow the instructions that they have been given on how to stand or bend their knees when lifting patients or turning stroke patients in bed. Back pain is not a glamour cause in the health service or in the charitable sector, but it afflicts a great many people, and I should like the Government to devote more of their time and resources, and more of their share of the preventive medicine budget, to the prevention of back pain.

Earlier I mentioned fluoride. I used to represent the Greater London council on the Metropolitan water board—when it was the forerunner for Thames Water. I took an interest in the fluoridation of water. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to report to the House, either now or at some convenient time, what progress is being made. The great

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law suit in Strathclyde three or four years ago—a case to end all cases, which lasted for many months and took massive medical evidence—clearly established that fluoridation is not only safe but is the most effective measure that can be taken to protect children's teeth. Unfortunately, we are making rather slow progress. I hope that the whole process will be bucked up and that my hon. Friend will give us some information about it. I did not give her notice that I intended to raise the matter, so I should be content to accept a letter from her if it is not convenient for her to reply now.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am grateful to my hon. Friend and neighbour. Is he aware that the chairman of the anti-fluoridation campaign lives in my constituency? I listened with interest to what my hon. Friend said and I wonder whether he would like to receive correspondence from my constituent, rather than my constituent writing to me.

Mr. Jessel: No, I would not. I have had correspondence from the person in question for some 20 years.

Mr. Sims: Have not we all?

Mr. Jessel: Indeed we have. I admire the gentleman's tenacity, but he never seems to learn anything. He just churns out the same old stuff, and I see no point in reading it again. I do not want to hear from him. Indeed, I once had to threaten to sue him. I hope that the process of fluoridation will now proceed more rapidly.

I was pleased to hear the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery refer to water, because water is the basic foundation of health. A year ago, when water was still nationalised, some horrible green midges appeared in the pools of water waiting to go into the water supply at the waterworks at Hampton. Since water was privatised, those green weevils have not reappeared. That is an argument in favour of the privatisation of water.

I have one complaint about the water administration, and it is that the water pumping station——

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that there is a cause and effect relationship between the privatisation of water and the disappearance of those monsters? If so, can he explain why quantities of green algae have now appeared in water sources in Wales?

Mr. Jessel: The green things that appeared in my constituency were not algae; they were midge larvae. They wriggled, they were shown on television and they alarmed a great many people, even though they were perfectly harmless. I do not know whether the algae are harmless, but I am sure that they do not wriggle. They are therefore less likely to bring about fear, anxiety and despondency, and so are a less worrying matter.

I want the waterworks in my constituency to stop sounding a hooter at 9 am. It is a Victorian relic summoning people to work and it annoys those of my constituents who are still asleep—and there are a few. I hope that the chairman of Thames Water will stop the hooter noise forthwith, after which I shall cease complaining about it.

12.49 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): It is a challenge to follow the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), who has much in common with the green things that he found in his water supply: he too is perfectly harmless but frightens many people.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) for taking the opportunity provided by his success in the ballot to debate such an important topic, and for drafting a motion with which I and many other right hon. and hon. Members agree. His speech was wide ranging and struck the balance interestingly between private and Government responsibility.

Every individual has a responsibility to take care of themselves, and it is the responsibility of every parent to care for the health of their children. The Government also bear a major responsibility in caring for the nation's health —to promote good health and to prevent ill health—but they are failing to meet it. There has been progress in cutting deaths from preventable disease, but it has been too slow. Heart and liver disease and lung cancer are still major killers, but many deaths from them could be prevented.

We know much more now about the causes of disease and of accidents, and about their prevention. We know of the link between alcohol and liver disease, smoking and lung cancer, poverty and ill health. That knowledge places a moral obligation on the Government, which they should discharge by setting targets for preventive medicine and formulating strategies that will meet them. They should also monitor progress. That will not happen by itself, so the Government must take the lead.

Of course there must be a partnership between individuals, local authorities, health authorities, industry, and the Government, but they must take the lead. The reason they are failing to do so is that all their health initiative and enterprise is bogged down and tied up with their efforts to press ahead with national health service reforms that the public do not want. If one goes to any district health authority or family practitioner committee, one finds it discussing not public health strategy but how it can manage to make ends meet and to implement the Government's ludicrous reforms.

A further obstacle to the Government being the real champion of preventive medicine and good health promotion is their hostility to planning and regulation, which, as other hon. Members have remarked, are a vital element in maintaining public health. Nor are the Government prepared to invest the resources necessary to improve it.

I shall mention some of the aspects involved, though I am afraid that I shall not range as widely as the hon. Member for Twickenham. I hope to shed more light on family planning than he was able to do, but I cannot compete with the hon. Gentleman when it comes to the price of lobsters in Toronto.

Lung cancer, which is caused by smoking, is a major killer. We know that smoking is also a major cause of disability and premature death. Recently, I visited a hospital in my constituency whose patients included those who had just undergone amputations as a result of circulation problems caused by smoking. I went from ward to ward seeing babies born prematurely because their mothers smoked, and adults struggling to breathe as they

tried to talk to me about smoking. The toll that that habit takes on public health is intolerable. The facts and figures, as the hon. Member for Chislehurst said, are appalling.

We did not always appreciate how dangerous smoking can be, but we do now. I remember an advertisement from the 1950s which was shown recently on television. It was a public information advertisement to encourage people to go to see their general practitioner. A woman was invited into the GP's surgery but one could hardly see the GP for the cloud of smoke from the fag he was puffing on. He invited her to sit down and, in order to show how to take it easy in a GP's surgery, and how a GP can set patients at their ease, he offered her a fag, she lit up and the cloud of smoke deepened.

One of the people I met in hospital who had had an amputation said that he was given cigarettes as part of his rations in the armed services. He said that he had not chosen to be a smoker but had become addicted to smoking at a time when information about the link between smoking and ill health was not known.

Now that we have information about the effects of smoking and ill health, we must have clear and unambiguous policies to cut down smoking and prevent ill health. The facts are appalling. In its strategy document for 1990-95 entitled "Strategic Plan", the Health Education Authority says:

"Cigarette smoking is the greatest cause of preventable death and disability in this country. It is estimated that some 110,000 deaths each year in the United Kingdom are attributable to tobacco products. This is the equivalent of one million years of life lost annually."

It is the equivalent of 300 people dying every day from smoking. Smoking causes 90 per cent. of deaths from lung cancer, 90 per cent. of deaths from chronic bronchitis and emphysema and 20 to 25 per cent. of deaths from heart disease.

Smoking rates are still much too high. A total of 32 per cent. of the British adult population are regular cigarette smokers. Worryingly, at the age of 15, 22 per cent. of girls —more than one in five—and 17 per cent. of boys are regular cigarette smokers. We have to act decisively on this issue.

We have to have a target. That target should be to reduce by the end of the century the number of adult smokers from 32 per cent. to 20 per cent. We should aim to cut to 5 per cent. or less the number of children under 16 who smoke. That would be a realistic target. I too support the Parents Against Tobacco initiative which is looking at new ways to deter children from smoking.

We need to have regular increases in the price of tobacco. We should have an advertising levy on tobacco promotion which could be used for health education. Really, we should abolish advertising for tobacco and tobacco products. We know that smoking kills. Why do we still allow advertisements for a product that causes major ill health and death? We should have a total ban on advertising and sponsorship. It is horrifying to see in toy shops toy cars with the name of cigarette companies all over them and during motor racing on television the cars whizz past with highly visible adverts. Cigarette sponsorship runs throughout sport.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Will the hon. Lady say the same about alcohol advertising? Is she saying that a Labour Government would ban advertising of both products?

Ms. Harman: I shall come to alcohol advertising shortly. If the hon. Gentleman reads "Looking to the Future", our policy document, which was quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), he will see that we are committed to a total ban on advertising and sponsorship. We must be clear about that.

The ceiling for permitted tar yields must be reduced and there should be no Government subsidies, through any Department, for the production, import or manufacture of tobacco products. That will be hard, because the tobacco industry, including the manufacture, importing, sale and supply of tobacco products, accounts for many jobs in this country. However, the Department of Health should not have to pick up the pieces of illness caused by smoking while the Department of Trade and Industry is subsidising the tobacco industry in this country.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most distressing problems at the moment concerns the export of high-tar tobacco products to poorer countries and the promotion by British companies of tobacco in Third world countries? Does she agree that those companies should be rapidly encouraged to adopt product diversification instead of promoting the sale of those dangerous tobacco products to poorer people in poorer countries?

Ms. Harman: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Government should have an honest and coherent approach to smoking across all Departments. Smoking cannot be dangerous in this country but safe in the third world. Different Departments should not be pulling in different directions.

There should be more resources for health education targeted at smokers and to prevent people from taking up smoking. We need more training in the risks of smoking for health professionals, and smokers who are trying to give up should be supported and receive counselling.

We also need legislation to control all public and workplace smoking, because that smoking involves a twofold problem. Firstly, non-smokers are smoking passively and that is a problem for everyone, but particularly for people with respiratory diseases and for children. Secondly, workplace and public smoking seems to create the idea that smoking in public is somehow acceptable and that we can expect to see people on buses, in restaurants or at work smoking.

Smoking should not be allowed in day rooms in hospitals. It is an amazing irony that a mother who has given birth prematurely to a low birth weight baby with a health risk as a result of smoking can go and have a fag in the day room. We must have a public health strategy in which the Government take a lead in their role as an employer and provider of facilities and services. Cigarettes should not be sold on health service premises. Selling them there is a contradiction in terms.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) made an interesting point about the sale of cigarettes bearing the House of Commons insignia. I would be interested to hear what the Minister for Health thinks about that.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley) *indicated dissent.*

Ms. Harman: The Minister is shaking her head. It seems that she is going to try to avoid that point. However, I hope that she will consider the matter.

There must be a named individual in each health and local authority to co-ordinate action. Smoking control plans should be part of every local and health authority's strategy.

There has been a great advance in child immunisation, as several hon. Members have said. However, there should be more stringent checks to discover whether children have had the correct immunisations. Those checks should be made when children enter school, because if children have missed out on immunisation before then, they can be caught and their parents can be encouraged to have their children immunised.

The Government must back that kind of service with resources. The Government took up on the excellent MMR vaccination campaign. Obviously, we should aim to stamp out rubella; it can have a terrible effect on a child if its mother had rubella when she was pregnant. That illness is entirely preventable. However, it is ironic that, when the advertising campaign for MMR was at its height, district health authorities were rationing the vaccine because they could not afford it. Parents were told to bring their children back on a different day because there was not enough vaccine available. They were told that, although their children were eligible for vaccination, they were not in the main target group and therefore they should bring their childern back on another occasion. We should take every oportunity to ensure that children have received their immunisations and vaccinations.

More and more stress is being placed on health visitors yet their posts are being frozen as a result of cuts and difficulties with health budgets. Health visitors play a vital role in promoting public health and in encouraging women to have cervical smears and to take their children for vaccinations. They must be an important part of any health promotion strategy. Their posts should not be frozen because health authorities are having financial difficulties.

I should like the Minister to respond to my next point, about vaccine-damaged children and their eligibility for compensation. As I understand it, a child is eligible for compensation only if he or she has suffered 80 per cent. disability. As the compensation scheme does not cost very much in any case—because vaccine-damage is rare—it seems unfair that children who have been vaccine-damaged should not be eligible for campensation unless they cross the threshold of 80 per cent. disability.

We know that health inequalities relating to income are as deep as ever. The map of the variations in health and disease patterns shows that the picture remains largely unchanged since the Black report. Our health strategy and our targets for health promotion should focus not only on certain diseases, such as those caused by smoking or alcohol, but on the ill health that exists in different regions and individual cities. We need to set targets for cities and to encourage healthy city projects such as those in Liverpool and Sandwell, and the one that I have visited in Oxford. We need public health profiles so that the agencies concerned and the local community can join in setting and achieving targets to improve the health of their region or city.

Many hon. Members have referred to food safety. Our discussion has ranged across salmonella, botulism, listeria and the problems of a contaminated drinking water supply. Our knowledge of food safety and of the link between poorly stored food and ill health is growing as food science is becoming more developed and microbiology is telling us more.

The Government should not lag behind. They should see the research as an opportunity. They should not bring in controls reluctantly, only when everybody is screaming and shouting; they should look closely at what science can now tell us about food and ill health, which it could not previously, and be poised to cut the incidence of ill health caused by food.

The Government should not be dragged kicking and screaming to introduce new regulations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Preston has said, we need a sufficient number of environmental health officers to enforce the regulations, because regulations by themselves have only a limited value if there are insufficient environmental health officers to police them. No local authority has sufficient environmental health officers to ensure that the current law is being complied with, let alone to make the improvements in the regulations that we are seeking.

While I am dealing with food and nutrition, I must emphasise that the low level of breast feeding in this country is a scandal. All the evidence shows that the best food for a child when it is born is its mother's breast milk. However, the companies that produce artificial milk are still giving out free samples of their products in hospital maternity wards. Although that is against the regulations, it is still happening because the milk manufacturers have been clever and have recognised that maternity wards no longer give out packs to new mothers.

In the past, a new mother could take a nappy, some baby lotion or vaseline and some talcum powder from the hospital supplies. The national health service used to provide such things, when it was not so strapped for cash. That is one of the cuts that has taken place. Therefore, milk suppliers provide what are called "bounty boxes" for expectant mothers. In the bounty box there is stacks of commecial advertising material for artificial milk.

Despite the increase in the number of babies being born, the number of maternity beds has been cut. That has led to mothers being discharged sooner after they have their babies. The amount of time that women spend in hospital after having a baby is rapidly decreasing. One of the casualties of that is that women return home with a new baby without having established breast feeding with the support of the midwives in the hospital. The community support of the midwives is the hospital. The community midwife service is too stretched to enable mothers who have nothing wrong with them to establish breast feeding.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Harman: We have an expert on breast feeding; I shall give way.

Mr. Arbuthnot: As the hon. Lady will understand, I am not an experienced breast feeder. Would she cope with the problem by banning the advertising of babies' milk?

Ms. Harman: A Department of Health regulation states that hospitals should not advertise babies' milk. I simply argue that that regulation should be enforced. I am sorry if I did not make myself clear. The Minister will confirm that it is already Government policy that milk should not

be advertised in hospitals but that the regulation is not enforced. The milk companies encourage hospitals to break the regulation by offering free samples which hospitals stretched for cash take up.

Mrs. Wise: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's point. Does she agree that the community midwife service needs to be strengthened and that it would be a good thing if new mothers were again given a home help so that they could rest more and give more attention to the baby? That would help in the establishment of breast feeding.

Ms. Harman: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. The home help service was introduced to assist mothers with new babies, but it is now almost entirely devoted to the elderly and people with disabilities.

I wish to touch briefly on maternity services. We must increase pre-conceptual care and promote understanding of the issues behind it, but we must also increase the number of women who come forward for ante-natal assistance and screening.

There is still an appallingly high toll from industrial illness and accidents at work. Many of those accidents simply should not happen. There is an unacceptable level of accidents among employees of cowboy builders. My hon. Friend the Member for Preston mentioned repetitive strain injury. Ill-health and disease is caused in the chemical and nuclear industries. Farmworkers are affected by chemicals and machinery used in agriculture.

We need a combination of openness, so that people know and assess the hazards in their workplace, and good inspection by the Government which is properly resourced, so that employers know that, if they breach regulations, there is a substantial chance that they will be discovered and fined. We need unionisation so that management can negotiate with strong unions acting in the interests of their members to ensure their safety.

I wish to touch briefly on ill health caused by poverty. A severe winter always brings an epidemic of hypothermia, which is preventable. The Scandinavian countries, which have far harsher climates, do not experience the increase in deaths by hypothermia that we have in Britain. If people had a decent income, if there were good incentives for insulation and if the cost of fuel was lower, we would not have that unacceptable Dickensian epidemic of death by hypothermia that arises every time that there is a cold winter.

We have too many accidents in the home. We need to have better regulations to ensure that unsafe toys and electrical goods do not reach the market. My hon. Friend the Member for Preston mentioned the safety of people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. In her previous incarnation as a social worker, she will have visited families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Such accommodation lacks cooking facilities. The electric kettle is inevitably without a table because there is no space between the beds, and its wire snakes across the floor. That is of particular danger to children. Several families share the same toilet and inadequate washing facilities. They are prone to infectious diseases, such as gastroenteritis. It is a contradiction in terms to claim an interest in public health promotion when so many families live in these squalid, unhealthy hostels for the homeless.

As I came here today, I went down Haygate street in SE17 and saw a touching shrine of a little dog made up of flowers. Obviously, a child has been killed there recently. Recently I went to Doncaster royal infirmary and chatted to two children who had been hit by a car. We have an unacceptably high level of road accidents. It is ridiculous that, when one argues on behalf of one's constituents for a school crossing, better enforcement of the speed limit or more school crossing attendants, one is told, "Yes, we recognise the need, but you will have to wait because spending restrictions mean that you are 50th in the queue."

We need improvements in public transport and deterrents to private cars—for example, road humps and parking restrictions. Hon. Members have talked about cycling, and it is welcome to see more people wearing cycling helmets. Sometimes cyclists wear elaborate masks because of the appalling pollution in central London and our other cities.

In any accident and emergency department there are people who have injured themselves by falling down when they were drunk. There are people, certainly in my constituency, with punch or stab wounds from being hit by someone who is drunk. As the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said, in court people give as a defence, "I hit him because I was drunk." In every hospital there are people suffering from liver and other diseases caused by drink.

A cut in the volume of alcohol consumed, particularly high consumption, must be a target in improving the nation's health. Alcohol consumption should be cut by 20 per cent. by the year 2000. In particular, we must halt the increasing alcohol consumption by women, reduce consumption among high risk occupational groups and reduce the proportion of the population drinking more than the recommended number of units. The Government have a responsibility in that. Advertising plays an important part. We should have mandatory, clear labelling of alcohol content and the recommended limit on consumption on all containers. There is more information now that even small levels of alcohol can damage health.

Family planning clinics are an important health promotion and preventive medicine resource. The Government are wrong to allow hard-pressed, cash-starved, district health authorities throughout the country to cut those clinics because they are desperate to reach the end of the financial year without going over budget.

Research recently undertaken in Warwickshire showed that 45 per cent. of those presenting themselves for abortions had not used any form of contraception. In the light of that appalling figure, a strategy has been developed in that area with the aim of reducing the number of abortions by a third by the end of the century.

Family planning clinics and sex education are important in the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and it is wrong to reduce such services in the face of a possible epidemic of a sexually transmitted disease. Family planning clinics are a good base from which to conduct health and sex education and to provide people with information about sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS.

There are about 180,000 abortions in Britain every year. If nearly half of those involve people who have not used contraception, it is clear that a major objective of the Government should be to reduce the number of people not using contraception.

Giving evidence to the Select Committee, the Secretary of State made an astonishing remark. He seemed to think that family planning had no relationship to contraception

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and that contraception had no relationship to unwanted pregnancies. He seemed to think that, in any event, none of that had anything to do with him.

It is difficult to have a sensible strategy to promote good health and prevent ill health when financial spending restraints are placed on the national health service in such a way that the service cannot improve in the way it should. People who are diagnosed as needing heart surgery must wait for that surgery and they become more ill all the time they are waiting. People requiring hip replacements are having to wait, and they suffer immobility and further disability while waiting for their operations.

The same is true of cuts in provisions for the menopause clinic in my constituency at King's College hospital. Menopause, pre-menstrual tension and post-natal depression services all have the aim of preventing situations from deteriorating. It is a false economy to cut their financing. A doctor recently told me, "Unless we can help women suffering the effects of the menopause, many of them will end up as in-patients across the road at the Maudsley." I am sure that the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) will have more to say about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Preston was right to talk about the importance of our commitment to abolish the charges for eye tests and teeth checks. Such checks are major preventive measures against glaucoma, diabetes, brain tumours and many other ailments. The hon. Member for Twickenham seems to appreciate that, if the price of a packet of fags goes up, fewer people will smoke. Yet he seems to think that, if a charge is slapped on eye tests and teeth checks, people will continue to go to the optician and the dentist. That does not make sense.

Does the Minister share my concern about the mushrooming of bogus advertisements for slimming aids, which clearly are not aids for slimming? Numerous magazine and newspaper advertisements urge people to spend their money on such projects, which would either not have any effect or, if they did, would harm people.

Likewise there are a growing number of advertisements for cosmetic surgery. We are constantly told, "Get your nose done," "Get your breasts fixed," "Have a slice taken off your thighs," and "Have a face lift." We do not want to go down the path that they have trodden in the United States, where one sees increasing numbers of elderly women with faces like a baby's skin, stretched thin. The Government should take a view on such matters. It is obscene.

The path that people are encouraged to take—cosmetic surgery for no good reason so that doctors in private clinics can make a fat profit—is wrong. I do not say that there is not a place for cosmetic surgery under the NHS. There are important uses for such surgery, but at present it is turning into a racket, and I promised to say that one need not have a face lift to look young. Look at the hon. Member for Billericay.

I should like the Minister to comment on the adverts about hair loss. There are increasing numbers of adverts encouraging people to spend money on hair transplants that will no doubt mutilate their scalps without making them look as though they have thick hair. Other adverts encourage people to spend money on potions that will allegedly thicken the hair shaft. There are also bogus adverts inviting people to spend money to deal with memory loss. There are many quasi-medical claims in those adverts. If they are to have a serious and scientific approach to educating people about health and what effects their bodies, the Government should take a stance on such adverts and do something about them because they are becoming a scandal and a rip-off.

The Government must also ensure that there are adequate resources for research. We are able to have a cancer screening service because the research has been done, so that we know how to detect the early signs of cancer and prevent it. We have made major breakthroughs in a number of cancers such as Huntington's disease and childhood leukaemia, but we still need more research to prevent ill health caused by cancer. We need an integrated, comprehensive, well-resourced health service, with local government working in partnership with health authorities, partnerships between unions and management, the Government acting to prevent environmental pollution, and above all, a determination to end the poverty that is the cause of so much ill health.

1.26 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) by ranting about the shortcomings of the private sector and what basically sounded like the need for a national plan. I thought that even her party had abandoned the idea of such a salvation from the difficulties that we faced some years ago. I strongly support the sentiments expressed by many hon. Members who paid a most warm and fulsome tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) for his motion and the manner in which he delivered it. I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who paid a tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst for his non-sermonising Jimmy Young style. That was an excellent description of the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst presented the motion and drew together its main strands.

I shall seek to describe the steps that the Government are taking and the reforms that are already under way in the health service, which for the first time will, we hope, achieve a health service rather than a disease service. It is a recognition of the emphasis that we put on health promotion that a major, central section of the leaflet that we distributed to every household in the country relates to health promotion matters such as looking after the heart and the importance of healthy eating. I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) that I fear that it does not cover lobsters, shellfish or eels, but it covers smoking, alcohol and other matters of great concern. It explains in a clear and direct manner how the new reforms will lead to enhanced and better care for our people.

It is well known that health promotion has had a long history. The bible describes dietary laws to prevent disease and contains detailed passages on the control of leprosy. In the middle ages, communities took steps to avoid the plague. Quarantine later helped to control the spread of diseases such as cholera. Modern health promotion stems from the major sanitary revolution of the previous century. I suspect that plumbers, rather than pharmacists or physicians, had the largest part to play in the improvement of health standards of our and other nations.

Sound engineering, the separation of sewage and clean water revolutionised health care and reduced mortality from water-borne diseases such as typhoid and cholera.

The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) referred to housing. The revolutionary concept of having a sink inside the house led to a marked decline in food-borne killing diseases such as infantile diarrhoea. The gradual reduction in overcrowding reduced the airborne infections such as streptococcal disease, rheumatic fever and tuberculosis.

The second era, of medical intervention, dramatically increased people's opportunities of surgical and medical treatment. I refer to the remarkable development of antibiotics and then to the era of vaccination and immunisation, of which more in a moment. The result has been that polio, diphtheria and many of the killer diseases of childhood of the past are scarcely seen in our country any more.

The new challenge is to combat the diseases in which personal responsibility and individual action can play a major part. Heart diseases, strokes and cancers, the great modern killing diseases, are the areas on which so much of our debate today has centred. We know only too well that the key risk factors in strokes overlap with those for coronary heart disease—high blood pressure and cigarette smoking; we know less of the causes of cancer, but cigarette smoking is certainly the cause of 30 per cent. of all cancers in this country. My hon. Friend the Member for Acton spoke about the influence of smoking on other chest diseases, too.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst and others mentioned how the developments in the health service are for the first time placing responsibility on district health authorities for analysing and assessing the health needs of their populations. The Acheson report on public health made a major contribution to the way in which we analyse and study public health, as has the appointment of a director of public health in each district health authority with a crucial part to play in carrying forward the district health board's responsibilities to provide for health needs and to draw up contracts. Let no one underestimate the significance of the new and enhanced nature of the role of the district health authority or of the prominence that will inevitably be given to public health matters and the prevention of disease by analysing the needs of the local community and purchasing services to meet those needs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst also mentioned the changed nature of the general practitioner's contract. There, too, there has been a marked shift towards recognising the importance of health promotion. I pay tribute to the Royal College of General Practitioners which, in its policy statement in response to our Green Paper "An Agenda for Discussion", said that many of the problems brought by patients to doctors are best understood by the doctors who know the patients as people, who understand their fears and feelings and who know the problems in their daily lives.

More and more the principle of healthy living and much of the management of chronic disease depends on people making changes in the way that they eat, drink and smoke. Personal preventive medicine is now a major feature of the modern health service, and it is logical for people to be offered preventive services in the same place and by the same team as offers them treatment services. Fusing prevention and treatment into comprehensive clinical care is an exciting development in modern practice.

As the House will know, we decided to make health promotion an explicit part of the GPs' new contract. I was interested in the remarks by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile); his role on the General Medical Council, like that of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst, is an important new development. The hon. and learned Gentleman spoke about the collegiate ethos of the Bar and about how that could apply in general practice, thereby registering a point that was also picked up by my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). So often those who cannot gain access to single-handed practitioners might make excessive use of a casualty department.

Our reforms in the recent National Health Service and Community Care Act mean that doctors who choose to become fund holders can invest in their own practices. They can develop services, provide anti-smoking clinics and diet-exercise clinics, and they can make sure that health promotion becomes the key to their work. There will be extra help for the over-75s, who will be offered an assessment of their medical needs. There will be a requirement regularly to assess both current and new patients on doctors' lists.

We are already seeing in practice the effects of that important new work. The general practitioner service—the family practitioner service—is the gatekeeper to the national health service: it is where most people go first when they are worried about their health. It is essential that the key messages from the debate should be echoed by the general practitioners, and by the new groups of practice staff who have been able to join general practice thanks to the investment that the Government have made.

Throughout the health service all members of staff—doctors, for instance, and the health visitors to whom the hon. Member for Preston paid especial tribute—have a role to play. We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of health education officers, from about 200 in the mid 1970s to nearly 700 now. Their job is to ensure co-operation, and to ensure that the messages that are spread from the centre—from the Health Education Authority and others—are properly disseminated.

I should like to refer particularly to the appointment of Professor Michael Peckham as the new director of research and development for the national health service. I think that he will be able to inform and enlighten the service from the top to ensure that the latest research is properly evaluated, and that we draw on those lessons in carrying out our health promotion campaigns.

The major arm of Government, in health promotion and disease prevention, is the Health Education Authority. Since it was established as a special health authority, it has had a substantial increase in funding, and its work in carrying out health promotion is a force for good. Its recent strategic plan for the first half of this decade identifies seven key programmes as priorities for the next five years: HIV and AIDS prevention, and sexual health; "Look After Your Heart"; cancer education; smoking education; alcohol education; nutrition education; and family and child health. All those issues have been raised by hon. Members in the debate.

The plan identified key settings in which the programmes should operate—primary health care, schools and colleges and youth settings. I think that all of us would agree about the importance of education at school in encouraging health promotion. Health Education is a cross-curricular theme in schools. The chief medical officer

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has recently had discussions with the chairman of the National curriculum Council to discuss how that can be carried out further. If people can understand the importance of healthy living, of exercise and of avoiding smoking at an early age, it sets a good pattern for life.

The strategic plan for the Health Education Authority also identified the special needs of women and members of the ethnic minorities. We want good health to be available to all groups in our community. The other day I went with my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins)—my Parliamentary Private Secretary—to his constituency to meet a group from the Commission for Racial Equality, where we discussed what more could be done to ensure that the ethnic minorities were informed about, and had access to, high-quality health care and services.

Addressing the health needs of elderly people is of major importance, and Age Concern has carried out a considerable amount of work in that area. The Health Education Authority and my Department have been developing—in consultation with health professionals—the concept of a personal health record, which would be provided for GPs to issue to their patients. It is intended to organise a major consultation exercise to examine how those proposals can be implemented.

The idea of a personal health record is a powerful statement in itself. We have just taken through Parliament legislation concerned with access to medical records. It demonstrates a change in culture and attitudes that there is now an expectation that individuals should have their own personal health record. In the past, many felt that they were being denied access to vital information about their own health. That is a message about individual involvement and responsibility.

Many hon. Members spoke about coronary heart disease, prevention of which has to be a high priority for us all. In April 1987, the Department and the Health Education Authority launched a joint "Look After Your Heart" campaign, in response to concern about the high level of coronary heart disease. We know of the success of health education campaigns in other countries with initially far higher rates of death and disability from the disease. The original aim was to increase knowledge of the risk factors for coronary heart disease. In its first three years, the campaign enjoyed considerable success. Although there are other notable campaigns against coronary heart disease, we believe that ours is the first national campaign of its kind in the world. All Health Authorities have been involved in it. "Look After Your Heart" has sponsored more than 270 projects at a cost of over £500,000.

The involvement of the campaign with industry has been a great success. The hon. Member for Preston said that industry believes that it owns its employees body and soul. If that means that employers are increasingly aware of the contribution that they can make by promoting good health and passing on health education messages, that is a welcome development.

I know that this is an interest of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) and there is no doubt that, in the "Look After Your Heart" campaign, an excellent example has been set. Some 300 major organisations, with around 3 million employees, are actively involved in the campaign, both in the public and private sectors, including large organisations such as ICI and smaller organisations, the TUC and most Government Departments.

The "Heartbeat Award Scheme", which is run in conjunction with local environmental health officers, encourages not only good standards of hygiene but health menus and no-smoking areas in all eating places from canteens to restaurants. Although it was launched nationally only two months ago, already 40 per cent. of local authorities are taking part. Many of the remarks by hon. Members today lead me to think that they will welcome that development and that they understand how vital it is that people should take steps to promote healthier eating and to discourage smoking.

I have had any number of invitations to take up the issue of smoking on aeroplanes with Ministers in the Department of Transport. It would be less than generous of me to fail to do so after the strength of the remarks made on that subject.

The "Look After Your Heart" campaign has also been working with the food industry and last year developed a "Less Fat Fortnight". This year, it will be mounting a month-long promotion called, "Food For the Heart". These are all ways in which a campaign that is determined to meet with success can draw together people from the public and private sectors and from Government Departments. It is vital that they work successfully together. The campaigners have worked continuously with the National Forum for Coronary Heart Disease Prevention and the coronary Prevention Group to inform and enlighten their work further.

In that context, I am pleased to announce that we are able to give further section 64 resources this year to the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association, which we shall be funding to the tune of £35,000 this year and £36,000 in each of the following years for the important work that it does in promoting nurse facilitators associated with doctors' practices, particularly in the north of England, to make sure that the lessons on heart disease are fully incorporated and understood.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst mentioned the recent report of the standing medical advisory committee on whether opportunistic cholesterol testing can make a cost-effective contribution to combating heart disease. Copies of the report are available in the Library and a consultation period is under way. I hope that my hon. Friend and others will contribute to those consultations.

Another subject that has been the source of a great deal of comment today is smoking. The effects of smoking are devastating, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst made clear. Each year, it kills more than 100,000 people and costs the NHS around £500 million. What it costs in forgone earnings, and in personal misery and bereavement can scarcely be accounted for in terms of money. The habit accounts for millions of days of absence from work. It is a staggering toll in both human misery and cost.

There can be little doubt that if cigarettes were introduced today, their production and sale would probably be banned, but the habit has a 400-year history of acceptance and approval and it is too firmly established for a ban to be imposed now. However, when new tobacco products are introduced in the United Kingdom, we can

consider a ban. Indeed, at the end of last year we responded to the evidence that oral snuff products were linked with mouth cancer by banning their sale.

We can and do use the law to protect children. Tribute has been paid to the "Parents Against Tobacco" campaign and discussions are taking place on how further we can strengthen the law to ensure that young children do not gain access to cigarettes and tobacco products. It is not only a question of the law; it is a question of public perception and social accountability. The more that can be done to make the sale of tobacco products to children unacceptable and offensive, the better. That is certainly an area in which the good will of the campaign is important.

Smoking harms not only the smoker. As hon. Members said, there is a growing rejection of the effects of passive smoking. There is an increasing demand for smoke-free areas, both in public places and in the workplace. We welcome that change in public attitudes. I shall take up the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Acton and ask the Health Education Authority to accept his invitation to draw up guidance on passive smoking for general distribution.

Another important plank in the Government's response to the grave health risk posed by tobacco has been to strengthen and refine the system of voluntary agreement with the industry. As hon. Members will know, recent developments in the European Community mean that there must be changes, and we are still considering the implications of some of the latest directives. We are all committed to ensuring that smoking is reduced, that there are proper controls over advertising, and that needless deaths are avoided at all costs.

Nutrition has also been a subject for debate today, and it has been a long-standing debate over recent months and years. I cannot furnish my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham with detailed replies on all the various products that he identified, such as eels, oysters, herring, kippers, salmon and so on. However, I can give him some good news. Next week the Department of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Health Education Authority will jointly issue joint guidelines for a healthy diet. They are intended to be exactly what hon. Members wish—a clear statement of guidance about healthy eating and the importance of nutrition, to try to develop a sense of coherence and understanding in an area that is easily moved to emotion rather than common sense. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" is an old maxim. The importance of diet for health cannot be understated.

I want to speak briefly about the importance of alcohol. I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, who spoke about the effects of alcohol not only in terms of disease and illness, but in terms of crime, and especially domestic violence. I am closely associated with a Minister who is committed to the eradication of drinking and driving. He has been most successful in making people think through the dangers of drinking and driving. We could spread the message more widely.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President currently chairs the ministerial group on alcohol misuse. In launching "National Drinkwise Day" this year, he said most aptly that alcohol can either be a good friend or a bad enemy. We all know of the many circumstances in which alcohol makes a very bad enemy.

My right hon. and learned Friend co-ordinates that group, which draws together Ministers from different Departments to ensure that policies are developed and initiatives planned in a co-ordinated way. A report describing the progress that has been made in combating alcohol misuse will be published early next year. When sensible drinking rules are breached, that poses a serious threat.

In our proposals announced this week for phasing in the implementation of community care, a commitment was made to introduce a specific grant for the treatment of those with drug and alcohol misuse problems, which demonstrates the seriousness with which we view alcoholism. Alcohol Concern provides an important service in that regard. The Government are funding it to the tune of £500,000 this year, but by 1992-93 that figure will rise to £2·5 million.

Little mention has been made of the dangers of drug misuse, but we are committed to ensuring not only that supplies from abroad are reduced but that enforcement is effective, that there are strong deterrents, and that improved rehabilitation treatment is available. Above all, we want education and prevention to be spread as widely as possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham, the hon. Members for Preston and for Peckham and others, mentioned child health. We have seen a dramatic reduction in infant mortality, from 12·8 per 1,000 live births in 1979, to 8·4 in 1989. Perinatal mortality fell from 14·7 per 1,000 births in 1979 to 8·3 in 1989. The figures are now at an all-time low, and that achievement is a source of considerable pride. However, none of us is satisfied that we have gone as far as we can. We must encourage every group and community throughout the country to take every possible step to ensure that children benefit from all the advantages of modern health care.

Immunisation rates have also dramatically improved, from 85 per cent. to 89 per cent. between 1985 and 1990, provisionally, in respect of tetanus, diphtheria and polio. Immunisation against measles improved from 68 per cent. to 88 per cent. in just five years, and against whooping cough from 65 per cent. to 82 per cent. That is a remarkable and impressive achievement.

Our efforts will not stop there. Recently, we published a handbook, "Immunisation Against Infectious Disease", which has been sent to all doctors and health visitors. It reminds them of the continuing importance of the immunisation campaign. In September, we shall launch with the Health Education Authority a further publicity campaign, "Immunisation, the safest way to protect your child", which will carry forward that work. We have learnt the lessons of the past as to how easy it is to allow a campaign to become forgotten. The momentum must be kept up, and there is no better way of doing that than the commitment in the general practitioner contract to provide an incentive for GPs who go out of their way to ensure that the children on their lists are properly immunised. Again, we are seeing important and impressive results already, which will lead to further improvements in child health.

I take issue with the hon. Member for Peckham's remarks concerning maternity services, which have continued to show a considerable improvement. This week, I was pleased to speak at the annual conference of the Royal College of Midwives, when I emphasised that our maternity services provision is based, as it has been for the past 10 years, on the reports of the Maternity Services Advisory Committee, and that we recognise the

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importance of the continuity of the midwife's role and of a coherent and integrated service. Those are precisely the policies that we shall be pursuing. The process of contracting is being examined carefully in two areas—Maidstone and Lewisham. I have invited the Royal College of Midwives to discuss the effects on maternity services, to ensure that all the aspects about which it may have concerns are properly addressed.

To pay tribute to the midwives, only this week they launched a new video on "Rights and choice in maternity care" particularly intended to ensure that those from ethnic minorities receive the services and are aware of the importance of protecting their child as they approach childbirth and in the months afterwards. It was funded by the Department and is an excellent and professional video. It will be a force for good.

The hon. Member for Peckham mentioned breast feeding. We recognise the importance of breast feeding and have been involved in a joint initiative funding three voluntary groups. We are determined that the messages should be carried forward because, as the hon. Lady said, there is no doubt that breast feeding in the early stages can make an important impact on health, apart from the relationship that develops between the mother and child.

I should not be doing justice to the great programme of work that the Government have been undertaking if I did not refer to the important breast and cervical cancer screening programme. We are the first country in the Community to introduce a nationwide breast and cervical cancer screening programme based on inviting women by computerised call and recall. We have been setting the pace in terms of preventive health care for women.

There is no doubt that on the basis of the Forrest report on breast cancer screening and the inter-collegiate report on cervical cancer screening, early detection and intervention can mean that many lives will be saved. It is vital that throughout the country women should accept the invitation for a test and ensure that the family practitioner committee is aware of any change of address. They should ensure that in following up their invitation they encourage others to do the same. It is a waste of resources to have failed appointments but, my goodness, it may be a waste of years of a woman's life if she fails to take up the appointment. We know, sadly, that the vast majority of those who have died from cervical cancer have never been screened or have not been screened in the recent past. It is possible to save lives and to promote health.

Concern has been expressed by some about the availability of results. There has been a substantial increase in those going for cytology testing but I can assure the House that about 80 per cent. of results come through within the four weeks in which health authorities are asked to provide them. We are looking carefully at local authorities where there may be difficulties or delays.

This is an important programme, which is a force for good for women. It is backed up by the GP contract, where the incentive is such that we are going out of our way to encourage GPs to ensure that the women on their lists have taken advantage of screening. We have also asked the national co-ordinating network for the cervical screening programme to ensure that the lessons that are learnt in terms of the fast implementation of the programme are properly disseminated throughout the country.

Women are a particularly important group, not only in terms of the health issues that affect them, but in terms of their role so often as the communicators about the health service within their families. They are often the gatekeeper to the health service for their family. They are often responsible for their family's food habits and many of their social habits and the way in which they conduct their lives. It is right to make a special effort to inform and work with women's organisations to ensure that those messages are spread.

I regularly have meetings with a series of women's organisations to ensure that all those lessons are properly understood and that they take steps to inform their members. I have meetings with the National Council of Women for Great Britain, the British Federation of University Women, the Townswomen's Guilds, Women's Gas Federation, the Fawcett Society, the Business and Professional Women's Federation, the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the National Association of Women's Clubs. Not only are women so often the gatekeepers to the health service, setting the tone for their families, but the majority of health service workers are women, so they play a particularly important part.

I must briefly refer to a subject that has been strangely absent from our debate. More resources are spent on AIDS by the Health Education Authority than on anything else. It would be unacceptable for any Government to fail to recognise the great importance of that major modern threat to public health. For a disease for which there is no known cure, prevention and education—the theme of the motion before us—must be fundamental.

We are committed to a programme of prevention, to monitoring, surveillance and research and also to treatment, care and support. Dramatically and significantly, those in the groups most affected by AIDS seem to have been able to change their behaviour as a result of health education messages. It is easy for us to agree what the messages should be, but it is much harder to turn those messages into action in terms of diet, sexual behaviour, smoking or drug addiction.

We have launched a further publicity campaign about AIDS and HIV. It is important that we have introduced an anonymous screening programme and before long it will be possible to debate the subject on the basis of facts rather than fiction. Sometimes the debate on AIDS seems to suffer from too much heat and too little light. However, we continue to give AIDS a very high priority, working closely with the Health Education Authority.

I have not been able to respond to all the points that have been raised. If hon. Members feel that I have not covered their points, perhaps I can write to them. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst asked about the progress that we are making on the European region of the World Health Organisation's "health for all by the year 2000 targets". We have been making good progress in several areas, particularly on cardiovascular disease and infant mortality. We are doing as well as any on accidents. The next formal response is due in 1993. However, those matters are carefully monitored by the Department's central health monitoring unit. I shall ensure that we look carefully to see whether there are any other ways in which the information can be provided before the next formal reporting date.

This has been an important debate, with many thoughful and considered contributions. I hope that I have left the House in no doubt that the Government take enormously seriously the challenge that confronts us. We believe that our proposals for reform in the national health service will ensure that health promotion and disease prevention are given the proper consideration that they deserve and that we will indeed well and truly have established a national health service.

2.3 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): Since this debate started about four and a half hours ago, more than 100 of our fellow citizens have died of coronary heart disease. To put it another way, every day in this country a number equivalent to a Boeing 747 jumbo jet full of passengers die from that crippling disease.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on moving his motion and I thank him for the opportunity to debate this subject. This debate has ranged widely over the whole question of health promotion and illness prevention. I shall concentrate on one aspect—coronary heart disease. It is particularly appropriate to discuss this issue now, just after the third anniversay of the establishment of the Health Education Authority, the "Look after your heart" campaign, the publication of its five-year plan, "Beating heart disease in the 1990s" and the recent publication of the report on cholesterol testing by the Standing Medical Advisory Committee, which has been mentioned by several hon. Members.

Much has been said in the debate and both inside and outside the House on many occasions about the incidence of coronary heart disease, what causes it and where it is likely to be found in the United Kingdom. The four countries of the United Kingdom have an appalling record with this disease. Of the top six countries in terms of the incidence of coronary heart disease, four are Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. The other two are Finland and Czechoslovakia. Naturally, I welcome the progress that has been made in the past three years, but we started late on the journey and we have a lot of catching up to do.

I should like to give the House one or two pieces of information about the incidence of coronary heart disease in this country. In Scotland, for example, the *Scottish Medical Journal* says that people in social classes 3, 4 and 5—especially men—are "closely associated" with a high mortality rate. Male unemployment is also strongly associated with coronary heart disease death rates. A Whitehall study of civil servants showed that men in the lowest grades, including messengers, had three times the coronary heart disease mortality rate of men in the highest grades, the administrators. The Health Education Authority has said that a man's unemployment is a strong predictor of his subsequent risk of getting coronary heart disease and that unemployment is more significant than any other risk factor. Coronary heart disease is more prevalent among manual rather than professional social groups. A man in social class 5 has nearly three times the chances of dying prematurely from coronary heart disease than a man in social class 1.

However, it is only fair to say that coronary heart disease death rates are falling fast in the younger age groups. Since 1972 death rates from coronary heart disease in England and Wales in the 35 to 74 age group have fallen by 18 per cent. for men and 11 per cent. for women. That seems good, until one compares it with the decreases in other countries such as the United States and Australia, where the decreases are three or four times greater than those which I have just quoted. In the past 15 years, reductions in coronary heart disease mortality rates for women aged 35 to 44 have been nearly seven times greater than for women aged 55 to 64, and two and a half times greater than the rate for men. It is undoubtedly true that mortality rates are falling faster in the younger age groups than in the ones that I have quoted.

Much has been said inside and outside the House about the location of high rates of mortality from coronary heart disease and about the north versus the south. According to the figures, Scotland and Northern Ireland have high incidences, with the north-east, the north-west, Merseyside, Yorkshire, the Trent area and the west midlands all having high figures; but so it must be said have the east end of London, Plymouth and Cornwall. We should not talk about a north-south divide in coronary heart disease, nor should we say that simply because someone happens to be of a certain age and class, he is certain to contract the illness.

However, what has to be said—I echo the comments at the beginning of the debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst—is that it is up to the individual to decide whether to have a healthy life style. There is no reason why people on a low income, for example, should not eat wisely. The food that is harmful to diet is often more expensive than that which is good for the diet, but it is rejected.

I support my hon. Friend the Minister in saying that in 1990 we are more likely to perish of a self-inflicted disease than from a contagious disease. That is a complete reversal of the situation 100 years ago. In 1890 we were likely to die of cholera, typhoid or another of the water or air-borne diseases. That it is not so today is a triumph for technology, engineering and, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, plumbers. Today our lives are literally in our own hands, not in those of others or of the environment.

It has already been said that we spend a relatively small amount of public resources on prevention of coronary heart disease. We spend about £10 million a year in England and Wales. Let us set that against the cost of treating coronary heart disease, which is £500 million a year. Another even more alarming statistic is that 40·5 million working days are lost in Britain as a result of the disease. That represents 11·6 per cent. of all the days of sickness. That lost production costs £1·8 billion a year. Yet we spend only £10 million encouraging people to avoid the habits which lead to coronary heart disease.

The Public Accounts Committee in its report last year, just 13 months ago, said:

> "We are concerned at the stark contrast between the levels of expenditure on the prevention and treatment of coronary heart disease. We conclude that our examination illustrates our predecessors' concerns about the Department's failure to evaluate the full potential for spending on prevention to save on treatment costs."

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, what more we can do to counter that charge? I listened with interest to what she said, of course, and I recognise that more is being done, but we are not yet doing enough to counter coronary heart disease.

There are two main causes of the disease—diet and smoking. There is a third cause—alcohol—but in view of

[Mr. Simon Combs]

the time I shall restrict myself to a few remarks on the first two. The major factor in diet is an excess of fat in the diet of ordinary British men and women, particularly of saturated fats. We were told six years ago by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food that such consumption should not exceed 35 per cent. of total energy intake. But the figure remains above 40 per cent., despite all the best efforts of experts and politicians to advise people to reduce their intake of saturated fat.

There has been a slight improvement from saturated to unsaturated fat, but the total amount of fat in the diet is still far too high. It is true that people consume less butter, milk and red meat and have changed to semi-skimmed and skimmed milk. But when I hear people say, "Oh well, we cannot afford to eat the things that the experts tell us to eat", I look at the price of 250 grammes of butter. It is two and a half times the equivalent cost of 250 grammes of margarine. So it can be done.

Smoking accounts for approximately 20 per cent. of deaths from coronary heart disease in Britain. Those who have hypertension, are overweight or have high blood cholesterol are more likely to contract the disease than others. The risk is two and a half or three times greater for smokers than for non-smokers. In men under 45, 80 per cent. of heart attacks are due to smoking cigarettes.

It is even more appalling that schoolchildren aged between 11 and 15 are taking up smoking. In that age group 7 per cent. of boys and 9 per cent. of girls smoke regularly. There is tremendous public support for reducing the level of smoking. A recent survey showed that 82 per cent. of the population supported banning smoking completely in restaurants; 72 per cent. supported a ban in banks and post offices; and 70 per cent. supported a ban at work. Even 42 per cent. of the population said that they would support a complete ban on smoking in pubs. That is a substantial and remarkable figure. Seventy-four per cent. of hon. Members support bans on smoking on public transport, 63 per cent. support bans on smoking in school buildings and 60 per cent. support bans on smoking in shops. The will is there. We must translate it into action.

In 1987 "Look After Your Heart" produced a guide to healthy eating. It recommended the need to cut down on fat, sugar and salt and to eat more fibre-rich foods and plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, to go easy on alcohol —a weak way of putting it—and to get plenty of variety in food. As my hon. Friend the Minister has already spoken, perhaps later she will let me know how many copies of the guide were produced and what happened to them. What monitoring was done to see whether they went to the people who needed to read them? Although a large proportion of people think about what they eat and try to eat healthily, a substantial proportion of them ignore advice and dismiss any suggestion as ludicrous. They are the ones who are at risk from this killing disease. Clearly, we must do far more to get the message across to those who, until now have been deaf to it or have refused to listen.

Unless we tell people the contents of food, it is unlikely that they can make the right choice of what they should eat. The Standing Medical Advisory Committee estimates that if every adult adopted its dietary recommendations, those needing clinical supervision due to elevated blood pressure would decrease by two thirds. Information on blood pressure and diet would influence public attitudes and behaviour, thereby influencing good manufacturers' approach to labelling.

Professor John Goodwin, the chairman of the National Forum for Coronary Heart Disease Prevention, recently said:

"To help achieve a healthy diet, we need compulsory food labelling so that people can put into practice the advice given in the healthy eating leaflets."

How much longer will we talk about food labelling? Surely the time has come for action. We are in the middle of yet another consultation period, this time involving all the European Community countries. We should be taking a lead in those talks. For the benefit of producers, manufacturers and, most important, consumers, we need to bring the talking to an end as quickly as possible and make it abundantly clear to the population exactly what they are eating so that those who wish to make the right decisions can make them in the full-knowledge of what they are buying.

This month the SMAC published its report on blood cholesterol levels. It states:

"An elevated level of blood cholesterol is one of the chief factors which lead to an increased risk of coronary heart disease. . .Some programmes of opportunistic blood cholesterol testing and treatment have the potential to make a cost-effective contribution to CHD prevention, whilst others are likely to perform less well."

We have some decisions to make following the consultation and I hope that we make the right ones. The committee suggests that doctors give priority to high-risk categories, such as those with high blood pressure, smokers, diabetics, people with a family history of CHD or hyperlipidaemia, and those who already have CHD, and in particular that high priority should be given to people with more than one of those symptoms. The committee states:

"If blood cholesterol testing and treatment programmes are to remain cost-effective the proportion of prescribed drugs must be kept to a minimum by careful dietary counselling."

I say amen to that. Let us not get into the position where GPs, faced with a patient who has a high level of blood cholesterol, simply prescribe pills to help get rid of it. This is crucial. We must not turn another group of people into pill pushers. The answer lies in the life style and the diet of the people, not in having people think, "I can eat, drink and smoke what I like because a magic pill will put it all right." Unless we get that right, the NHS will have another problem with its drugs bill.

To give an example of what it could cost, if the figures for people with high levels of cholesterol in their bloodstreams in this country are anything like the figures in the United States—the evidence suggests that, in all probability, the figures here are much higher than those in America—we could be talking about well over £1 billion a year for the drugs needed to bring blood cholesterol down to safe and acceptable levels. I cannot believe that such expenditure is the answer to the problem that undoubtedly lies ahead.

The opportunity to do the testing of cholesterol levels on GPs' patients must be grasped. We must ensure that GPs have the training to be able to cope with those who come to them presenting high levels of blood cholesterol so that they can give the right advice about the diet and life style necessary to bring down cholesterol levels.

There is no doubt that physical activity and exercise can help to reduce obesity, blood cholesteral and blood pressure. Again, men and women in professional groups are more likely to go in for physical activity in their leisure

time than are men and women in unskilled manual groups. So the people who are eating the wrong foods are likely to be doing nothing about it in terms of taking exercise.

In socio-economic groups A and B, 15 per cent. said in a recent survey that they had taken no exercise the previous week, compared with 35 per cent. in group E, who similarly said that they had taken no exercise. Nearly twice as many people in socio-economic groups A and B went running or jogging than those in C2, D and E groups.

Younger people said that they exercised to feel fitter. Older people said that they exercised for health reasons. In either case, it was predominately the people who were already eating more sensibly who were taking more exercise, rather than those who were taking risks with their diets or life styles.

We must also consider the younger section of the population, those at school eating school meals. The national forum for CHD prevention has demanded national nutritional standards, and I support its call. School meals account for a third of children's energy intake, and 45 per cent. of that comes from fat, well above the levels recommended by the experts to whom we turn for advice.

Two years ago the Government introduced the FEAST —fun eating at school today—campaign, which was designed to promote healthy eating and attract as many pupils as possible to eat healthy, nutritious school meals.

The problem with a debate such as this—we are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst for initiating it—is that it is answered by a Health Minister, and we are grateful for her presence. But we see no sign of Ministers from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or from the Department of Education and Science, both of which have a key role in the promotion of healthy living. I hope that that message will be passed to those Departments, although I welcome on the Front Bench my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Department; the Home Office is always anxious to see that we are looked after in every possible way.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I am obliged to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Coombs: It is essential to check what youngsters at school are eating and to make sure that they do not eat the wrong foods, and I hope that the message that was given to me last year by the former Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher)—that the Government were anxious to see local authorities taking up the chance to participate in the FEAST campaign—means that that campaign continues and has the Government's support.

With regard to home economics and health education, it is crucial that the new national curriculum should take into account the need to teach children how to look after themselves when they grow older and have responsibility for themselves and their children. Having looked at the national curriculum guidelines, I am not entirely satisfied that the emphasis is sufficiently clearly placed on the need for healthy eating and cooking with unsaturated fats. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to pass on the message to the Department of Education and Science about the need for action on that.

I congratulate the Government on what they have achieved so far. I hope that nothing that I have said in the past 20 minutes or so gives the impression that I do not welcome the progress that has been made. I believe, in concert with large numbers of people outside the House, that we still have a great deal to do to beat coronary heart disease. Other countries have tackled the problem and produced major reductions in the number of people suffering from CHD.

Last year, the Public Accounts Committee said:

"We are also concerned at the varying levels of local commitment to the heart disease prevention programme in England, and by the slowness of the Department of Health in obtaining essential monetary information from health authorities."

We must continue to monitor the work of local health authorities in this matter because some of them are doing a great deal more than others. I pay tribute to my health authority in Swindon, which is well advanced. Not all the others have managed to achieve the same amount of progress in the past three years.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Coombs: I shall stop in a moment, if my hon. Friend will allow me.

I welcome the large number of projects related to looking after the heart that are being undertaken, particularly the Allied Dunbar national fitness survey. That company, which is located in my constituency, has taken an important lead.

In relation to food and its impact on health, I hope that the Houston initiative on the common agricultural policy of the European Community will be given every encouragement to succeed—principally and ideally through the end of the CAP. It is ludicrous that we are spending 800 million ecu on community support for the tobacco industry in Europe, when tobacco is a killer drug.

The CAP does not mention food or consumers, only farmers. We must remember that there are more consumers in every constituency in Europe than there are farmers. They are the people who will count in the future. We need to promote greater consumer confidence in food safety. I welcome the National Farmers Union suggestion of an independent food assessment and monitoring body; it deserves careful consideration. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to be unremitting in her efforts to secure more money from Treasury Ministers to enable the prevention of coronary heart disease to continue in the future, with an ever greater determination to beat that dreadful disease.

2.28 pm

Mr. Sims: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall speak again.

I thank all those who have spoken in the debate. It has been time well spent. I appreciated the kind comments about my initiative in tabling the motion. I am sorry that our proceedings were interrupted by a statement over which we had no control, which has precluded two or three of my hon. Friends who were anxious to contribute to the debate from doing so. That is unfortunate, but that is how things happen in Parliament, and we have to take the rough with the smooth.

I hesitate to refer specifically to any of the speeches because all of them either picked up points that I had touched on or elaborated on others which simply due to lack of time, I had been unable to mention. I hope that the debate has brought home to hon. Members and the country the importance of preventive medicine and what

[Mr. Sims]

we can do to promote our good health. I particularly appreciated the comprehensive reply by my hon. Friend the Minister, who covered a great deal of ground in a relatively short time. It will be interesting to hear whether she has more to tell us about the extraordinarily fishy speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel).

I am grateful to all hon. Members who have supported me in the debate and I hope that the message that I was endeavouring to put across—that individuals have responsibility for their own health, and that the Government have a responsibility to take measures to promote good health and disseminate information—has got through to the House and to the country. I am grateful for the opportunity to have had this debate.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

CONSUMER GUARANTEES BILL

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

Hon. Members: Object.

Consideration of Lords amendments deferred till Friday 19 October.

ROAD TRAFFIC (TEMPORARY RESTRICTIONS) BILL

Order read for further consideration of Lords amendments [6 July].

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Second Reading what day? No day named.

SEXUAL OFFENCES BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Third Reading [6 July].

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because the same issue will arise several times, can you tell us which dates if any are available, given that there appears to be some confusion about which days can be named?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman asked that, because it might help our proceedings. The answer is that there is no further time available in this Session for private Members' Bills.

PROTECTION OF BADGER SETTS BILL

Order read for consideration (as amended in the Standing Committee).

Hon. Members: Object.

Consideration deferred till Friday 19 October.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It appears that everyone is now saying that no one objected——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There was an objection.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think I saw——

RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL (ROAD TRANSPORT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PENSIONERS' TELEVISION LICENCES BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

BAN OF IMPORTS (CHILD LABOUR) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

FORMER CABINET MINISTERS (INTERESTS) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

TRADE UNION ACT 1984 (AMENDMENT) (No. 2) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

SAFETY IN CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

COMMUNITY CHARGE (LANDLORD AND TENANT) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

COMPUTERS (COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGE) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

REFORM OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS BILL
Order for Second Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

MISUSE OF DRUGS BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

WRITTEN CONSTITUTION BILL
Order for Second Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

FUEL AND ENERGY PROVISION BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

POLL TAX (ABOLITION) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

LOCAL AUTHORITY PLAYING FIELDS BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

CONTROL OF TOXIC WASTE RESIDUES BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

DRUG TESTING (SCHOOLS) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTORAL REFORM BILL *[LORDS]*
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

FORMER MINISTERS (INTERESTS) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (PROTECTION OF GREENFIELD SITES) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

BEACHES AND COASTLINE (REGULATION) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

SAFEGUARDS FOR RESIDENTS IN REGISTERED HOMES BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

ADOPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

DOGS BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PRIVATE SECURITY (REGISTRATION) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

MOTOR TRADE (CONSUMER PROTECTION) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

TRADE UNION ACT 1984 (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE BILL

Order for Second reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

CONTROL OF DETERGENT POLLUTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Ever hopeful—now, Sir.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Hughes: 13 October, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a non-sitting day. We had better make it 19 October.

Mr. Hughes: 15 October, Sir. That is our first day back.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 15 October.

POLL TAX (RESTORATION OF INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

RAPE IN MARRIAGE (OFFENCE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

HARE COURSING (ABOLITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

GAMING MACHINES (PROHIBITION OF USE BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

DECLARATION OF WAR AND COMMITMENT OF TROOPS ABROAD (CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On behalf of the hon. Member concerned and all peace-loving peoples, I beg to move that the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Corbyn: In deference to the warmongers, 19 October.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

PRESCRIBED DRUGS (COMPENSATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

ABOLITION OF FOX-HUNTING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 October.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am in no way challenging what you have said, but Opposition Members heard not a word when the title of the Protection of Badger Setts Bill was read out. In view of the earlier experiences of some hon. Members. I understand why others do not wish to be associated with objections to that Bill. Nevertheless, will the hon. Member who objected—if indeed it was an hon. Member—identify himself or herself? Will he or she at least have the courage to admit it, so that we can all see who it was?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman and the House know very well, we have been round this course many times before. The procedure is well established: one objection stops a Bill proceeding any further, and—whether it happens at 2.30 pm on a Friday, at 2.30 pm on a main sitting day or at 10 pm—no hon. Member need identify himself in such circumstances.

Let me also remind the House that an objection does not necessarily mean that the hon. Member concerned objects to the Bill; he may simply be objecting to the Bill going through a stage without any discussion or debate.

Mr. Banks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I fully understand that, but there is some confusion on these occasions. People are objecting to Bills, ot trying to move Second Reading motions for Bills that have already been passed. There is a general climate of confusion.

All the hon. Members who were in the Chamber at the beginning of the process through which we have just gone are still present; none has admitted to objecting to the Protection of Badger Setts Bill. It could well be, Sir, that you heard something that was not actually said. No one is admitting to having objected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot pursue the matter any further. As I say, this is a well-trodden path.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am somewat surprised at the Opposition's concern. Opposition Members objected to three Bills that have received general consent in the House—the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Bill, whose Second Reading I moved, the Sexual Offences Bill and the Radioactive Materials (Road Transport) Bill. The Road Traffic (Temporary Provisions) Bill was objected to by the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) if a fit of pique because his Bill was objected to before.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have let hon. Members on both sides of the House get the matter off their chests and we must now move on.

Bangladeshi Communities

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful——

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now cutting into the time for the Adjournment debate. I am sure that he does not want to do that.

Mr. Hughes: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that we can be encouraged by the prospect that we might get further with this subject than we did with the ones set down for consideration earlier.

I am pleased to have secured at last an opportunity to debate the needs of the Bangladeshi community in Britain. I say that because, like other hon. Members, I have got this opportunity by lottery and one can apply often without success.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Could not the hon. Gentleman have persuaded his party to take one of the Supply Days that it is allocated to debate this matter?

Mr. Hughes: That is true. Had we more than about two days a year, we might have been able to find some time, but we have little time. My party has discussed the possibility of debating the matter, but the Government and the Labour party have far more opportunities than we do and have never used them to debate this subject.

Specifically, we could have debated this subject at any time since December 1986. I say that conscious that much of the work done by Committees does not get debated in the Chamber. But the Home Affairs Select Committee reported nearly four years ago on Bangladeshis in Britain. It investigated the Bangladeshi community, reported and made a series of recommendations because it believed, and this belief was confirmed by its report, that the Bangladeshi community is "considerably the most disadvantaged" of Britain's minority ethnic communities.

For example, the Committee found that Bangladeshis live in some of the worst accommodation of any community, and that 78 per cent. of 15-year-old Bengali speakers are not fluent in English. The Committee called that an "educational and social disaster". It also found that many Bangladeshis are unskilled and that the percentage of unskilled workers among Bangladeshis is much higher than in any other group and that many Bangladeshi women have a high incidence of depressive illnesses. It concluded that it is even unclear how many Bangladeshis live here.

Those concerns have led me to introduce this debate, so that we can consider the range of social provisions that we afford—or, sadly, too often do not afford—to people who come from Bangladesh to make their home here with us. They come from a country that is one of the most disadvantaged in the world in its own right, because of its geography and because it lacks natural resources.

The Government responded to the Select Committee report in July 1987. There was then a follow-up check by the Home Affairs Select Committee. I now challenge the Government on what has been done about the recommendations of the Select Committee.

[Mr. Hughes]

For me, and I am sure that I speak for other hon. Members, the Bangladeshi community is a welcome addition to the complexity of our society. The figures are unclear, but there are over 100,000, and perhaps approaching 150,000, of them. They are to be found mainly in a few cities and towns and there are more in Tower Hamlets than anywhere else. I therefore particularly welcome to our debate the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who is a former Secretary of State for the Environment and has shown a career-long concern in this community for which we are grateful.

Other large towns and cities have large numbers of Bangladeshis, too—Birmingham, Luton, Oldham, Bradford and, in London, Camden and my borough of Southwark. I know from my dealings with those in my community and elsewhere that they are a committed, industrious and persuasive people in terms of what they want to contribute. I had that confirmed by the privilege that I had last year of visiting Bangladesh for the first time. I was lucky to go with three of my Liberal Democrat colleagues from Southwark—Councillor Anna McGettigan, Martin Downs and Paul Hobbs. We went for almost a fortnight and had a fascinating and informative time. I had always taken the view that I could not properly represent Bangladeshi and Bengali-speaking people without visiting the country from where they came, and I am very glad to have done that.

Unfortunately, there is little time available, so I shall highlight the matters of greatest concern. I begin with housing. The Select Committee rightly drew attention to housing issues which are still the most immediate concern. The dual problem is overcrowding, coupled in many instances with the fact that the housing stock is poor. Homelessness has affected Bangladeshis more than any other ethnic group in the community. The report says that 67 per cent. of Bangladeshi households contains five or more members, compared with the national average of 10 per cent. There is no doubt that there is a tradition of difficulty in obtaining equal treatment. The Commission for Racial Equality and many local authorities have accepted that there is often an inherent disadvantage in the meeting of Bangladeshi housing needs because of the nature of the stock and because of the way the people are dealt with as a result of the lack of linguistic ability to put the case as well as others might. I shall single out one action that we must take to meet those needs. We must ensure that the test of the amount of housing that we provide is that which meets the needs of the people, not just the demands of the market economy. Above all, in the allocations of housing funds or approvals from the Department of the Environment budget, whether directly to and through local authorities or via the Housing Corporation, we must specifically provide more housing for larger families. Without that, Bangladeshi families will often remain grossly overcrowded or be unable to stay together. This week the Prime Minister made a key speech on the family. It is no good talking about rights of maintenance and divorce if social policy does not allow the families who wish to stay together to do so.

Education lies at the heart of many of the needs and problems currently affecting the Bangladeshi community —not just the young, but the middle-aged and older generations. As I said, the report shows that five years ago, 78 per cent. of 15-year-olds were not fluent in English. Another report, published by the Inner London education authority in its last days, showed the poor educational performance of Bangladeshi youngsters compared with those from other ethnic minorities. For example, Indian families, who have often come from East Africa, attain much better results. The problem has been exacerbated because the areas in which there are many Bangladeshi youngsters at school have been among those with the greatest teacher shortage.

There are certain actions that we could take to help. There should be more mother tongue teaching for the very young. All the evidence is that cognitive functions are improved if that is provided at an early age. Last year, I argued in Committee that rather than having only European languages as first choice foreign languages in the national curriculum, non-European languages should also be available as first choice languages. We need more English as a second language teaching provision for all ages. In particular, we must ensure that we meet the educational needs of the older communities, especially those who otherwise would be handicapped or house-bound because of their lack of skill in English.

Of course, all this is directly related to employment problems. About 62 to 65 per cent. of the Bangladeshi community who wish to work are unskilled, compared with 16 per cent. of the white community. That leads to disadvantage. We know that of all the ethnic groups, the Bangladeshis earn least. That is partly because of language and discrimination problems, because they do not have sufficient knowledge of the way the system works. It is all cumulative. We could alleviate the housing problems fairly quickly, but educational disadvantage causes a much longer-term problem. I want the Minister and other Departments to address several linked issues. Most people wanting to set up a small business in Tower Hamlets or Southwark, for example, must compete against a big developer and will be confronted by high land costs. Unless we as a society intervene to help, that will be impossible to overcome. Accommodation must be made available as well as skills provision.

Social services departments have a supportive role to play. Soon, there will be many elderly Bangladeshis to care for. We have an elderly population as a whole, and we are adapting our social provision accordingly, to allow them to participate in society. As an example, I can say that it took years to arrange in Southwark the handover of land for a community centre where, for example, women past working age can meet others who share their interests and aspirations. Only this week, I attended the opening of a Turkish centre in my borough which clearly offers a great advantage to that section of the community. We must do the same for Bangladeshis.

A sense of alienation and isolation gives rise to illness, particularly depressive conditions. We must ensure that people do not feel alienated from the health service and that they can find at the hospital or doctor's surgery someone to whom they can talk. This year, the London hospital introduced a language line so that members of the ethnic communities can communicate in their first language. That sort of practical help counteracts the feeling that barriers are being erected.

A high proportion of the Bangladeshi community are women. Women have enough problems in society anyway, but those from the ethnic minorities have particular

difficulties. That is even more true of women from the black or Asian communities. They often carry the burden of an overcrowded home, a lack of suitable skills to allow them to join the work force, and language difficulties. Earlier this week, I mentioned to the Minister that I am encouraged to believe that the lessons learnt from our Overseas Development Administration in Bangladesh are being considered for translation into the development of policy in Britain. However, I should like to know what are the initiatives regarding women proposed by the committee that the Minister chairs, and what are the plans for increasing the opportunities available to women from Bangladeshi communities.

Bangladeshi young people represent our future as much as do white young people. They have an enormous contribution to make to the arts, sport, the academic world, and practical employment, yet often we write them off. That is not done intentionally but because there is insufficient provision to ensure that they succeed. Certain features of Government policy are intended to help. For example, there is a provision known to those in the trade as section 11 grants, made specifically to deal with the needs of the ethnic minority communities. However, I was disappointed to learn from a parliamentary answer that this year section 11 grants look likely to be reduced, for the first time, from £115 million to £110 million.

Mr. Hanley: That provision is not cash limited.

Mr. Hughes: Perhaps not, but it is not enough to say that such a reduction is justifiable, even if there are many other demands. I am not asking for something that is incapable of being answered, or suggesting that money is not being made available in other forms, but the Government's key mechanism for helping such people must not be cut.

Britain is coming to terms with the Bangladeshi community, as it has with others in the past. I recognise that some action has been taken. For example, the Home Office has entered into a commitment to reduce the height and chest measurement requirements for recruits entering the police and there are many agencies now serving that community. But I do not see sufficient changes to ensure no discrimination against Bangladeshis who are already in this country, let alone those who have still to arrive here.

I could have dealt with immigration or the problems of racial harassment and racial attacks because they are also important. However, I have concentrated on the general point so that Parliament has a springboard from which to jump to pressurise those in power to take more steps more quickly and to ensure that we do not ignore a community which, because of its economic and social status, currently depends more on others for help. I hope that after today's debate there will be increased awareness of our obligation to ensure that all these people, as part of our community, have the opportunities that we would wish for ourselves.

2.55 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I congratulate the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on his successful initiative in bringing the important subject of the Bangladeshi community in the United Kingdom to the Floor of the House. I have the honour to represent the constituency of Bethnal Green and Stepney, which contains a substantial number of Bengali settlers. I am as conscious as anyone of the great problems that they face.

However, I do not think that the story is one of unrelieved gloom. When one looks at the enormous number of people who come from the entirely different environment of Sylhet in Bangladesh to live in the east end of London, the enormous adjustments that both they and the settled host community have made in accommodating each other reflect creditably upon all concerned. It is admirable to see people of Bengali origin occupy some of the seats on the local council as properly elected members. We all wish to see greater integration of the community in the future.

I want to deal with three important points. First, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said, racial harassment is a major problem. There are more racial incidents and more violence due to racial causes in the borough of Tower Hamlets than anywhere else in England with the possible exception of Newham. That requires an energetic police presence as well as a continued stream of advice, warning and encouragement from everyone in public life so that there is a proper appreciation of the difficulties of both communities and so that the racial tension underlying attacks can be reduced.

Education is the second great problem. I have been to see the Minister and raised on the Floor of the House at least three times in the past 12 months the appalling problem of the 300 to 400 children of school age who are not receiving any education, let alone making up for the special difficulties and problems that a recent immigrant community is bound to face in the education system and with the English language. That problem must be dealt with. I urge the Minister to agree to the proposition that a timetable should be laid down for when we can expect every child in the Bangladeshi community and in Tower Hamlets to have the same right to education provision that is guaranteed to all our citizens.

Thirdly, our housing problem is appalling. It is difficult to describe and I shall not even attempt to do so. It is Dickensian. It is overcrowded and there are many homeless people, particularly Bangladeshi families. The housing stock in Tower Hamlets is in a pretty bad state of repair. The Select Committee report, which underlies much of what we have said in the debate, said about the effect of housing on race relations:

> "It is hard to imagine anything more damaging to racial harmony in Tower Hamlets than competition between different communities for increasingly scarce housing. It is not adequate for the Government to deplore racial hatred but to accept no responsibility in respect of situations which forment it. For these reasons, we recommend that Tower Hamlets' HIP allocation be significantly increased, to at least the extend needed to prevent further deterioration in housing conditions in the borough."

I regret that that recommendation has been ignored. The housing investment programme for Tower Hamlets in the past two years is just under 34 per cent. of what it was 10 years ago. That is a problem that Ministers can address urgently and I hope very much that the Minister will urge it on his colleagues.

2.59 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who has an unparalleled reputation for personal integrity both inside

[Mr. John Patten]

and outside the House and I know that he looks after the interests of his Bangladeshi constituents as carefully as he can and never plays politics with the race issue. In that regard, I listened with care to the moderate and moderately phrased way in which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) spoke to the House. I found his tone characteristic of the way in which he normally speaks, but surprising when compared to a press release that he issued on Monday, in which he gave an entirely different account and flavour of what he would say this afternoon.

The press notice issued by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was more political and, alarmingly, was inaccurate and might cause some distress to the Chair. I shall place a copy of the document in the Library so that hon. Members may read it. The press release states that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey

"is to force a Commons debate on 'The needs of the Bangladeshi communities in Britain.'"

I had always thought that Adjournment debates are raised somewhat differently and are not forced upon the Chair. I have heard about muscular Christianity, but muscular liberalism is a contradiction in terms. The idea that the Liberal party could force anything on anyone, inside or outside the House, is ludicrous. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take the earliest opportunity to write to Mr. Speaker and apologise for his doubtless inadvertent mistake in suggesting to the outside world that he had somehow heroically forced this debate.

I have also indulged in a little textual criticism of the hon. Gentleman's press notice, which was brought to my notice by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) who I am happy to see is in the Chamber now. He has given distinguished service to the Select Committee on Home Affairs and has travelled to Bangladesh on an important fact-finding mission. I believe that he was surprised at the tone of the speech made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and his references to the Home Affairs Select Committee report and the Government's attitude to it. My feeling of unease was reinforced when I opened my mail and discovered a letter from the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), who cannot be present today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North is a most distinguished Chairman of a distinguished Committee and he has given me his authority to quote his letter. I shall place a copy of my hon. Friend's letter in the Library. In his letter, my hon. Friend refers to the press notice and then states:

"I am afraid this"—

and "this" refers to the press notice—

"does not reflect the truth and the most generous interpretation I can place upon these remarks is that Mr. Hughes is not familiar with the work done."

My hon. Friend draws my attention in his letter to various reports from the Home Affairs Select Committee and states:

"In each of these reports, my Committee dealt in detail with the needs of the Bangladeshi community, and following the publication of these reports, the Home Office replied setting out in detail what was being done and the achievements made. In particular, I would draw attention to"—

and he then refers to several responses from the Home Office and continues:

"as well as statements made by ACPO and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner.

I am concerned that the interests of race relations may be harmed by selected statements which do not represent the truth concerning these issues."

It is important that the House and in particular the Bangladeshi community is made aware as widely as possible of the views of the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee.

I want now to consider the welfare of the Bangladeshi community, which I have got to know quite well over the past three years particularly, interestingly enough, in Tower Hamlets—the constituency of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney. He knows that I have made a number of visits there recently.

Any member of the Bangladeshi community would resent the implication that Bangladeshis are making no contribution to British life. I was delighted to hear the right hon. Gentleman refer to the considerable contribution that that community is making to British life and to local government, and to the fact that Bangladeshis do not simply present a problem that needs to be solved. When taking about delicate issues, it is important that we balance the problems—and the right hon. Gentleman certainly pointed out some problems—against the successes and contributions of the Bangladeshi community. I pay due tribute to their successes.

The Government accept that, despite its capacity for self-help, to which I have just referred, and some individual successes, the Bangladeshi community is among the more disadvantaged of the ethnic minority communities in this country. I, personally accept that also. The Bangladeshi community suffers especially in those areas where the Bangladeshi population is relatively small, sometimes located next to members of other Asian groups. We must all make a substantial effort to recognise that the needs of Bangladeshis in this country may be different from the needs of other Asian groups. They must be differentiated.

In defence of the problems that the Bangladeshi people face, they would be the first to recognise that they are among the newest arrivals to this country. Young groups of Bangladeshi men and women—and especially young women—who have arrived here as recently as 18 months ago, have been to see me at the Home Office to talk about the problems that they face. They recognise that it will take some time for them to establish themselves in the mainstream of British life. Family reunions mean that there has been a fairly regular flow of people needing time to adjust to this country, its culture and language.

If one looks to the success of slightly older-established Asian minority communities to see how they have managed to enter the mainstream of British life, that makes me full of hope for the future of the Bangladeshi communities, notwithstanding the problems of Tower Hamlets, and Southwark and Bermondsey. Their achievements have been widespread—in the professions and in business. I wish that the Hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey had mentioned the contribution made by the Bangladeshi community.

Mr. Hanley: Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that as a result of the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, the Metropolitan police are considering

relaxing the height restrictions for entry to the police, so that the Bangali community can play a full part of the policing of London?

Mr. Patten: Yes, the Metropolitan police and police forces in other parts of the country wish to have as many recruits as possible from the Bangladeshi communities, as soon as possible. I am a great believer in community policing and in communities policing themselves, although not totally. Obviously, having more people from the Bangladeshi communities in our police forces can only help.

I want to see the Bangladeshi communities being able similarly to contribute to many other parts of British life. We hear quite a bit about Islam these days, and the Islamic values of many Bangladeshis, such as the commitment to family life and the belief in hard work and enterprise, correspond closely to some core elements of British society. I am sure that hon. Members of all parties would agree with that.

I refer now to some points in detail. I was asked why the findings of the Select Committee on Home Affairs have not been debated on the Floor of the House. We sit long and hard—longer than any other legislature anywhere else in the world, as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will doubtless reflect from time to time late at night. It would be impracticable for the Government automatically to initiate debates on every Select Committee report that is produced. However, the Government published a comprehensive reply to the report in July 1987, and an update was published in 1988. Copies have been placed in the Library.

I was also asked about how many fellow Bangladeshi-British citizens we have. The current estimate, which is based on the 1986-88 surveys, is of a Bangladeshi population of about 108,000. For those who are statistically minded, that is about 0·2 per cent. of the total population of the United Kingdom. The 1991 census will solve the problem because it will contain a question that asks people to classify themselves, if they so wish, as Bangladeshis.

Housing is another important issue. I certainly do not think that all Bangaldeshis live in the worst housing in the country, but I acknowledge the considerable problems in inner London boroughs where the Asian community has chosen to live and where there are large concentrations of Bangladeshi families. The Department of the Environment, and my right hon. Friend—and namesake—the Secretary of State for the Environment, looks to the housing authorities to identify housing measures that will help Bangladeshis and other ethnic minorities and asks them to include provision to address such problems in their bids to the Department.

I fear that time is probably about to run out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I seek the permission of the House to write to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and so deal with all the points that I have been unable to cover in the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 9 July 1990

THE ARTS

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will place in the Library the correspondence between himself and the president of the Linnean Society on the level of funding for taxonomic research at the natural history museum.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 15 June 1990]:* I have placed copies of my correspondence with Professor Claridge in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from the Geologists Association concerning the attitude of the natural history museum towards sponsorship from South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* An hon. Member has forwarded to me a letter that he received from the president of the Geologists Association about the natural history museum's attitude towards sponsorship from South Africa. Sponsorship policy at national museums and galleries is a matter for their directors and boards of trustees.

NATIONAL FINANCE

International Monetary Fund

75. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he expects to bring forward proposals to change criteria applied by the International Monetary Fund for loans to developing countries.

Mr. Ryder: No.

Family Incomes

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the percentage increase in the average family's real income over the last 11 years.

Mr. Lilley: A married man with two children on average male earnings has enjoyed an increase in real net income of over a third since 1978-79.

European Currency Unit

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to make the ecu legal tender in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* It is not necessary for the ecu to be made legal tender for it to be used in transactions if both parties so agree.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Conveyancers

82. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent representations he has received about the payment of insurance commissions to conveyancers.

The Attorney-General: Since the Courts and Legal Services Bill was published on 6 December 1989, I have received three representations and the Lord Chancellor has received 20 representations concerning the payment of insurance commissions to conveyancers.

City Fraud

83. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he next expects to meet the Director of Public Prosecutions regarding City fraud; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Primary responsibility for the prosecution of commercial fraud rests with the Serious Fraud Office; I met the director of the Serious Fraud Office on Monday 2 July to discuss matters of departmental interest.

Pub Bombings

84. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last discussed the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings case with *(a)* the Lord Chief Justice and *(b)* the Master of the Rolls.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave today to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

Crown Prosecution Service

85. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Attorney-General whether he will issue guidance to the Crown prosecution service or prosecution lawyers in respect of the care to be exercised in regard to comments in court which may be damaging to individuals and communities not directly involved in the case before the court.

The Attorney-General: No. Guidance on this subject is already given to all barristers and solicitors, including those appearing in court on behalf of the CPS, in the codes of conduct issued by their respective professional bodies, the Bar Council and the Law Society.

87. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the work of the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General: I last met the Director of Public Prosecutions for this purpose on 5 July 1990.

Extradition (Irish Republic)

86. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent discussions he has had with Ministers in the Government of the Irish Republic about extradition; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I discuss these matters from time to time with the Irish Attorney-General as the need arises.

Magistrates

88. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General how many stipendiary and non-stipendiary magistrates are in post; how many were in post 10 and 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: In England and Wales on 1 January 1990 there were 64 stipendiary magistrates and 28,700 lay magistrates in post; in 1980 there were 52 stipendiary and 24,700 lay magistrates; and in 1970 there were 47 stipendiary and 19,300 lay magistrates in post.

The number of lay magistrates continues to increase and the Lord Chancellor values the contribution they make to the administration of justice. Stipendiary magistrates are appointed where they are needed to support the lay magistracy.

Legal Aid

89. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the countries which subscribe to the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid.

The Attorney-General: The countries subscribing to the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid are:

Austria
Belgium
Denmark
Eire
France
Greece
Italy
Luxembourg
Norway
Portugal
Spain
Sweden
Turkey

Finland, which is not a member state of the Council of Europe, has acceded to the agreement.

Hilda Murrell

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the progress of the Director of Public Prosecution's consideration of the report of the West Mercia police on the murder of Hilda Murrell.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecution is awaiting a report on the outcome of the further police inquiries to which I referred in my answers to the hon. Gentleman on 18 June at cols. *675-76*. Further consideration will be given to the case once that report has been received.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Attorney-General what progress has been made by the Lord Chancellor's Department towards the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

The Attorney-General: The Children Act 1989 represents a major step towards the Government's objective of providing proper and rationalised arrangements for hearing and determining family proceedings. It brings together in one statute all the public and private law on the care and upbringing of children with the overriding purpose of promoting and safeguarding the child's welfare. It also establishes a new jurisdictional structure encompassing the magistrates court, county courts and the High Court in which children's cases will be heard at the appropriate level of tribunal by trained lay and professional judiciary, according to uniform rules and procedures.

An extensive programme of work is being undertaken by the Lord Chancellor's Department, in conjunction with the Home Office and the Department of Health, to ensure that the Act can be implemented in October 1991.

First, new rules of court, embodying the recommendations of an advisory committee on procedure chaired by Mrs. Justice Booth, will be drafted for consultation this autumn. There will also be public consultation on the criteria to be laid down by the Lord Chancellor for the allocation of cases between courts.

Secondly, it is intended that children's cases in the higher courts should be heard by judiciary who, by reason of their experience and training, are specialists in family work. An amendment will be tabled to the Courts and Legal Services Bill giving the Lord Chancellor the power to nominate such judiciary, with the concurrence of the president of the family division. The Judicial Studies Board has already embarked on a programme of 17 inter-disciplinary seminars throughout the country to explain the guiding principles of the Act to both lay and professional judiciary and these will be followed next year by more detailed training in the new procedures.

Thirdly, all courts with divorce jurisdiction will continue to deal with such cases, but work requiring the attention of a circuit judge will be concentrated on a network of family hearing centres. Some 52 of those courts will also act as centres for care cases transferred up from the magistrates courts.

Finally a central advisory committee will be established to advise on whether the guiding principles of the Act are being achieved and the new system is working effectively. Local groups will also be set up before October 1991 to ensure that the system is properly established at local level by the date of implementation and thereafter maintained.

ENVIRONMENT

Architects

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Southend, East of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *419*, if he will make inquiries with the Governments of *(a)* Germany, *(b)* France and *(c)* Italy as to whether they have any records of the numbers of United Kingdom qualified architects who have been registered by the appropriate professional bodies in each of these countries as qualified to practice as architects.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The European Commission has recently invited all member states to provide statistics on the registration of migrant architects. It is expected that the responses will be available later this year.

Ferro Alloys (Emissions)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the arrangements to monitor air emissions from the Ferro Alloys chimney stack in Glossop, and of air emissions from the stack in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Trippier: The darkness of the emissions is monitored continually by measuring transmitted light. Sulphur dioxide emissions are assessed by calculations based on the levels of sulphur fed into the plant. Tests made by an HMIP sampling team in December 1988 confirmed this correlation.

Information on sulphur dioxide calculations covering the period July 1989 to June 1990 is shown in the table.

Ferro Alloys and Metals Ltd—SO_2 Calculations July 1989—June 1990

Month	*Total SO_2 (Tonnes)*	*Days Production*	*Average SO_2/Day (Tonnes)*
July 1989	248	31	8·0
August 1989	132	17	7·7
September 1989	252	30	8·4
October 1989	263	31	8·5
November 1989	248	30	8·3
December 1989	247	31	8·0
January 1990	242	31	7·8
February 1990	242	28	8·6
March 1990	240	31	7·7
April 1990	235	30	7·8
May 1990	231	31	7·5
June 1990	212	30	7·1

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the sulphur dioxide emissions were required to be reduced following the decision by the Secretary of State for the Environment to uphold the appeal to extend the planning permission for the Ferro Alloys chimney stack in Glossop; and if the process will be covered by IPC.

Mr. Trippier: The sulphur dioxide emissions were required to be reduced to a rate not exceeding 113 kg/hour by 31 August 1992, a reduction of 70 per cent. on previous emission rates.

The process will be covered by IPC.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information held by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution or his Department concerning *(a)* emissions from the Ferro Alloys chimney stack in Glossop, and *(b)* other producers of sulphur dioxide in the area, has been exchanged with the Peak Park planning board.

Mr. Trippier: Glossop is within the High Peak district council area and not the Peak Park planning board, and there has been no exchange of information with the latter.

The Ferro Alloys chimney stack is the only registered works within the Glossop area producing sulphur dioxide.

Pollution Inspectorate

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give full details of all contracts awarded in the last year by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to private consultants, university departments and other bodies, and include the value of each contract, the research/analysis to be undertaken and the duration of the contract.

Mr. Trippier: The research contracts listed in the table were commissioned by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution during the year ending 30 June 1990.

In addition, a number of short-term consultancy contracts were awarded during the same period by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Research contracts commissioned by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution during the year ending 30 June 1990

Contractor	*Contract value (excluding VAT) £*	*Duration (months)*	*Area of work*
University of Lancaster	60,340	15	Study of Polonium 210 levels
Research Surveys (GB)	64,750	15	Cumbrian coastal area habit surveys
W. S. Atkins	89,000	12	Modelling gas generation
Biotreatment	77,221	12	Removal of radionuclides by bio-sorption
UKAEA	45,200	12	Study of environmental distribution of technetium
NRPB	10,050	7	Exposure of sewer workers
National Nuclear	39,500	12	Management of tritium wastes
UKAEA	85,000	12	West oxidation of organic waste
UKAEA	80,000	9	Effect of elevated temperatures on cement and blended cements
PA Technology	90,000	24	Microbiological treatment of low level waste
UKAEA	104,000	24	Removal of active species from liquid effluent
Taymel	1,500,000	24	Quality checking of radioactive and hazardous wastes
RPRWC	19,945	8	Monitoring of tritium discharges
UKAEA	10,000	6	Determination of the efficiency of absorber materials
University of Newcastle upon Tyne	83,634	9	Study of scope of site investigation programmes

Contractor	*Contract value (excluding VAT)* £	*Duration (months)*	*Area of work*
NERC	295,000	24	Nature and complexing properties of humic substances
NERC	380,000	12	Colloid migration studies
ANS	18,880	6	Management options for organic liquid waste
UKAEA	119,368	31	Radioactivity in air and rainwater
Laboratory of Government Chemist	306,321	39	Radiochemical analysis of drinking water supplies
ICI Tracerco	143,299	39	Radiochemical analysis of private water supplies
NRPB	186,500	38	Radiochemical analysis of effluents
ICI Tracerco	293,856	39	Environmental radioactivity monitoring programme
UKAEA	85,100	45	Assessment and reporting of environmental monitoring programmes
UKAEA	49,100	12	Artificial radioactivity in tide-washed pastures
Electrowatt	144,812	11	United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory
UKAEA	28,800	6	Pollution control at chemical incineration works
Environmental Resources	35,080	6	Pollution control at large glass works
Warren Spring Laboratory	32,500	6	Pollution control at municipal incineration works
Cremer & Warner	28,100	6	Pollution control at hospital incineration
UKAEA	160,000	12	Microbial aspects of gas generation
Clayton, Bostock Hill and Rigby	25,500	6	Pollution control at sewage sludge incineration works
National Nuclear	41,500	12	Liquid effluent treatment
UKAEA	22,600	4	Review of organic material in radioactive wastes
INTERA-ECL	28,704	4	Data requirements for groundwater modelling
W. S. Atkins	74,500	9	Thermodynamic detabase and geochemical modelling
NRPB	20,000	24	Development of atmospheric dispersion model
UKAEA	328,220	24	Testing of models for colloid transport
UKAEA	86,700	11	Technetium removal from aqueous effluents
UKAEA	30,000	11	Effects of radiation on wasteforms
UKAEA	76,800	11	Treatment of complexed radionuclides
University of Aberdeen	326,460	11	Effect of elevated temperatures on cement in radioactive waste isolation
UKAEA	240,000	10	Actinide sorption on geological materials
INTERA-ECL	39,000	10	Methodology for assessing disposal of wastes
WRC	38,612	5	Sewage sludge BPEO study
British Ceramic	24,500	6	Monitoring of coke oven emissions
IMPEL	20,400	7	Assessing industrial process emissions

City Grants

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by region, and in chronological order *(a)* all projects and *(b)* companies involved, the amounts they are investing and the amounts they are likely to receive, which have been offered a city grant.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested is as follows:

Approved city grant projects by region

Date offer made	*Project name*	*Developer's name*	*Approved grant* £	*Private investment*	*Number of schemes*
West Midlands					
6 October 1988	Windmill Lane, Smethwick	McLean in the Inner Cities Ltd.	775,000	2,286,000	—
28 October 1988	Seven Stars Industrial Estate	Deeley LCP Ltd.	1,627,000	4,748,000	—
9 January 1989	The Bond	Raltorten Ltd.	391,355	785,000	—
9 January 1989	Garrick Business Park	Garrick Properties Limited	750,000	4,099,000	—
18 January 1989	Startpoint Industrial Development	Pentos plc	283,000	850,000	—
27 January 1989	Kings Norton Business Centre	Slough Properties Ltd.	1,260,000	7,635,000	—
1 February 1989	Sandwell Ski Centre	Glenarn Investments Limited	282,000	2,101,000	—
26 April 1989	Washington Centre, Dudley	Folkes Properties Ltd.	3,500,000	8,486,000	—
10 May 1989	Garrison Lane, Ind. Dev. Birmingham	J. A. Elliot (Developments) Ltd.	570,000	2,906,000	—
9 June 1989	Constitution Hill	T. S. Gandhi	67,933	284,000	—
30 June 1989	St. Marks Church Conversion	Quest International Partnership	368,865	1,037,000	—
3 August 1989	Waterlinks	Waterlinks plc	6,200,000	22,600,000	—
22 August 1989	Walsall Chamber of Commerce	Walsall Chamber of Commerce	68,377	281,000	—

Date offer made	Project name	Developer's name	Approved grant (£)	Private investment	Number of schemes
22 August 1989	Hay Lane/Bayley Lane, Coventry	Ice Developments Ltd.	624,000	1,792,000	—
25 September 1989	Jewellery Business Centre	Grosvenor Laing Urban Enterprise Ltd.	934,271	3,136,000	
20 October 1989	Davenport Warehouse and Offices, Willenhall	H. Davenport & Sons Ltd.	110,000	604,000	—
14 December 1989	The Arcadian Centre	Avatar Limited	3,200,000	17,160,000	—
27 February 1990	Browning Street, Ladywood	Nationwide Housing Trust	902,000	3,375,000	—
27 February 1990	Bordsley Village, Phase 1	Bryant, Tarmac, Wimpey	1,401,257	5,200,757	—
29 March 1990	Batmans Hill Development, Sandwell	Douglas Homes Limited	1,399,431	10,633,500	—
9 April 1990	Industrial Estate, Bilston	Echo Estates (trading as Richardson Developments)	1,160,725	4,266,990	—
10 May 1990	Molineux Alley	T. S. Frobisher Ltd.	666,120	1,723,550	—
10 May 1990	Old Heath Road, Wolverhampton	Manders Property (Wolverhampton) Limited	154,421	3,066,472	—
11 May 1990	Tipton Trading Estate, Phase II	A. & J. Mucklow	1,660,000	5,200,000	—
4 June 1990	Bordsley Village Initiative	Bellway Urban Renewals (New Homes) Limited	3,720,603	10,990,500	—
Regional Total			32,076,358	125,246,769	25
North west				—	
2 August 1988	Frederick Street, Farmworth	Allen Homes Ltd.	202,820	1,766,000	—
2 August 1988	Prospect Mills Housing	Tay Homes (Northern) Ltd.	649,773	1,593,000	—
24 October 1988	Oozebooth Mill	Euro Jeans Ltd.	142,000	441,000	—
12 December 1988	Park Road Hotel	Florshiem Company (UK), Limited	1,053,000	4,755,000	—
22 December 1988	Salford University Tower	Manchester Parc Securities Limited and Amec Regeneration Limited	2,550,000	8,614,000	—
18 January 1989	Atlantic Mill Site	Hillcrest Homes Limited	377,123	1,508,000	—
25 January 1989	Hazel Avenue and Acme Mill Housing Development	Brackenlea Ltd.	580,000	2,915,000	—
3 March 1989	Ice Rink, Blackburn	Arena Associates Ltd.	679,500	1,980,000	—
25 April 1989	Carriageway, Manchester	Upton-Hunter Estates Ltd.	99,100	261,000	—
26 April 1989	Beil Crescent, Manchester	Tay Homes (North West) Ltd.	621,700	2,347,000	—
26 April 1989	Every Street Housing Scheme	Tay Homes (North West) Ltd.	456,615	1,674,000	—
9 June 1989	Rose Hill, Bolton	Lovell Urban Renewal Ltd.	559,987	2,483,000	—
30 June 1989	Stretton Road/Tabley Road, Bolton	Rushmoor Investments Limited	308,000	1,880,000	—
30 June 1989	Low Hollin Ind. Units, Blackburn	Northern Trust Company Limited	100,992	312,000	—
14 August 1989	Moat House Hotel, Bolton	Fraserfort Ltd.	900,000	9,430,000	—
22 August 1989	Portland Mews, Manchester	Barratt Manchester Ltd.	451,000	1,907,000	—
6 November 1989	Queens Park Deck Flats, Blackburn	Wimpey Homes Holdings Limited	738,620	3,300,000	—
24 November 1989	Housing and Urban Park, Lower Audley	Elite Homes (North West) Ltd.	1,209,000	6,007,885	—
4 December 1989	Oak Hotel, Wigan	Oak Group Hotel	360,000	3,991,000	—
19 December 1989	Bennington St. Housing, Lower Audley	Lovell Urban Renewal Ltd.	707,000	3,577,000	—
19 December 1989	Exchange Street Development, Blackburn	Rawlings Estates Limited	258,247	846,750	—
31 January 1990	Orient Mill, Salford	Clark & Terry (Manchester)	202,000	875,000	—
27 February 1990	Grand Hotel, Manchester	Trusthouse Forte PLC	1,215,000	15,799,000	—
27 February 1990	Woodside Mills	Bellway Homes Ltd.	550,983	3,936,000	—
27 February 1990	Park/Persian Mill, Bolton, MK2	William Hargreaves Ltd.	398,233	2,969,405	—
27 February 1990	Wilson Park, Manchester	Grand Metropolitan Estates Limited	3,519,810	11,863,760	—
27 February 1990	Oldham Town Centre Redevelopment	Arlington Retail Developments Ltd.	4,793,842	65,330,330	—
23 March 1990	London Road, Blackburn	Norwest Holst Partnerships Ltd.	688,407	3,152,000	—
23 March 1990	Derker Street, Oldham	Wiggett Construction Ltd.	165,443	850,406	—
29 March 1990	St. Annes School, Manchester	David Hill & Frank Moyle	107,290	315,000	—
29 March 1990	Units at St. Annes School, Manchester	Meir Heilpern & David Adler	134,735	378,000	—
4 April 1990	Hurel-Dubois Factory, Burnley	Hurel-Dubois UK Limited	135,730	480,000	—
6 April 1990	Crown Business Centre, Oldham	P & O Developments Limited	200,000	1,350,000	—
10 May 1990	Kersal Vale, Salford	Regalian Estates Ltd.	5,152,000	26,202,000	—
17 May 1990	Sovereign Business Park, Wigan	Allen Commercial Developments Limited	362,760	3,000,000	—
22 May 1990	Brandsby Gardens, Salford	Willan Homes Ltd.	100,000	585,250	—
31 May 1990	Globe Works, Padiham, Burnley	Colway Contracts	63,140	200,000	—
Regional Total			30,793,850	198,901,786	37

Date offer made	Project name	Developer's name	Approved grant (£)	Private investment	Number of schemes
Northern					
17 November 1988	7-19 Mosley Street	Kelburn Holdings Ltd.	413,000	1,606,000	—
15 December 1988	Ascot Court, Phase 3, Farringdon	Two Castles Ltd.	100,806	403,000	—
20 January 1989	Grosvenor Mews, North Shields	R. A. Construction Ltd.	64,620	253,000	—
9 March 1989	Dean Street, Newcastle	Avatar	351,000	896,000	—
9 March 1989	43-49 Grey Street, Newcastle	City and Northern Properties Ltd.	487,500	3,660,000	—
22 March 1989	Coach Lane, North Shields	Nomad Properties plc	88,892	442,000	—
10 April 1989	Gilley Law, Sunderland	Wimpey Homes Holdings Ltd.	1,221,447	4,119,000	—
10 April 1989	Ascot Court, Sunderland, Phase 4	Two Castles Limited	54,910	309,000	—
21 April 1989	Wellington Road, Dunston	Stannah Lifts LImited	200,704	1,002,000	—
26 April 1989	Boldon Business Park	Boldon Investments Ltd.	1,230,940	2,472,000	—
5 May 1989	Owton Manor, Hartlepool	Wimpey Homes Holdings Ltd.	570,000	1,454,000	—
8 June 1989	West Row, Stockton	Glynns Estates (Cleveland) Ltd.	96,722	425,000	
9 June 1989	Hartlepool Business Park	East Mercia Developments Ltd.	634,600	3,940,000	—
9 June 1989	Mowbray Court, South Shields	Red Castle Properties Ltd.	100,693	411,000	—
14 August 1989	Former Walkers Department Store	Onix Construction Ltd.	128,500	414,000	—
20 September 1989	Baronshill	Wimpey Homes Holdings Ltd.	438,445	1,116,000	—
23 October 1989	Grange Road, Middlesbrough	Tendermill Ltd.	247,841	4,044,000	—
24 October 1989	Dorrington Road Flats	Wimpey Homes Holdings Ltd.	1,087,000	2,817,400	—
5 December 1989	Clayton Street	Highbridge Properties Ltd.	310,073	1,144,119	—
30 January 1990	Moore Street, Gateshead	East Coast Ltd.	30,750	210,400	—
13 March 1990	Bertha Street	Gowerflag Ltd.	78,077	336,700	—
15 March 1990	Newport Road: Phase 3	Roseberry Construction Co-operative Limited	223,900	1,068,090	—
17 May 1990	Jackson's Building, Newcastle	Peaston Investments Ltd.	450,670	2,777,568	—
Regional Total			8,611,090	35,320,277	23
Yorkshire and Humberside					
26 October 1988	Abbey Park	Barratt Leeds Ltd.	364,516	1,997,000	—
2 November 1988	175 Arundel Gate	Manor Developments (Chesterfield) Ltd.	245,730	856,000	—
30 November 1988	Victoria Buildings	Lynthorpe Property and Development Ltd.	72,790	224,000	—
13 February 1989	Canalside Warehouse	Mr. Marino Belivacqua	100,567	349,000	—
9 March 1989	Huttons Buildings, Sheffield	Crofton Place Estate Co. Ltd.	269,750	1,520,000	—
6 April 1989	Maxi's Chinese Restaurant	Maxi's (Yorkshire) Co. Ltd.	74,000	614,000	—
11 April 1989	Site 2, Ringway Industrial Centre	Slough Properties Ltd.	218,720	565,000	—
24 April 1989	Holroyd Hill/Wibsey Bank	Amex Regeneration Limited	700,000	4,536,000	—
6 September 1989	The Sheffield Arena	International Sports Marketing Inc.	4,750,000	26,250,000	—
20 September 1989	Tudor Square Hotel	Able Property Developments Ltd.	1,044,000	10,080,000	—
20 November 1989	New Wholesale Market and Residential Development, Mark 2	Harrogate Properties Ltd. and Clayton Bowmore Ltd.	492,090	2,428,680	—
13 December 1989	Charnwood Hotel, Sheffield	Charnwood House Limited	179,000	1,216,000	—
19 December 1989	Pelican House, Bradford	Crownhold	80,000	350,000	—
17 January 1990	Roger Street Development	Ackroyd and Abbott Ltd.	169,654	937,500	—
27 February 1990	Lower Grange, Bradford	Wimpey Homes Holdings Ltd.	2,652,707	10,812,500	—
27 February 1990	Wombwell Industrial Estate, Barnsley	Rafahart Limited	162,677	2,000,000	—
4 April 1990	Dubrovnik Hotel and Restaurant	Mr. and Mrs. Basic	150,000	1,150,000	—
11 May 1990	Redbrook Business Park	Tinselsave Limited	559,123	5,372,563	—
17 May 1990	Birdwell Development, Barnsley	Rafahart Limited	453,982	1,873,832	—
18 June 1990	Thorncliffe Road, Industrial Units, Bradford	J. R. Timme and Sons Ltd.	60,000	219,000	—
4 July 1990	Midland Road, Bradford	J. and S. Batty Brothers Limited	136,860	720,000	—
Regional Total			12,936,166	74,071,075	21
London					
20 September 1988	Alami Import/Export	Alami Import and Export Ltd.	780,000	2,547,000	—
25 January 1989	Alaska Works, SE1	Charterhouse Estates Limited	4,162,590	16,587,000	—
14 February 1989	Catholic Church Site, Deptford High Street	First Premise Limited	157,785	437,000	—
27 February 1989	Atlantis Paper Company	Atlantis Paper Company	400,000	3,277,000	—
1 March 1989	Ackermans Chocolates Ltd.	Ackermans Chocolates Ltd.	70,000	280,000	
24 July 1989	Priter Way Arches	British Rail Property Board	505,000	2,500,000	—

Date offer made	Project name	Developer's name	Approved grant (£)	Private investment	Number of schemes
7 November 1989	Archbishop Temple	Lenta Business Space	500,000	3,855,000	—
24 November 1989	Ffinch Street Railway Arches, Deptford	British Rail Property Board	300,000	1,070,000	—
19 January 1990	Stamford Wharf, Southwark	CSCB Ltd.	3,327,050	15,300,873	—
27 February 1990	Former Synagogue, Brixton	R. C. McLure Esq	1,033,000	4,058,000	—
23 March 1990	Sardar Manufacturing Company (Leather) Ltd.	Sardar Manufacturing Company (Leatherwear) Ltd.	410,000	1,184,777	—
11 May 1990	Raleigh Hall Mk 2, Brixton	Inner City Enterprises plc	359,212	988,070	—
Regional Total			12,004,637	52,034,720	12
East Midlands					
11 May 1988	8 Stanford Street, Nottinghamshire	Rushcliffe Developments Ltd.	305,500	1,159,000	—
28 July 1988	Rutland Square Hotel	Rutland Hotels Ltd.	738,000	2,478,000	—
2 August 1988	Sir Francis Ley Industrial Park South	Shaftsbury Commercial Properties Ltd.	3,287,000	8,300,000	—
20 October 1988	The Nottingham Business Design Centre	Priest Marian Developments	2,019,000	4,635,000	—
8 November 1988	20, 20a, Fletcher Gate	Garratt Properties	159,304	424,000	—
24 November 1988	Glasshouse Street (Avalon Court)	Avalon Holdings Limited	673,688	3,690,000	—
17 February 1989	Lamberts Factory Office Development	Pickering Developments Ltd.	796,548	2,594,000	—
17 February 1989	Pilcher Gate, Nottingham	James McArtney Architects	79,833	627,000	—
3 March 1989	St Johns Corner	Provident Mutual Life Assurance Association	566,463	5,078,000	—
13 March 1989	Arnhem House, Leicester	London & Manchester Assurance Co. Ltd.	708,200	6,079,000	—
29 March 1989	The Former Art Annexe	Michael Goodall Quality Homes Limited	120,000	364,000	—
17 April 1989	Players Court, Nottingham	Thomas Long & Sons Ltd.	969,590	3,000,000	—
18 May 1989	3 & 4 Kayes Walk, Nottingham	Spenbeck Ltd.	129,534	444,000	—
14 August 1989	Commerce Square, Mk 2	Commerce Square Limited	1,630,874	4,886,000	—
22 August 1989	Kingsway Industrial Estate, Derby	K & A Enterprises Derby) Ltd.	1,050,000	4,007,000	—
22 August 1989	Raynesway Park, Derby	St. Modwen Developments Ltd.	564,000	2,930,000	—
5 June 1990	Bitterlings Factory Redev. Nottingham	Topical (Nottingham) Limited	93,123	535,000	—
27 June 1990	Queensway Buildings, Leicester	R. S. Gill, G. S. Gill, M. S. Gill, H. S. Gill.	445,167	1,084,660	—
Regional Total			14,335,824	52,314,660	18
Merseyside					
24 May 1989	Former Huntley & Palmer Building	Anglo International Holdings Ltd.	334,690	1,307,000	—
10 October 1989	Green Bank: Ravenhead	Green Bank Ltd.	6,330,000	19,350,000	—
1 November 1989	Halton Road, Runcorn	John Ross Properties Ltd.	62,000	277,000	—
1 February 1990	Cathedral Chambers Commercial Area	Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Christ	1,349,765	5,966,947	—
15 May 1990	The Hotties, St Helens	Pilkington Properties Ltd.	3,048,000	14,130,000	—
5 June 1990	Prudential/Colonial Offices, Liverpool	Villagate Properties Ltd.	1,164,000	5,428,630	—
Regional Total			12,288,455	46,459,577	6
South West					
22 December 1988	Hawks Gymnastics Centre	Bristol Hawks Gymnastics Club Ltd.	145,000	310,000	—
Regional Total			145,000	310,000	1
GRAND TOTAL			123,191,380	584,658,864	143

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average time taken in 1989-90 by each regional office of the Department of the Environment to process completed applications from the private sector for city grant.

Mr. Moynihan: Although city grant applications are initially submitted through the Department's regional offices, they are considered by the appraisal team which is based in London. The average time to decide applications made in 1989-90 was 13 weeks.

Single Homelessness

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those places which have obtained approval and agreement following his consultations under his plan to tackle single homelessness;

(2) if he will list those *(a)* Church organisations and *(b)* other organisations he consulted when drawing up his plans to tackle single homelessness.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We had informal preliminary discussions with a number of voluntary and church groups. My announcement stressed the importance of co-operation with voluntary groups, housing associations and local authorities in developing our package of measures. We are now taking forward these consultations urgently.

Air Emissions, Sellafield

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give full details of the arrangements for monitoring air emissions of radioactive substances at Sellafield.

Mr. Trippier: Emissions of radioactive gases from the main discharge points are monitored continually; emissions from approved places other than those monitored points are estimated from air concentration data obtained at the site boundary.

Planning Applications

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the calling-in procedures over planning applications, so as to give greater protection to the general public interest.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has no plans to modify the Government's policy on calling in planning applications for his decision. That policy was set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on 5 May 1987. I am satisfied that the procedures for operating that policy generally work well, and I have no present plans to review them.

Orlit Housing, Ealing

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been paid and when the money was paid to Ealing council in respect of defective Orlit housing relating to *(a)* owner-occupiers and *(b)* council tenants in the Ferrymead avenue area of Greenford; if he expects to make further payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The following payments have been made to Ealing London borough council in respect of 11 Orlit dwellings under the housing defects legislation:

	£
1986-87	5,830
1987-88	11,779
1988-89	15,054

These payments represent the notional loan charges on 75 per cent. of the difference between the repurchase price and the defective market value of the dwellings, and will be payable for a period of 20 years.

The market value of properties repurchased is included in the calculation of the authority's entitlement to main housing subsidy (to 1989-90) and to housing revenue account subsidy (HRAS) from 1990-91. The costs incurred by the authority in maintaining and repairing its housing stock are similarly included in those calculations.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each urban development corporation in 1989-90 the number of sites sold to private developers which were *(a)* smaller than an acre, *(b)* between 1 and 5 acres in size, *(c)* between 5 and 10 acres in size and *(d)* larger than 10 acres.

Mr. Moynihan: The table gives the information requested.

Land sold to private developers in 1989/90 by size of site

Urban development corporation	*Number of sites smaller than 1 acre*	*Number of sites between 1 and 5 acres*	*Number of sites between 5 and 10 acres*	*Number of sites larger than 10 acres*
Black Country	3	3	1	0
Bristol	None			1
Central Manchester	None			1
Leeds	None			1
London Docklands	2	2	1	1
Merseyside	4	4	1	0
Sheffield	None			1
Teesside	0	1	1	2
Trafford Park	2	1	1	0
Tyne and Wear	75	1	3	0

Canals

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the mechanism of accountability to him or his Department for decisions made by British Waterways about the management and operation of canals in its remit.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The British Waterways Board is a nationalised industry which the Department sponsors. The board acts in accordance with broad policy objectives agreed with Government, but decisions about day-to-day waterway management are entirely the board's responsibility.

Weston Shore (Pollution)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he intends to make to the legal proceedings opened by the European Commission in respect of the pollution of the waters off Weston Shore in Southampton Water; and what action he intends to initiate to ensure that these waters meet European Community standards.

Mr. Trippier: By convention legal proceedings of this kind are not conducted in public. However, it is the Government's intention to respond firmly to the complaint. We are at present consulting the National Rivers Authority and Southern Water Services Ltd. to confirm the relevant facts.

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the membership of the public interest panel of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee; and what public interest groups are represented on the public interest panel.

Mr. Trippier: Attendance at the public interest panel of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee (RWMAC) is by invitation. The following organisations were invited to send representatives to the meeting of the panel in February 1990:

Environment Council
Caithness Against Nuclear Dumping
Institute of British Geographers
National Federation of Women's Institutes
Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment
Institution of Environmental Health Officers
Society for Radiological Protection
Institution of Water and Environmental Management
Nuclear Free Zones—Scotland
Institute of Biology
Royal Society of Chemistry
Drigg and District Action Group
National Society for Clean Air
Institution of Geologists
Scotland Against Nuclear Dumping
Ecological Affairs Committee (for British Ecological Society)
Institution of Civil Engineers
Institute of Waste Management
Institute of Physics
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Council for the Protection of Rural Wales
Dounreay Action Group
Friends of the Earth Ltd.
Friends of the Earth—West Cumbria
Green Alliance
Highland Anti-Nuclear Group
Institute for European Environmental Policy

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what vacancies are current or forthcoming on the public interest panel of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee; if meetings of the public interest panel are open to the public; and if there is funding available to facilitate public attendance at these meetings.

Mr. Trippier: The public interest panel has no fixed membership. The chairman invites representatives of environmental organisations to attend, according to the topics on the agenda. The meetings are not open to the public.

Global Warming

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what approximate calculations have been made of the relative importance of car and aircraft emissions in global warming.

Mr. Trippier: The total fuel consumption of road traffic compared with aircraft gives a good approximation to their relative importance in terms of global warming. World figures for 1986 show that aviation accounted for about 12 per cent. by weight of the combined consumption of motor fuel, jet fuel and aviation gasoline.

Housing, Exeter

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what amount he has given his consent for Exeter city council to spend this year on the building of houses from its general fund capital receipt.

Mr. Chope: Under the new system of local authority capital finance local authorities are free to use all their usable capital receipts for capital expenditure on any service and no consents are required.

House Prices

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state *(a)* the average percentage rises in house prices, by region, annually in the last 10 years and *(b)* the current average house price for each region.

Mr. Chope: Dwelling price indices showing the annual change in the prices of houses and flats bought with building society mortgages, and adjusted to take account of the mix of dwellings sold, for the years 1978 to 1988 are in the latest annual volume of "Housing and Construction Statistics—Great Britain" (Table 10.8), a copy of which is in the Library. The corresponding indices for 1989 and the average dwelling prices for the same year are as follows:

	Index 1985 = 100	*Price*[1] *£s*
North	170	37,374
Yorkshire and Humberside	194	41,817
East Midlands	207	49,421
East Anglia	221	64,610
Greater London	203	82,383
South East (excluding Greater London)	216	81,635
South West	219	67,004
West Midlands	219	49,815
North West	184	42,126
England	207	58,458
Wales	193	42,981
Scotland	144	35,394
Northern Ireland	124	30,280
United Kingdom	202	54,846

[1] These are simple average prices of dwellings purchased with building society mortgages, not adjusted for the mix of dwellings. Figures for earlier years are in table 10.11 of the publication referred to.

European Environment Agency

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the establishment of the European Environment Agency.

Mr. Trippier: The EC regulation establishing the agency was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 7 May 1990 but will not come into force until a decision has been taken by the Council on where it is to be located. The agency will not start its work until then.

Dilapidated Buildings

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from *(a)* Eastbourne borough council or *(b)* any other borough or district council that the powers conferred upon local authorities by section 79 of the Building Act 1984 are inadequate; what proposals he has to strengthen those powers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received no such representations. I am not aware of any general feeling that the powers available to local authorities under section 79 of the Building Act 1984 are inadequate and I have no proposals to strengthen those powers.

CITES

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *689*, if he will make a statement regarding his consideration of the World Wide Fund for Nature's request for a contribution towards the costs of the investigation and enforcement officer employed by the CITES secretariat.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The World Wide Fund for Nature's request is still under consideration. I will write to the hon. Member when a decision has been reached.

Local Government Finance

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to take any action to help parish and town councils with the community charge bills because of the loss of income from the business rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Parish and town councils have the same access to the income from business rates as do county and district councils. I see no need for action to change this position.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects those people who have a holiday caravan on a protected site within the meaning of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 to receive the benefits of the changes to the Local Government Finance Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 30 March at column *346*.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), 27 June, *Official Report*, columns *258-59*, whether the quarterly statistical survey referred to will be published, placed in the Library and sent to all individual right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Chope: I am willing to place an analysis of the returns from local authorities in the Library of the House, once sufficient returns have been received. We would also make the analysis available to the local authority associations, but I have no plans to send them to all individual right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he used in reaching his decision to vary from his original proposal the budget reductions required of *(a)* the London borough of Brent, *(b)* the London borough of Southwark and *(c)* the metropolitan borough of Wigan.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* My right hon. Friend's decisions on caps for the 17 authorities, including Brent, Southwark and Wigan, which did not accept the caps which he proposed for them and which put forward alternative amounts within the statutory 28-day period, represent in each case his view of what is achievable and appropriate in the light of all the circumstances of the individual authorities concerned, on the basis of all the information available to him.

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the additional borrowing requirement of local authorities in England and Wales arising as a direct result of late payment and non-payment of the community charge.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* No analysis is available of the separate effects of the many factors which influence the borrowing requirements of local authorities. The indications are that the vast majority of community charge payers are already making payments to their local authorities. However, the Government have paid 25 per cent. of authorities' revenue support grant in the first two months of the financial year to compensate them for any cashflow problems caused by the introduction of the new local government finance system.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the borough or district council element of each community charge in Essex in descending order from the highest to the lowest.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The operation of the collection fund means that the community charge is not split between the councils providing services in each Essex district.

If all authorities had provided a standard level of services the community charge could have been set at £278 throughout Essex, before safety net adjustments. Each additional £1 per community charge payer that a district council raises above the amount needed to provide a standard level of service adds £1 to the community charge in its area. The effect of district councils' 1990-91 budget decisions on community charges in Essex is shown in the table.

	Effect on community charge £
Basildon	+154
Harlow	+113
Thurrock	+75
Brentwood	+73
Southend-on-Sea	+45
Castle Point	+38
Chelmsford	+36
Rochford	+31

	Effect on community charge £
Tendring	+25
Braintree	+16
Epping Forest	+15
Maldon	+5
Colchester	+2
Uttlesford	−3

Notes: The figures for each district show the level of demands on the collection fund minus the standard spending assessment, expressed as an amount per head of relevant population. The standard spending assessment covers services provided by both parish and district councils. For consistency, the effects shown above include parish as well as district council spending.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the future of the Property Services Agency office in Leeds.

Mr. Chope: PSA Services has a number of offices in Leeds, including a regional headquarters, design office, estates office and district works office.

PSA Services is reviewing all its organisation as part of its drive towards greater efficiency and in the light of future business needs.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the reasons for the delay in placing in the Library the letter from his officials to the National Rivers Authority referred to in his answer of 3 July, *Official Report*, column *504*, until 5 July.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The letter was placed in the Library without undue delay and was sent direct to the hon. Member.

Acid House Parties

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations or guidelines his Department has initiated with local authorities concerning acid house parties.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government are supporting a private Member's Bill which would increase the penalties for infringement by party organisers of the licensing laws. The working party on my Department's review of noise has been looking into the problems posed by acid house parties. Subject to its recommendations, my Department with the help of the Home Office will be issuing guidance to local authorities.

Dolphins and Porpoises

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to protect dolphins and porpoises in British waters and internationally.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* All species of cetacean already receive protection through their listing in schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This means that it is an offence to kill, injure, take or sell any wild cetacean.

At the third North sea conference at the Hague, Ministers of states bordering the North sea signed a memorandum of understanding on small cetaceans. The agreement specifies a series of measures to improve our knowledge of the health and status of these species and threats to them and gives a commitment in principle to take appropriate regulatory action where it is clear that human activities are causing damage.

At the meeting of the International Whaling Commission now taking place in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom has fully supported the proposal by New Zealand to bring small whales, dolphins and porpoises within the remit of the commission.

Whales

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that investigations are carried out to establish the causes of death of whales washed up on the British coast.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* I am pleased to announce that the Department of the Environment is commissioning three new research projects which will focus primarily on dolphins and porpoises but will extend as appropriate to other species in the cetacean or whale group. The first project establishes a co-ordinator based at London Zoo to oversee a systematic collection of samples from strandings and to arrange post mortems on appropriate animals. This project will apply to English and Welsh coasts and separate arrangements are being made to establish a similar system in Scotland.

A second contract, co-ordinated by the sea mammal research unit of the Natural Environment Research Council and also involving the British museum of natural history will cover the cost of tissue analysis, particularly for contaminants. A third project, with the United Kingdom Mammal Society, will update and improve information from sightings surveys.

The Department of the Environment is contributing £180,000 to the cost of these projects with additional contributions from the Welsh Office, the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Welsh region of the National Rivers Authority.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on cases of toxic waste sites being in close proximity to underground water supplies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* This is a matter primarily for waste disposal authorities in carrying out their disposal licensing functions under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Prior to their assuming these responsibilities, the Department and Institute of Geological Sciences co-operated with local government and water authorities in 1973-74 on a desk survey of disposal sites which might pose risks to water. The survey results were published in 1975. More recently a list of the sites has been supplied to the National Rivers Authority to assist in its review of groundwater monitoring requirements.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the terms of reference given to Deloittes, in respect of the Crown Suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Deloitte, Haskins and Sells—now known as Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte—was appointed to provide accountancy advice on the sale of the Crown Suppliers in May 1989. I have put the terms of reference for that work in the Library. In addition it has recently been given a commission based on the expansion of some of that work, but the terms of that commission are commercially confidential.

DELOITTE HASKINS AND SELLS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. *Advice on taxation matters relating to the transfer of TCS*
To advise on taxation issues which may require special attention in TCS legislation. To examine the tax consequences of any legislation or administrative action (such as incorporation or capital restructuring) proposed before a sale. To advise on the taxation implications of incorporating and selling TCS, having regard to the effect of taxation on direct sale proceeds and on overall Government revenue.

2. *Accountants' Report*
To prepare long form reports on those activities of TCS indentified by the Secretary of State as being businesses to be privatised.
In addition to the long form reports, to provide abbreviated reports if required for publication in any documents related to the privatisation of TCS which are to be made available to prequalified potential purchasers. These abbreviated reports will draw upon the long form reports rather than present an audit report of prior years. The abbreviated reports will include a reconciliation between the statutory accounts and the accounts of the businesses which are being sold.

3. *Other matters*
To attend as required various meetings leading up to an invitation to bid. Also as required to carry out further work associated with the invitation document(s), including consideration of any accounting matters which might arise in the course of the sale, and reviewing any financial information which is to be released, together with the issue of formal comfort letters.

Rural Areas (Planning)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to review the planning procedures for rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) on 27 June, *Official Report*, column *273*.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent consultations he has held with the Council for the Protection of Rural England on planning issues in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) on 27 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *272*.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those urban development corporations *(a)* which have elected members of the relevant local authorities on their boards and *(b)* which have on their boards elected members of the relevant local authorities nominated by those same local authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: The board of each English urban development corporation normally includes one or more elected members from the local authority, or authorities, in its area. These appointments are made only after consultation with the relevant local authorities. There are currently temporary vacancies for such members of the boards of Leeds, London Docklands and Sheffield development corporations.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Development Education

94. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of funding for development education in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: With schools as a main focus, most of the ODA's information budget is spent on development education, raising public awareness of the interdependence between developed and developing countries. So far in the current financial year over £300,000 of this budget has been committed to specific development education activities.

Guyana

95. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria his Department employs in deciding on the funding of aid projects in Guyana; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Our criteria are Guyana's priority needs and Britain's ability (along with other donors) to help meet these. We have not given financial aid in project form since the capital aid programme was suspended in 1984. The new capital aid programme (begun in 1989) is being used to finance essential imports in connection with Guyana's IMF and World Bank supported macroeconomic reform programme. Our technical co-operation is concentrated on the key areas of training in the United Kingdom and local training for both public administration and the private sector.

Population Growth

96. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution Her Majesty's Government make to international programmes aimed at slowing population growth.

Mrs. Chalker: We are major contributors to the three multilateral population programmes. We also support bilateral projects and programmes and research and teaching at United Kingdom institutions aimed at reducing population growth. Aid programme spending on activities directly related to population concerns has increased from £6·5 million in 1981 to £17·3 million in

1989. We intend to increase the level and quality of this assistance and help promote awareness of population issues within developing and developed countries.

106. **Sir Charles Morrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action his Department is taking to reduce the growth of the world's population; and whether he will make a statement.

113. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution is made through the overseas aid programmes to international efforts to slow population growth.

Mrs. Chalker: We are major contributors to the three multilateral population programmes. We also support bilateral projects and programmes and research and teaching at United Kingdom institutions aimed at reducing population growth. Aid programme spending on activities directly related to population concerns has increased from £6·5 million in 1981 to £17·3 million in 1989. We intend to increase the level and quality of this assistance and help promote awareness of population issues within developing and developed countries.

109. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made, and what action they propose to take, with regard to the United Nations report on estimated world population growth.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Newport West (Mr. Flynn) on 22 June at column *718*.

Third World Debt

97. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives Her Majesty's Government will be proposing at the G7 summit in July to promote debt relief for developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government keep the debt strategy under continuous review, and we are hoping to discuss its achievements and prospects at the summit, with particular attention to the needs of the poorest debtors.

98. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the sufficiency for developing countries of the Toronto plan for the poorest indebted countries.

Mrs. Chalker: The impact of concessional rescheduling on the financing needs of the poorest countries is kept under close review; 17 countries have already benefited, and other creditor Governments have joined us in writing off old aid loans to the poorest.

Southern Africa

99. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the level of aid to the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference's programme by *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other donor countries.

Mrs. Chalker: United Kingdom pledges to the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference's programme total £70 million: information on pledges from other donors is not readily available. In 1988 net bilateral aid to the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference member states from DAC donor countries totalled $2,668·46 million (nearly £1,500 million) of which the United Kingdom provided $247·62 million (£139 million).

124. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Overseas Development Administration has to introduce new initiatives to help black people in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on 19 March at column *431*.

101. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's support to SADCC programmes.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 24 May at column *368*.

128. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has recently had discussions with non-governmental organisations on the subject of aid for people in Southern Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 18 June at column *391*.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the current levels of each of the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference countries' external bilateral debts to the United Kingdom broken down into concessional and non-concessional categories.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on 28 November 1989 at column *200*.

Ethiopia

100. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Ethiopia in respect of food supplies.

102. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent information he has in respect of the famine in Ethiopia.

103. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the famine situation in Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: The situation remains essentially as stated in my replies of 18 June at column *394* to the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), respectively. We have since been pleased to hear that both the Government and rebel sides have agreed to an early visit by United Nations personnel to assess the extent of damage to the port of Massawa and the prospects for reopening it to relief shipments. We await the outcome of the visit with great interest.

Cambodia

104. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has given further consideration to the idea of sending another British delegation to review the situation in Cambodia.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 18 June.

127. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the development needs of Cambodia.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 5 July. Britain is helping to meet the basic humanitarian needs of the people of Cambodia by supporting the projects of British NGOs under the ODA's joint funding scheme and by contributing to the programmes of international agencies.

114. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border.

Mrs. Chalker: There are approximately 300,000 Cambodian displaced persons living in camps administered by the Cambodian resistance factions. The United Nations Border Relief Organisation (UNBRO), other international agencies and NGOs provide humanitarian assistance. In common with other members of the international donor community, the United Kingdom provides financial support for these humanitarian relief activities. Support is channelled through the various relief agencies and is aimed at providing food, water, shelter and medical services for the non-communist groups.

Environmentally Sustainable Development

105. **Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the call in the OECD's development assistance committee 1989 report for a stronger concern for environmentally sustainable development.

Mrs. Chalker: I welcome and endorse the DAC chairman's comment on this point.

Namibia

107. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to help relieve Namibian debt incurred before its independence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) on 3 July.

115. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government are making in support of a substantial beef quota and least-developed country status for Namibia under the Lomé convention.

Mrs. Chalker: We favour generous terms of accession both as regards a beef quota and least-developed country status under the Lomé convention for Namibia. We expect to receive proposals from the Commission shortly.

Development Assistance

108. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of British official development assistance.

Mrs. Chalker: Net official development assistance in 1989 is provisionally estimated at £1,579 million, compared with £1,485 million in 1988.

Caribbean Bananas

110. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what position the Government will be taking towards the Caribbean banana producers when the European single market comes into effect in 1992.

Mrs. Chalker: The European Commission is currently considering the arrangements to apply to bananas post-1992, but has not yet come forward with proposals. We are encouraging the Commission and other member states to ensure that any new arrangements fulfil our commitments to Commonwealth Caribbean suppliers and that they take account of consumer interests, trade policy considerations and the competition and efficiency objectives of the single market initiative.

Environmental Projects

111. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support Her Majesty's Government are giving to proposals by President Mitterrand for a special global environmental facility to finance programmes to tackle environmental problems through the World Bank.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) on 14 May.

123. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any environmental projects or initiatives in the third world have been funded by money additional to the existing aid budget.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain's contribution of up to $15 million to the funding mechanism to help developing countries meet their obligations under the strengthened Montreal protocol will be separate from the aid budget to developing countries. It will form part of a new and separate item in the ODA's expenditure plans.

Hazardous Imports

112. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on efforts by the Overseas Development Administration to build technical expertise and institutional structures within developing countries for the regulation of hazardous imports.

Mrs. Chalker: The ODA has been involved in a number of projects designed to help developing countries to tackle a range of environmental issues associated with hazardous substances. For example in 1988 expert advice was provided to Nigeria on the status and disposal of a toxic

waste dump in Bandel state. I am ready to consider providing further assistance of this kind if so requested by developing countries. To help developing countries to strengthen their capacity to deal with pollution and hazardous substances, amongst other environmental problems, the ODA funds training in the United Kingdom for developing country nationals, for example, in environmental education, environmental pollution control and industrial waste management.

Women (Adult Education)

116. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is given by the Overseas Development Administration to provide adult education for females.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes, we provide such support in a variety of ways: as component parts of ODA projects; through in-country training and training on courses in British institutions; through distance learning; and in joint ventures with non-governmental organisations and in our contribution to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Forestry Projects

117. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the cash limit for the 1990-91 aid programme has been increased in respect of the extra £100 million for forestry projects announced by the Prime Minister in November.

Mrs. Chalker: The planned aid budget for 1990-91 of £1,587 million set out in this year's Public Expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1002) was £75 million higher than the earlier planning figure for 1990-91 set out in Cmd. 602. This covers in part the increased expenditure arising from the Prime Minister's announcement in November 1989 that we aimed to commit a further £100 million on forestry projects over the next three years.

Global Warming

118. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how his Department is measuring the impact of Britain's bilateral aid programme on global warming; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) on 18 June.

121. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives Her Majesty's Government will be proposing at the G7 summit in July to assist developing countries to adapt to global climate change and a rise in the sea level.

125. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives Her Majesty's Government will be proposing at the G7 summit in July to help developing countries implement policies to reduce the growth rate of carbon emissions.

Mrs. Chalker: The summit is an informal meeting between Heads of Government and I cannot predict in advance what will be discussed. However, it is likely that the issue of global warming and developing countries will be debated.

Pesticides

119. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the Government are giving developing countries in their efforts to regulate imports of pesticides.

Mrs. Chalker: The ODA attaches great importance to the promotion of pesticide safety in developing countries and has carried out a wide range of activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of those countries to address pesticide safety issues. For example, last year we helped to fund a training workshop in the United Kingdom for government and parastatal organisations from developing countries on the FAO international code of conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides. I am writing to the hon. Member giving further examples of our activities.

India

120. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of British aid to India in the past 10 years has been spent in projects in the Punjab or Kashmir.

Mrs. Chalker: Statistics for the British aid programme are not collated for the regional distribution of aid within recipient countries.

However, assistance has been offered for projects in both states in response to requests from the Government of India. This includes an aid agreement for £17 million concluded in 1989 for the Uri hydroelectric power station in Kashmir and the offer of aid in connection with a coach factory in the Punjab, as well as technical co-operation projects.

Animal Conservation

122. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding support from Her Majesty's Government for animal conservation schemes.

Mrs. Chalker: We regularly receive such representations, from a wide variety of sources, ranging from interested members of the public to official requests for assistance from NGOs and overseas Governments. No central record of such representations is kept, but recently many have concerned support for elephant and rhino conservation in east Africa. We are already funding a number of such activities and are always ready to consider new requests for help.

Nicaragua

126. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what purposes the recent United Kingdom allocation of £600,000 to Nicaragua will be used.

Mrs. Chalker: The funds will be provided as grant in support of activities crucial to Nicaragua's economic recovery. Specific uses will be agreed with the Nicaraguan authorities shortly.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on what criteria have been used for providing the recently announced £600,000 aid package to Nicaragua.

Mrs. Chalker: We decided to provide this aid to assist the new, democratically elected government of Senora Chamorro in its efforts to revive the Nicaraguan economy.

South-East Asia

129. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's aid to Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government are supporting British NGO activities in both Cambodia and Vietnam. We are also funding humanitarian aid programmes administered by international agencies in Vietnam. We have no bilateral aid programme to Laos. In Thailand we have a technical co-operation programme of about £1·5 million per year, focused mainly on the provision of training awards and English language teaching. Financial aid is also available to Thailand under the aid and trade provision.

Aid Budget

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the relative trends in the British aid budget since 1979 and that of other G7 countries.

Mrs. Chalker: The level of net official development assistance since 1979 of the United Kingdom and other G7 countries is as follows:

Net official development assistance from G7 countries 1979—1989 (£ million)

Country	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
United Kingdom	1,016	798	1,081	1,028	1,063	1,070	1,184	1,185	1,160	1,485	1,577
Canada	498	462	586	684	942	1,216	1,258	1,156	1,150	1,318	1,289
France	1,626	1,789	2,060	2,305	2,515	2,835	3,082	3,482	3,982	3,854	4,715
Germany	1,599	1,533	1,569	1,801	2,094	2,082	2,269	2,613	2,679	2,656	3,152
Italy	129	294	328	463	550	848	847	1,639	1,596	1,793	2,007
Japan	1,265	1,441	1,564	1,727	2,479	3,232	2,929	3,842	4,080	5,128	5,794
United States of America	2,208	3,069	2,851	4,686	5,327	6,518	7,253	6,523	5,458	5,693	4,490

El Salvador

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial assistance Her Majesty's Government have provided to the Government of El Salvador between 1984 and 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: Between 1984 and 1988 we provided bilaterally £1 million of financial aid, all for disaster relief; and £113,000 of technical co-operation. The provisional figures for 1989 are £140,000 (disaster relief) and £4,000 (technical co-operation). European Community aid commitments in 1984-89 totalled 45·79 million ecu; expenditure in 1984-88 was 8·3 million ecu; the United Kingdom share of this aid is about 20 per cent.

Chile

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have considered granting financial help towards the newly established solidarity and social investment fund in Chile, along with other European Governments.

Mrs. Chalker: We have a bilateral technical co-operation programme for Chile which we have recently decided to increase. We have given careful consideration to the Chilean Government's request for further bilateral assistance, but have had to conclude that we cannot help.

We also assist Chile through multilateral channels such as the World Bank and European Community action; in 1988 expenditure on Chile by the EC amounted to just under £1 million, of which the United Kingdom share is about 20 per cent.

Environmental Conference, Japan

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects it is proposed to discuss at the conference the Minister for Overseas Development is attending in Japan on the environment, in relation to Japanese treatment of the rain forest.

Mrs. Chalker: Development Ministers visiting Japan for the annual Tidewater meeting will discuss a wide range of current and development issues, including the environment.

Zambia

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what provisions Her Majesty's Government have made to cancel Zambia's aid debt.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told the House on 5 April at column *734*, as part of our support for Zambia's present programme of structural adjustment and economic reform we have offered to reschedule all repayments, totalling some £12·85 million, of aid debt due from Zambia in the current (1990-91) United Kingdom financial year. These include accumulated arrears since Zambia ceased to service its aid loans in 1987. We hope to finalise the arrangements shortly.

Mozambique

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is considering making additional funds available for refugees and displaced people in Mozambique.

Mrs. Chalker: I announced in April a grant of £3·5 million and 10,000 tonnes of food aid for displaced persons within Mozambique. The £3·5 million will be used for basic relief supplies, seeds and food.

I also announced in June a further £3 million, in response to an appeal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for Mozambican refugees in Malawi and other neighbouring countries. I will continue to monitor the situation in Mozambique very carefully.

Angola

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make further funds available in addition to the £500,000 British emergency aid so far given to help fight the Angolan famine; and what other action he intends taking to help reconstruction in that country.

Mrs. Chalker: Since September 1989 I have announced two pledges totalling £1 million for relief in Angola. Detailed discussions with the Angolan authorities and international and British relief agencies have been necessary because of the very difficult logistical and organisational problems present in Angola. All of the first £500,000, and £240,000 from the second pledge, has now been allocated to specific requirements. We are ready to allocate the remainder as it becomes possible to do so. Reconstruction is unlikely to be possible on a large scale until the fighting has stopped.

Kenyan National Parks

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply of 7 June, *Official Report*, column 677, if he has now completed agreement with the Kenyan Wildlife Service on the communications project in the Tsavo and Meru national parks; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The agreement with the Kenyan Wildlife Service on the communications project has not yet been signed, but we hope to conclude formalities very soon.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

International Development and the Environment

76. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans the Government have to increase spending on education in the United Kingdom on international development and environmental issues.

Mrs. Rumbold: In England it is for individual local education authorities, schools, and further and higher education institutions to determine the resources to be devoted to education on international development and environmental issues.

School Psychological Service

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether costs related to the school psychological service will be passed to individual schools to be met under their local management of schools budgets.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Under local management of schools it is for individual local education authorities to decide whether to delegate the costs of the school psychological service to individual schools or to retain those costs centrally. All LEAs have chosen to retain some of the costs centrally, and most are retaining all the costs.

GCSE

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider establishing machinery to monitor examining in GCSE English language and literature by public examining bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The School Examinations and Assessment Council is responsible under section 14(4)(a) of the Education Reform Act 1988 for keeping all aspects of examinations and assessment under review. In addition to this my right hon. Friend has responsibility under section 4(2)(c) of the Education Reform Act 1988 for determining arrangements in connection with the assessment of the national curriculum. We have every confidence that the arrangements being made by the GCSE examining groups for the examination of English following the introduction of the national curriculum will build on and improve those at present in force.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the sitting dates for GCSE examinations.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received nearly 50 representations from head teachers and others about the GCSE timetable. The joint council for the GCSE is preparing to consult a sample of centres offering the GCSE about this matter. My right hon. Friend will expect to discuss with it the outcomes of the consultation.

Education, London

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the cost in each London education authority of providing a school place for each child between five and 11 years of age; and what is the additional cost deemed necessary for each child with special needs in *(a)* a special school and *(b)* an integrated unit of a school for children under 11 years;

(2) what is the cost in each London education authority of providing a place for each student between 11 and 18 years; and what additional cost is deemed necessary for each child with special needs in *(a)* a special school and *(b)* integrated unit in a secondary school.

Mrs. Rumbold: The available information is contained in the table. It shows net institutional expenditure for each type of school in 1988-89. Local education authority expenditure returns to the Department of the Environment do not give separate figures for the education of pupils in integrated units in ordinary schools, or for different age ranges within special schools.

Net institutional expenditure per pupil[1] 1988-89 cash terms

Local education authority[2]	*Maintained nursery and primary schools* £	*Maintained secondary schools* £	*Maintained special schools*[4] £
Barking	1,255	1,970	7,680
Barnet	1,250	1,820	7,070
Bexley	1,100	1,685	5,845

Local education authority[2]	Maintained nursery and primary schools £	Maintained secondary schools £	Maintained special schools[4] £
Brent	1,375	2,305	6,945
Bromley	1,165	1,770	5,725
Croydon	1,180	2,040	5,935
Ealing	[3]n/a	[3]n/a	[3]n/a
Enfield	1,110	1,715	6,210
Haringey	[3]n/a	[3]n/a	[3]n/a
Harrow	1,115	1,740	9,795
Havering	1,095	1,860	6,475
Hillingdon	1,195	1,870	4,870
Hounslow	1,270	1,895	6,555
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,175	1,900	5,625
Merton	1,210	1,660	9,035
Newham	1,360	2,140	6,700
Redbridge	1,070	1,735	5,775
Richmond-upon-Thames	1,180	1,640	5,020
Sutton	1,095	1,630	4,990
Waltham Forest	[3]n/a	[3]n/a	[3]n/a
ILEA	1,610	2,510	8,820

[1] Net institutional expenditure includes the costs of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection, debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.
[2] The figures are based on LEA expenditure returns to DOE and pupil number returns to DES.
[3] n/a denotes that an expenditure return has not been received from the LEA.
[4] Spending on special schools will vary according to the learning difficulties catered for, the pupils' disabilities, and the pattern of provision in each LEA.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have recently applied for grant-maintained status.

Mrs. Rumbold: The governing bodies of 17 schools published proposals for grant-maintained status during the first six months of this year.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out a list of local education authorities, indicating for each authority *(a)* the number of schools which qualify for application for award of grant-maintained status, *(b)* how many have applied for a ballot, *(c)* in how many the ballot has been successful, *(d)* in how many the ballot has been unsuccessful, *(e)* how many have submitted an application to him, *(f)* how many applications have been agreed, *(g)* how many applications have been declined, *(h)* how many schools have achieved grant-maintained status, and *(i)* how many, including those in *(h)*, will have achieved that status by September.

Mrs. Rumbold: It will take a long time to put together the information. I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

TVEI

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department is carrying out any current evaluation of the educational impact of the technical and vocational education initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department of Employment Training Agency is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the technical and vocational education initiative. Her Majesty's inspectorate does, however, inspect TVEI in the schools and colleges and a number of those reports have been published; HMI will be carrying out two surveys focusing on TVEI provision for 16 to 19-year-olds in the forthcoming academic year.

PRIME MINISTER

Diego Garcia

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit Mauritius in order to ascertain from the Ilois people whether they wish to return to Diego Garcia in the changed military circumstances.

The Prime Minister: No. Those concerned worked on the former copra plantations in the Chagos Archipelago. After the plantations closed between 1971 and 1973 they and their families were resettled in Mauritius and given considerable financial assistance. Their future now lies in Mauritius. The defence facilities in British Indian Ocean Territory continue to make a vital security contribution.

Manchester Olympic Committee

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what specific steps she and the Government are taking in support of the Manchester Olympic Committee's bid to stage the Olympic Games in 1996; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government wholeheartedly support Manchester's bid to host the 1996 Olympic Games and have offered the bid team whatever promotional help they can. I have made our support very clear both in correspondence with His Excellency Juan Samaranch, President of the International Olympic Committee, and in statements to the House.

In addition, the Government have provided Manchester with the necessary assurances required by the Olympic charter, and will pay full regard to the Olympic rules and byelaws and do all within their powers to facilitate entry and freedom of movement to members of the Olympic family. My hon. Friend the Minister for Sport has met the bid team, visited Manchester to meet an International Olympic Committee evaluation team and attended a dinner in honour of 10 International Olympic Committee members hosted by the British Olympic

Association. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has written to International Olympic Committee members endorsing the bid and our posts overseas are supporting the bid team in their lobbying efforts.

Adult Basic Education

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Prime Minister what investigation has been undertaken to assess the relative spending on adult basic education in Scotland with that in England and Wales; and with what findings.

The Prime Minister: Overall comparisons between Scotland and England and Wales are not practicable because it is not possible in Scotland separately to distinguish between spending by local authorities on adult basic education from spending on community education generally.

Urban Aid

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Prime Minister what current urban aid programmes involve provision for ethnic minorities.

The Prime Minister: The urban programmes for England, Wales and Scotland all make provision for ethnic minorities as one of the priority groups to be helped in the inner cities. Local authorities are required to ensure that the needs of ethnic minorities are being met when submitting their bids for urban programme resources.

Open Learning Centres

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Prime Minister how much the Scottish Education Department gives to open learning centres.

The Prime Minister: The Scottish Education Department provided a grant of £29,500 in 1988-89, £35,000 in 1989-90 and £40,000 in 1990-91 to assist with the running costs of the Whitfield open learning centre in Dundee.

ENERGY

Oil Rig Abandonment

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column 350, to the hon. Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), if he will make a statement on further monitoring of the oil rig abandonment programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall shortly be writing to Occidental Petroleum (Caledonia) Ltd. and its co-venturers to inform them about further work they will be required to carry out under the abandonment programme for Piper Alpha. When I have done so, I will inform the House.

Nuclear Power (Privatisation)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of all correspondence between Kleinwort Benson and his Department regarding the feasibility and costs to public expenditure of privatising nuclear power generation.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Oil Rigs

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation requiring the segregation of production and accommodation quarters on British oil rigs in the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Existing legislation provides comprehensive controls over the design and construction of offshore installations. This requires, among other things, that accommodation should be placed and constructed so as to afford protection to persons on the installation, and that the certifying authority should carry out an independent assessment of the design and method of construction of the installation.

DEFENCE

Polish Resettlement Act 1947

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence further to his reply on 11 May, *Official Report*, column *212*, when he now expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight of 3 April on the Polish Resettlement Act 1947.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces indicated in his letter of 24 April to the hon. Member, this is a complex issue which involves archive research and consultation with a number of other Government Departments. Unfortunately this process is taking longer than we had hoped, but my noble Friend will give a substantive reply to the hon. Member as soon as he is in a position to do so.

Transmitter, Glen Garry

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the bodies consulted by his Department on the proposed extremely low-frequency transmitter in Glen Garry.

Mr. Neubert: The following have been consulted at various times:

1. Forestry Commission (local and regional).
2. West Highland Estates.
3. Nature Conservancy Council.
4. Countryside Commission for Scotland.
5. Lochaber district council.
6. Highland regional council.
7. Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which company is conducting the environmental impact assessment of the proposed extremely low-frequency transmitter in Glen Garry; on what date the contract was awarded; what is the value of the contract; and what is the contracted completion date for the assessment.

Mr. Neubert: A contract for preliminary work, including an assessment of environmental impact, was awarded to W. A. Fairhurst and Partners of Newcastle on 14 November 1989. The value of the contract is a matter of commercial confidentiality. It is expected that this work will be completed by the end of this year. A formal notice

of proposed development, together with an environmental impact assessment, will be submitted to Highland regional council at the appropriate time, if it is decided to proceed.

Valiant Submarines

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress in checking the reactor equipment of Valiant class submarines following the discovery of faults earlier this year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The programme of inspections of our nuclear powered submarines is continuing.

Low-frequency Communications

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent on the extremely low-frequency communications programme in each year since 1979; and what is the projected expenditure for the next three years.

Mr. Neubert: It is not our practice to identify separately spending on individual research projects.

Diego Garcia

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to review the use of the base on Diego Garcia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Exercise Teamwork 90

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nature of NATO's exercise Teamwork 90, planned for September; where in Scotland it will take place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Teamwork 90 is a NATO maritime exercise to be held in the North Atlantic and in the waters off Norway from 6 to 23 September 1990. The exercise is designed to train NATO's maritime forces, including amphibious and air forces, to defend and operate in this geographically demanding area.

The exercise will involve some activity at RAF stations in Scotland and in Scottish waters.

Military Salaries

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the percentage change in real terms in the annual amount of Government expenditure on military salaries between (i) 1969 and 1979 (ii) 1979 and 1989;

(2) what is the percentage change in real terms in the pay upon appointment of *(a)* a field marshal, *(b)* major generals, *(c)* colonels, *(d)* captains, *(e)* second lieutenants, *(f)* sergeants, *(g)* corporals, and *(h)* privates, between (i) 1969 and 1979 and (ii) 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The military salary in its current form was not introduced until 1970 and it would not therefore be realistic to provide comparisons from before that date. Comparisons for the two 10-year periods commencing with the financial year 1970-71 are therefore provided.

The real changes in rates of pay were:

	Financial year 1970-71 to financial year 1979-80 per cent.	*Financial year 1979-80 to financial year 1988-89 per cent.*
Field Marshal	−24·3	+ 86·4
Major General	−30·5	+44·5
Colonel	−12·1	+29·7
Captain	−4·8	+21·9
2nd Lieutenant	−13·6	+13·1
Sergeant	+9·0	11·9
Corporal	+10·7	+9·0
Private	+11·0	−4·0

Government expenditure on military salaries for the corresponding periods showed a drop of 2·8 per cent. in real terms between financial year 1970-71 and financial year 1979-80 and an increase of 13·4 per cent. in real terms between financial year 1979-80 and financial year 1988-89.

Services (Recruitment)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many men and women were recruited into the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force in each financial year since 1969; and how many left each of the services prematurely.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* Information on intake and premature wastage in the years before 1971-72 is not available in the form requested. The total intakes to the United Kingdom regular forces in each financial year since 1971-72 are shown in table 1 below. The total numbers of exits from the services under premature wastage outflow categories during the same period are shown in table 2. The categories included in the outflow numbers are those listed in table 4.18 of volume 2 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates (Cm. 1022-11) with the exception of "Time and age expires or exercise of rights at option point" and for service women only "By exercise of right to give 18 months notice". Individual service officer premature outflow figures for 1989-90 have been amended from those given in the answer to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on 5 June at columns *426-28* which, regrettably, contained a number of errors in compilation.

Table 1
Intake to United Kingdom Regular Forces from civilian life

	Total number	*Males*			*Females*		
		Total	*Officers*	*Servicemen*	*Total*	*Officers*	*Servicewomen*
All Services							
1971-72	55,454	48,876	2,378	46,498	6,578	392	6,186
1972-73	46,324	41,007	1,989	39,018	5,317	359	4,958
1973-74	32,433	27,722	1,921	25,801	4,711	316	4,395
1974-75	42,236	36,852	1,890	34,962	5,384	273	5,111
1975-76	46,906	41,686	1,882	39,804	5,220	253	4,967
1976-77	40,244	36,390	2,007	34,383	3,854	320	3,534
1977-78	38,237	34,188	1,957	32,231	4,049	297	3,752

	Total number	Males			Females		
		Total	Officers	Servicemen	Total	Officers	Servicewomen
1978-79	43,366	38,774	2,110	36,664	4,592	280	4,312
1979-80	50,652	46,206	2,547	43,659	4,446	333	4,113
1980-81	50,488	46,693	2,924	43,769	3,795	409	3,386
1981-82	22,607	21,188	2,319	18,869	1,419	282	1,137
1982-83	21,647	19,342	2,136	17,206	2,305	232	2,073
1983-84	36,991	33,760	2,544	31,216	3,231	305	2,926
1984-85	34,721	32,076	2,716	29,360	2,645	300	2,345
1985-86	32,651	30,407	2,799	27,608	2,244	327	1,917
1986-87	34,049	31,147	2,920	28,227	2,902	360	2,542
1987-88	33,826	31,215	2,548	28,667	2,611	362	2,249
1988-89	33,863	30,862	2,262	28,600	3,001	361	2,640
1989-90	36,412	32,337	2,599	29,738	4,075	376	3,699
Royal Navy							
1971-72	10,846	9,667	492	9,175	1,179	51	1,128
1972-73	11,034	9,865	536	9,329	1,169	67	1,102
1973-74	8,065	6,983	493	6,490	1,082	60	1,022
1974-75	9,802	8,723	470	8,253	1,079	42	1,037
1975-76	8,910	7,732	488	7,244	1,178	35	1,143
1976-77	8,195	7,238	485	6,753	957	34	923
1977-78	7,167	6,269	487	5,782	898	42	856
1978-79	6,791	5,978	533	5,445	813	27	786
1979-80	8,526	7,701	649	7,052	825	22	803
1980-81	9,088	8,130	685	7,445	958	47	911
1981-82	3,805	3,353	400	2,953	452	18	434
1982-83	3,584	3,078	395	2,683	506	13	493
1983-84	4,785	4,223	445	3,778	562	8	554
1984-85	4,582	4,231	537	3,694	351	14	337
1985-86	4,276	3,987	568	3,419	289	32	257
1986-87	5,336	4,791	592	4,199	545	36	509
1987-88	5,181	4,601	455	4,146	580	26	554
1988-89	5,298	4,598	484	4,114	700	31	669
1989-90	5,556	4,696	516	4,180	860	42	818
Royal Marines							
1971-72	Included in Royal Navy figures						
1972-73							
1973-74							
1974-75							
1975-76	1,154	1,154	46	1,108	—	—	—
1976-77	929	929	46	883	—	—	—
1977-78	903	903	48	855	—	—	—
1978-79	1,282	1,282	51	1,231	—	—	—
1979-80	1,676	1,676	42	1,634	—	—	—
1980-81	1,674	1,674	69	1,605	—	—	—
1981-82	699	699	52	647	—	—	—
1982-83	447	447	28	419	—	—	—
1983-84	447	447	33	414	—	—	—
1984-85	954	954	43	911	—	—	—
1985-86	1,093	1,093	65	1,028	—	—	—
1986-87	1,233	1,233	62	1,171	—	—	—
1987-88	991	991	53	938	—	—	—
1988-89	937	937	43	894	—	—	—
1989-90	1,063	1,063	45	1,018	—	—	—
Army							
1971-72	34,303	31,298	865	30,433	3,005	180	2,825
1972-73	28,862	26,484	750	25,734	2,378	172	2,206
1973-74	17,554	15,310	822	14,488	2,244	157	2,087
1974-75	24,264	22,041	997	21,044	2,223	134	2,089
1975-76	29,591	27,238	1,096	26,142	2,353	145	2,208
1976-77	24,088	22,344	1,003	21,341	1,744	134	1,610
1977-78	22,550	20,868	1,020	19,848	1,682	149	1,533
1978-79	25,254	23,528	1,021	22,507	1,726	156	1,570
1979-80	29,189	27,164	1,127	26,037	2,025	154	1,871
1980-81	28,871	27,241	1,285	25,956	1,630	204	1,426
1981-82	14,204	13,603	1,198	12,405	601	148	453
1982-83	13,071	11,679	1,157	10,522	1,392	132	1,260
1983-84	22,348	20,811	1,295	19,516	1,537	173	1,364
1984-85	22,278	20,914	1,435	19,479	1,364	160	1,204
1985-86	20,268	19,173	1,374	17,799	1,095	151	944
1986-87	19,918	18,718	1,362	17,356	1,200	154	1,046
1987-88	21,041	19,895	1,254	18,641	1,146	148	998
1988-89	21,348	19,921	1,150	18,771	1,427	147	1,280
1989-90	22,084	20,398	1,377	19,021	1,686	177	1,509
Royal Air Force							

	Total number	Males			Females		
		Total	Officers	Servicemen	Total	Officers	Servicewomen
1971-72	10,305	7,911	1,021	6,890	2,394	161	2,233
1972-73	6,428	4,658	703	3,955	1,770	120	1,650
1973-74	6,814	5,429	606	4,823	1,385	99	1,286
1974-75	8,170	6,088	423	5,665	2,082	97	1,985
1975-76	7,251	5,562	252	5,310	1,689	73	1,616
1976-77	7,032	5,879	473	5,406	1,153	152	1,001
1977-78	7,617	6,148	402	5,746	1,469	106	1,363
1978-79	10,039	7,986	505	7,481	2,053	97	1,956
1979-80	11,261	9,665	729	8,936	1,596	157	1,439
1980-81	10,855	9,648	885	8,763	1,207	158	1,049
1981-82	3,899	3,533	669	2,864	366	116	250
1982-83	4,545	4,138	556	3,582	407	87	320
1983-84	9,411	8,279	771	7,508	1,132	124	1,008
1984-85	6,907	5,977	701	5,276	930	126	804
1985-86	7,014	6,154	792	5,362	860	144	716
1986-87	7,562	6,405	904	5,501	1,157	170	987
1987-88	6,613	5,728	786	4,942	885	188	697
1988-89	6,280	5,406	585	4,821	874	183	691
1989-90	7,709	6,180	661	5,519	1,529	157	1,372

Table 2
Premature outflow from United Kingdom regular forces

Number

	Total	Males Total	Officers	Servicemen	Females Total	Officers	Servicemen
All Services							
1971-72	33,822	28,806	1,950	26,856	5,016	245	4,771
1972-73	34,248	29,324	2,136	27,188	4,924	233	4,691
1973-74	31,164	26,624	2,355	24,269	4,540	215	4,325
1974-75	32,764	28,406	1,953	26,453	4,358	194	4,164
1975-76	30,089	26,259	2,433	23,826	3,830	188	3,642
1976-77	29,121	25,733	2,599	23,134	3,388	176	3,212
1977-78	30,951	27,810	2,707	25,103	3,141	168	2,973
1978-79	33,702	30,544	2,570	27,974	3,158	159	2,999
1979-80	30,861	28,068	2,098	25,970	2,793	146	2,647
1980-81	25,313	22,884	1,810	21,074	2,429	144	2,285
1981-82	18,932	16,905	1,948	14,957	2,027	170	1,857
1982-83	16,838	14,879	1,971	12,908	1,959	142	1,817
1983-84	19,330	17,413	2,096	15,317	1,917	139	1,778
1984-85	21,422	19,488	2,088	17,400	1,934	136	1,798
1985-86	22,407	20,413	2,303	18,110	1,994	150	1,844
1986-87	21,901	19,911	2,286	17,625	1,990	152	1,838
1987-88	22,474	20,383	2,191	18,192	2,091	153	1,938
1988-89	24,251	22,452	2,187	20,265	1,799	162	1,637
1989-90	27,184	25,006	2,460	22,546	2,178	184	1,994
Royal Navy							
1971-72	6,050	5,218	415	4,803	832	42	790
1972-73	7,396	6,533	551	5,982	863	53	810
1973-74	5,875	5,004	378	4,626	871	40	831
1974-75	6,698	5,901	430	5,471	797	50	747
1975-76	5,549	4,688	375	4,313	861	37	824
1976-77	5,038	4,278	388	3,890	760	35	725
1977-78	5,138	4,437	491	3,946	701	35	666
1978-79	7,305	6,584	457	6,127	721	36	685
1979-80	7,073	6,497	442	6,055	576	20	556
1980-81	5,675	5,092	387	4,705	583	24	559
1981-82	4,275	3,864	409	3,455	411	31	380
1982-83	3,004	2,635	406	2,229	369	30	339
1983-84	3,448	3,007	473	2,534	441	44	397
1984-85	3,786	3,394	329	3,065	392	17	375
1985-86	4,700	4,344	369	3,975	356	17	339
1986-87	4,702	4,332	380	3,952	370	17	353
1987-88	4,145	3,760	389	3,371	385	20	365
1988-89	4,091	3,747	409	3,338	344	17	327
1989-90	4,963	4,576	469	4,107	387	21	366
Royal Marines							
1971-72	930	930	33	897	—	—	—
1972-73	997	997	39	958	—	—	—
1973-74	1,075	1,075	38	1,037	—	—	—
1974-75	1,134	1,134	40	1,094	—	—	—
1975-76	843	843	38	805	—	—	—
1976-77	728	728	38	690	—	—	—
1977-78	889	889	42	847	—	—	—

	Total	Males Total	Officers	Servicemen	Females Total	Officers	Servicemen
1978-79	1,100	1,100	43	1,057	—	—	—
1979-80	1,344	1,344	28	1,316	—	—	—
1980-81	1,123	1,123	27	1,096	—	—	—
1981-82	573	573	37	536	—	—	—
1982-83	434	434	33	401	—	—	—
1983-84	492	492	37	455	—	—	—
1984-85	658	658	33	625	—	—	—
1985-86	809	809	36	773	—	—	—
1986-87	831	831	39	792	—	—	—
1987-88	777	777	27	750	—	—	—
1988-89	766	766	38	728	—	—	—
1989-90	834	834	48	786	—	—	—
Army							
1971-72	20,953	18,718	913	17,805	2,235	92	2,143
1972-73	19,523	17,341	833	16,508	2,182	72	2,110
1973-74	16,613	14,561	818	13,743	2,052	96	1,956
1974-75	18,311	16,362	701	15,661	1,949	57	1,892
1975-76	17,379	15,757	1,047	14,710	1,622	79	1,543
1976-77	17,383	15,947	1,202	14,745	1,436	70	1,366
1977-78	19,039	17,704	1,432	16,272	1,335	71	1,264
1978-79	20,659	19,349	1,522	17,827	1,310	67	1,243
1979-80	17,471	16,244	1,180	15,064	1,227	85	1,142
1980-81	14,366	13,354	1,013	12,341	1,012	66	946
1981-82	10,852	9,904	1,051	8,853	948	67	881
1982-83	10,061	9,106	1,025	8,081	955	58	897
1983-84	12,025	11,165	1,133	10,032	860	43	817
1984-85	13,126	12,186	1,205	10,981	940	66	874
1985-86	12,680	11,657	1,335	10,322	1,023	76	947
1986-87	12,343	11,401	1,287	10,114	942	49	893
1987-88	13,508	12,492	1,256	11,236	1,016	65	951
1988-89	14,233	13,490	1,139	12,351	743	58	685
1989-90	15,267	14,393	1,332	13,061	874	71	803
Royal Air Force							
1971-72	5,889	3,940	589	3,351	1,949	111	1,838
1972-73	6,332	4,453	713	3,740	1,879	108	1,771
1973-74	7,601	5,984	1,121	4,863	1,617	79	1,538
1974-75	6,621	5,009	782	4,227	1,612	87	1,525
1975-76	6,318	4,971	973	3,998	1,347	72	1,275
1976-77	5,972	4,780	971	3,809	1,192	71	1,121
1977-78	5,885	4,780	742	4,038	1,105	62	1,043
1978-79	4,638	3,511	548	2,963	1,127	56	1,071
1979-80	4,973	3,983	448	3,535	990	41	949
1980-81	4,149	3,315	383	2,932	834	54	780
1981-82	3,232	2,564	451	2,113	668	72	596
1982-83	3,339	2,704	507	2,197	635	54	581
1983-84	3,365	2,749	453	2,296	616	52	564
1984-85	3,852	3,250	521	2,729	602	53	549
1985-86	4,218	3,603	563	3,040	615	57	558
1986-87	4,025	3,347	580	2,767	678	86	592
1987-88	4,044	3,354	519	2,835	690	68	622
1988-89	5,161	4,449	601	3,848	712	87	625
1989-90	6,120	5,203	611	4,592	917	92	825

Outflow of United Kingdom Regular Forces: by category

Number

	Financial years					*1 April—31 December*	
	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1988*	*1989*
All Services	34,554	36,521	36,961	36,938	39,278	28,964	31,987
Male officers	3,194	3,388	3,258	3,374	3,369	2,643	2,865
Commissioned officers	2,577	2,678	2,492	2,690	2,747	2,168	2,272
Time and age expiries or exercise of right at option point	1,106	1,085	972	1,183	1,182	898	942
Premature release at own request[1]	1,094	1,223	1,121	1,154	1,160	969	1,044
Redundancies	10	7	6	—	—	—	—
Medical reasons and deaths	104	110	106	91	110	89	77
Unsatisfactory, disciplinary and other reasons	263	253	287	262	295	212	209

	Financial years					1 April—31 December	
	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1988	1989
Officers designate	617	710	766	684	622	475	593
At own request	73	119	127	110	128	95	101
Medical reasons and deaths	12	8	26	20	9	6	25
Other reasons	532	583	613	554	485	374	456
Servicemen	28,901	30,493	30,936	30,680	33,187	24,304	26,846
Before completion of 6 months service	5,925	5,437	6,299	6,535	6,676	4,844	5,629
By exercise of right	4,009	3,863	4,414	4,372	4,716	3,379	3,828
Unsatisfactory, disciplinary and other reasons	1,695	1,429	1,721	2,030	1,799	1,350	1,637
Medical reasons and deaths	215	144	161	132	157	114	154
Compassionate release	6	1	3	1	4	1	10
After completion of 6 months service	22,976	25,056	24,637	24,145	26,511	19,460	21,217
Time and age expiries or exercise of right at option point	11,501	12,383	13,311	12,488	12,922	9,556	9,927
Premature release at own request[1]	6,113	7,215	6,742	7,052	8,774	6,275	7,651
Redundancies	422	505	147	26	—	—	—
Unsatisfactory, disciplinary and other reasons	3,538	3,379	3,067	3,182	3,165	2,382	2,260
Medical reasons and deaths	1,194	1,408	1,197	1,254	1,479	1,122	1,229
Compassionate release	208	166	173	143	171	125	150
Female officers[2]	298	351	334	328	335	259	251
Time and age expiries or exercise of right at option point	162	201	182	175	173	135	114
At own request	108	110	120	120	129	102	112
Medical reasons and deaths	12	3	7	5	7	4	6
Unsatisfactory, disciplinary and other reasons	16	37	25	28	26	18	19
Servicewomen	2,161	2,289	2,433	2,556	2,387	1,758	2,025
Time and age expiries or exercise of right at option point	58	96	136	167	164	119	124
By exercise of right to give 18 months notice	305	349	459	451	486	351	425
At own request	307	296	373	358	391	279	407
Marriage, pregnancy	1,261	1,325	1,171	1,247	1,079	822	833
Unsatisfactory, disciplinary and other reasons	185	182	237	267	210	151	174
Medical reasons and deaths	41	36	53	61	50	32	58
Compassionate release	4	5	4	5	7	4	4

[1] The numbers shown as premature release at own request, for both officers and servicemen, relate only to trained personnel.
[2] As the numbers for female officers designate are small, they have been included in those for female officers.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gifts

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what procedure exists for documenting gifts received from foreign powers; and what becomes of them.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office follows well-established and recognised procedures, applying to both Ministers and officials, for dealing with the receipt of gifts.

These are that either:

(i) the gift may be placed on the inventory of the British mission concerned or the Foreign Commonwealth Office as appropriate; or
(ii) it may be given to another appropriate institution, eg a museum, or
(iii) the direct recipient may either keep or buy the gift depending on its value; or
(iv) it may be disposed of by public auction.

In all cases, the receipt and eventual disposal of the gift is recorded centrally within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Administrative Grade

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the number of persons recruited to the administrative level of the Foreign Office *(a)* in the past year, *(b)* on average each year during the past decade and *(c)* on average each year during the previous decade; and how many he intends should be recruited in the coming year.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have recruited the following number of persons into the administrative level of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

	Number
(a) In the past year	19
(b) On average each year during the past decade	20·5
(c) on average during the previous decade	19

Our recruitment target for 1990 is 30.

Diego Garcia

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will discuss with the United States the future of the Diego Garcia base in the

British Indian Ocean Territory, and the possibility of the Ilois people, living in Mauritius, being given the chance of returning home.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The defence facilities in British Indian ocean territory continue to make a vital security contribution. The former plantation workers were resettled in Mauritius in the early 1970s and their future lies there.

Armoured Personnel Carriers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department made of the human rights implications when it was consulted about the sale of 24 Shorts Shortland S55 armoured personnel carriers to Pakistan's Sind police.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our custom to give information on specific sales, but the hon. Member can be assured that the human rights implications of any such contract would be carefully considered along with the full range of other issues.

Ivory

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to negotiate a purchase on behalf of Her Majesty's Government of all stocks of elephant ivory held in Hong Kong by traders after midnight on 16 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Visas

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will show the cost charged for a visa to intending visitors to the United Kingdom from each country in eastern Europe, each Commonwealth country and the United States of America; and what requirements are made of such applicants with regard to proof of financial self-support.

Mr. Sainsbury: The standard worldwide fee for a United Kingdom visitors visa is £20, payable in local currency. This fee is charged to all eastern European visa nationals and to applicants from the following Commonwealth countries:

Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Visitors from the United States of America do not require visas.

Applicants for visit visas must show that they are able to meet their living expenses in the United Kingdom. Proof of an applicant's ability to support himself can take the form of cash, travellers cheques, letters of credit or other similar bank guarantees. Where the major costs of a visit are to be borne by the host in this country evidence of the sponsor's ability to do so is required. Copies of bank statements, building society or other savings accounts, or a bank letter confirming the sponsor's financial standing are all acceptable for this purpose.

Israel

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Israeli Foreign Minister to discuss United Kingdom-Israeli relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to meet the new Israeli Foreign Minister before too long. We regularly discuss the peace process with the Israelis. They are well aware of our view that a direct dialogue between Israel and representative Palestinians is needed soon as a first step towards an overall settlement.

Romania

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will reply to the letter of 9 May from Mr. and Mrs. B. O. Smith of 208 Sheffield Road, Killamarsh, Sheffield, concerning contacts with the British embassy in Bucharest.

Mr. Waldegrave: My private secretary replied to Mr. and Mrs. Smith's letter on 5 July. I regret the delay. Her Majesty's embassy in Bucharest is aware of Mr. and Mrs. Smith's interest in adopting a Romanian child and will assist them as much as possible.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the aid provided to Romania by the International Red Cross since 1 March; and if he will publish it in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 11 June]:* The information is not available for the precise period requested by the hon. Member. However, I understand that between 1 February and 25 June, contributions to the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' aid programme to Romania totalled approximately £11·6 million. This figure does not reflect numerous donations for which no value was indicated. The contributions, from over 30 national societies and private donors, consisted mainly of medical supplies, medicaments and basic equipment for orphanages, homes for the elderly or disabled, hospitals and dispensaries. Donations also include food, clothing, toys and other supplies.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his reply of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *609*, if he will make it his policy to ask the Government of Syria to help to obtain information of relevance to the international investigation into the Lockerbie air disaster.

Mr. Waldegrave: The investigation into the Lockerbie air disaster is being pursued by the Dumfries and Galloway constabulary, under the direction of my noble and learned friend the Lord Advocate. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office stands ready to assist the constabulary in any way they require in pursuit of international aspect of the investigation.

Declarations of Interest

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his reply of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *619*, whether advisers to his Department who are not employees of the Crown are asked to declare their pecuniary interests before taking up their responsibilities.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Intellectual Property Rights

73. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the Government's position on the patenting of intellectual property rights and on the consequences for developing countries of inclusion in the current general agreement on tariffs and trade round of trade in intellectual property rights.

Mr. Ridley: The Government recognise that adequate levels of protection for intellectual property rights, including patents, are a necessary incentive for innovation. A successful outcome to the GATT negotiations on the trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights will provide a favourable international climate for innovation from which all trading nations will benefit. Particular benefits for developing countries will include greater confidence for domestic and foreign investors alike and an improved framework for technology transfer. The European Commission is responsible for these negotiations on behalf of the United Kingdom and other member states.

GATT

74. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures are being proposed in the Uruguay round of the GATT by the European Community; and what practical measures the Government have introduced to ensure transparency in the negotiations and access to information for the public.

Mr. Ridley: The European Community plays a prominent role in the GATT Uruguay round, and has submitted proposals from time to time in all 15 areas of the negotiations. The European Commission represents the Community in the negotiations. The Community's negotiating position is regularly reviewed by member states through the article 113 committee of senior officials and the Council of Ministers.

Her Majesty's Government participate fully in this process, and maintain close liaison with interested business and other organisations in the United Kingdom. A public information point has also been established in the Department of Trade and Industry.

European Space Agency

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the status of the ERS-2 and DRTM programmes of the European Space Agency.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: These programmes were discussed at the Council of the European Space Agency on 27-28 June. I am pleased to report that the ERS-2 programme has now formally commenced following confirmation of subscriptions from all participating states. ERS-1 and ERS-2 will together constitute a major European contribution to the monitoring of climate and environment. The United Kingdom Government are allocating some £60 million to ERS-2. This will fund inter alia the provision of two major instruments—the active microwave instrument and the along-track scanning radiometer. DRTM (to which the United Kingdom has commited £32 million) has also formally commenced. In the TM element, United Kingdom industry will be active in the development of advanced land mobile services, optical (laser) inter-satellite communications, ion propulsion and nickel hydrogen cells. The data relay satellite system element is in a preparatory phase.

Girobank

Mr. Carr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the sale of Girobank to the Alliance and Leicester Building Society.

Mr. Forth: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave on 2 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns).

Timeshare Operators

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will meet the Timeshare Developers Association to discuss including timeshare owners in its membership.

Mr. Forth: I shall be happy to meet the Timeshare Developers Association if the association requests such a meeting. However, the composition of its membership is a matter for the association.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will introduce a mandatory code of conduct for timeshare operators;

(2) if he will implement the recommendations of the Director General of Fair Trading on timeshares;

(3) if he will introduce a licensing scheme for timeshare operators.

Mr. Forth: The Director General of Fair Trading's report on timeshare was published on 3 July. I shall be looking very carefully at his recommendations for legislation.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his statement of 19 December, *Official Report*, column 203, whether he has taken any action against any of the third parties implicated in the Barlow Clowes collapse.

Mr. Redwood: The Department is engaged in an urgent and wide-ranging assessment of possible legal actions against third parties to identify those cases which are worth pursuing in order to reduce the cost to public funds of the payments made to Barlow Clowes investors.

Research Council

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Research Council on 29 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I represented Her Majesty's Government at the meeting of the Community's Council of Ministers (Research) in Luxembourg on 29 June.

The Council adopted a research and technological development programme on human genome analysis, which will run for two years with a total budget of 15 million ecu (£10·7 million). The Council agreed common positions on the EURET (transport research) and

EUROTRA (development of machine translations systems) research and technological development programmes. The council also agreed a resolution on co-operation between COST (European co-operation in scientific and technical research) and the countries of central and eastern Europe.

There was also a preliminary discussion of two recent communications from the Commission on research co-operation with third countries and with eastern Europe. The Council is likely to have further discussion on this subject later in the year.

Financial Regulatory Organisations

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people in his Department have responsibility for overseeing the workings of *(a)* the Securities and Investments Board, *(b)* the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation, *(c)* the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, *(d)* the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation and *(e)* the Securities Association.

Mr. Redwood: Within the financial services division of my Department, the responsibilities of six people include, but are not confined to, oversight of the workings of the Securities and Investments Board. Oversight of the self-regulating organisations is the responsibility of the Securities and Investments Board itself.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the names, annual salaries and terms of contract for *(a)* the chairman, *(b)* the chief executive and *(c)* other directors of the Securities and Investments Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The names of the board of directors of the Securities and Investments Board together with directors' emoluments are given in the Securities and Investments Board annual report which was laid before the House on 6 June. Sir Mark Weinberg and Mr. Eddie Ray retire from the board on 31 July and Mr. John Craven is appointed a director from 1 August. The terms of contract are a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and industry what discussions he has had with the Securities and Investments Board regarding the rationalisation of its five self-regulatory organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: This subject was among those discussed when I met the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board on 30 April. I welcome the recent announcement that the Securities Association and the Association of Futures Brokers and Dealers are to merge.

Brewing Industry

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will bring forward legislation to increase the use of guest beers.

Mr. Redwood: The Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order 1989 already provides that from 1 May 1990 tenants of brewers with interests in more than 2,000 on-licensed premises and those receiving tied loans from such brewers, must be free to sell a cask-conditioned guest beer from any supplier of their choice.

Mr Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of the large brewers; and what was discussed.

Mr Redwood: The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry last met representatives of the six national brewers collectively on 6 July 1989. In addition, the Department had a meeting with representatives of the Brewers Society on 10 November 1989 to hear representations on the draft Supply of Beer Orders.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will arrange to meet the Director General of Fair Trading to discuss the results of his office's monitoring of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on brewing.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans at present to meet the Director General of Fair Trading. I will do so if and when we think it necessary. However my Department keeps in close contact with the Office of Fair Trading on their monitoring of the implementation of the measures the Government took in response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report. Monitoring by the Office of Fair Trading will extend at least until the end of 1992, when the Supply of Beer Orders have taken full effect.

Aldi Stores

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) when the Office of Fair Trading's preliminary report into the alleged refusal of companies to supply Aldi stores will be available;

(2) if he will detail the allegations of unfair trading practice which the Office of Fair Trading is considering in respect of Aldi stores;

(3) if he will estimate the time scale for a full investigation into the alleged refusal of companies to supply Aldi stores.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* Aldi have made representations to the Director General of Fair Trading that various suppliers of goods withheld supplies to them, within the meaning of section 12 of the Resale Prices Act 1976. I understand that the director general is making exploratory inquiries with a view to establishing the circumstances, following which he will decide what action if any he should take. The present inquiries do not constitute a statutory investigation and will not end in a report.

Channel 5

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies have been made by his Department of the costs of retuning video recorders associated with the reception of channel 5 output; in respect of how many transmitters have the calculations in respect of such costs been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* As my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office explained during the Committee stage of the Broadcasting Bill on 15 February 1990, my Department has made a study of the possible cost of retuning video recorders affected by interference from Channel 5 in cases where the user has not arranged to receive the Channel 5 service. This study was

based on the planned national coverage figure for the service of 70 per cent. The number of transmitters assumed in the study for this planned level of coverage was 25.

The new service is not expected to commence for about three years. The market is growing and changing rapidly. Any estimate of the costs must therefore be subject to great uncertainty. The study also made a range of other assumptions in addition to that concerning the number of transmitters. It is therefore important that franchise applicants carry out their own studies of the costs.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Civil Servants (Workplaces)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at workplaces used by civil servants in his Department.

Mr. Needham: The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations do not yet apply in Northern Ireland. A consultative document setting out the Department of Economic Development's proposals for controlling substances considered hazardous to health was issued on 5 March 1990.

An initial assessment of potentially hazardous substances has been made by officials in the Northern Ireland Office and the PSA. This assessment is kept under constant review.

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show for each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland the number of deaths from terrorist action since 1 January 1969 until June 1983 and also for each present parliamentary constituency, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Remand

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average number of days that prisoners spent on custodial remand for scheduled, non-scheduled offences and both together, in 1989.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* The average period on custodial remand for persons tried in 1989 for scheduled offences was 94·5 days; for non-scheduled offences, 61 days; and both together 80 days.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail and charged with scheduled offences in Northern Ireland in 1989.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* The average period between remand and trial for prisoners charged in scheduled offences and refused bail who were tried in 1989, was 94·5 days.

WALES

Registered Holdings

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many registered holdings in Wales are eligible for less-favoured area projects.

Mr. David Hunt: There is no register of agricultural holdings. Lists maintained for the purpose of collecting agricultural statistics contained at June 1989 20,576 statistically significant agricultural holdings which had some land in the less-favoured areas. The eligibility of a holding for assistance under any project will depend both on the project and on the individual circumstances of the holding.

Cataract Operations

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for each health authority to supply him with the waiting lists for cataract operations; and if he will publish the results in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Grist: Information about waiting lists for individual procedures is not collected routinely. The Welsh hospital waiting list bulletin 1990 (No. 1), a copy of which is available in the Library, contains information on each health authority's ophthalmology waiting lists as at September 1989.

Market Research

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the market research surveys commissioned by his Department or paid for by his Department in each of the past five financial years.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

General Practitioners (Prescribing)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intendes to issue fresh guidelines *(a)* to general practitioners in respect of over-prescribing and *(b)* to family practitioner committees in respect of the operation of regulation 16 of the Service Committee and Tribunal Regulations.

Mr. Grist: A working paper will be issued shortly which deals with prescribing in general practice. This will indicate the initiatives being taken to encourage general practitioners to improve the quality of their prescribing. The working paper will also indicate that it is the Government's intention to amend regulation 16 of the Service Committee and Tribunal Regulations.

Teaching (Language)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on the right of parents to have their children taught in their first language.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Our general policy is that all pupils, as part of the national curriculum in schools in Wales, should study both English and Welsh.

The medium of instruction in an individual school, either Welsh or English, is a matter for determination by the head teacher and governing body within the context of the local authority's curriculum and language policies.

NHS Reforms

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated total cost to his Department of the Government's proposed publicity campaign in respect of their National Health Service reforms.

Mr. Grist: We are preparing a bilingual booklet for circulation in Wales which will explain the main changes taking place in the National Health Service in the Principality. The total cost of preparing and distributing the booklet has yet to be finalised, but we expect the unit cost to be broadly similar to that of the booklet being distributed in England.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those responsibilities which will no longer be exercised by district health authorities in Wales *(a)* following the passing of the National Health Service and Community Care Act and *(b)* following the implementation of the Government's plans for reform of the national health service.

Mr. Grist: Under our programme of reforms, DHAs will be responsible for securing quality health services for their resident populations. In certain areas of activity this purchasing role will be undertaken by any GP fundholding practices that are set up.

To the extent that NHS trusts are established and DHAs contract with other agencies for the provision of care, health authorities will not be responsible for the direct delivery of services. They will, however, continue to be responsible for the purchase of quality care under contract.

GP Budgets

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioners will be equipped with the necessary software to enable them to be responsible for their own budgets from 1 April 1991.

Mr. Grist: Discussions are continuing with the computer companies. The details of these discussions are commercially sensitive, but the general objective is to ensure that the necessary software will be available to all those GPs who wish to take part in the scheme.

Education (Special Needs)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the cost in each local education authority of providing a place for each student between 11 and 18 years; and what additional cost is deemed necessary for each child with special needs in *(a)* a special school and *(b)* an integrated unit in a secondary school;

(2) what is the cost in each local education authority of providing a school place for each child between five and 11 years; and what additional cost is deemed necessary for each child with special needs in *(a)* a special school and *(b)* an integrated unit of a school for children under 11 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The cost per pupil of providing a school place in 1988-89 for *(a)* nursery and primary children *(b)* secondary children and *(c)* children in these age groups with special needs is shown in the following table. It is not possible to identify expenditure on integrated special units.

Current expenditure on schools 1989-89

£'s per pupil

	Nursery primary	*Secondary*	*Special*
Clwyd	1,041	1,734	9,449
Dyfed	1,151	1,658	12,864
Gwent	1,123	1,821	11,264
Gwynedd	1,115	1,661	6,818
Mid Glamorgan	1,159	1,686	8,911
Powys	1,409	1,885	11,734
South Glamorgan	1,021	1,520	6,264
West Glamorgan	1,174	1,991	11,071
Total Wales	1,126	1,730	9,190

Land Use (Cardiff)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has undertaken with Cardiff city council and South Glamorgan county council regarding the future use of land and buildings currently used for industrial training purposes at Western avenue, Cardiff.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the future use and ownership of the land and buildings occupied by the skill centre at Western avenue, Cardiff.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what land and buildings he has made available to Astra Training Services at Western avenue, Cardiff for *(a)* present and *(b)* future industrial training facilities.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I understand that Astra Training Services Ltd. has taken a three-year lease from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment for most of the freehold site at Western avenue.

Nurses' Grading

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what deadline he has set for all clinical grading appeals by nurses in Wales which are currently outstanding to be dealt with.

Mr. Grist: Appeals against clinical grading decisions are conducted under complex procedures agreed between the staff and management sides of the general Whitley council. The procedures which provide for three separate levels of hearing are resource-intensive for staff and management sides alike and in view of the unprecedented numbers of appeals it is not feasible for any deadline to be

set. It is to be regretted that nursing trade unions chose not to pursue the possibility of adopting a simpler and quicker appeals procedures at the time the new structure was negotiated.

European Single Market

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of the completion of the single European market on economic growth and employment in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The impact of the single market on Wales will depend on the flexibility with which individual firms and industries respond to the opportunities and challenges which it presents. The Europartenariat forum which was recently hosted in Wales by the Welsh Development Agency, with the support of the European Commission, provided an excellent opportunity for firms, particularly small firms, in Wales to develop the potential for business co-operation with companies elsewhere in Europe and I am delighted that so many Welsh firms took the opportunity to participate.

Hospital Costs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the latest information he has on the cost of operations and hospital care in each hospital; and when he expects all hospitals to publish a price list for all operations and treatments available for patients.

Mr. Grist: Information on the cost of operations in each hospital is not available centrally. The latest available information on hospital costs is contained in "Welsh Health Costing Returns 1988-89", a copy of which is in the Library. The pricing of services will be included in the contracts for health services which will operate from April 1991. It is intended that these contracts should be made publicly available once agreed.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what figure for inflation his Department advised *(a)* district councils, *(b)* county councils and *(c)* health authorities in Wales to use in the advance planning and estimate-making for the 1990-91 financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: Individual local authorities determine their own budgets, including the inflation and other assumptions on which they are based. The appropriate level of local government expenditure for each financial year is set by the Government and it is regrettable that actual spending by local authorities has consistently and unnecessarily exceeded those levels. No record of local authorities' budget assumptions is kept and no estimate of the inflation in local government costs to which they have contributed is made by my Department. I will respond separately to questions raised with respect to health authorities.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, column *230*, if he will list the recipients of the £96,000 grant aid to voluntary organisations; and how much was given to each.

Mr. Grist: The entire allocation was to Wales MIND.

Training

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the total amount offered by the Training Agency for 1990-91 in Wales to training providers of *(a)* youth training and *(b)* employment training in each training and enterprise council area in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: All training and enterprise councils in Wales are at present in their development stage and not yet fully operational. This information is not, therefore, available.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the number of people requiring guaranteed training places within each training and enterprise council area during 1990-91.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In advance of the formal establishment of training and enterprise councils in Wales I cannot give figures for individual areas, but I am satisfied that sufficient places will be made available to meet the demand.

Planning

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will call in for decision by himself the current planning application in respect of Rhos-y-Chellis farm, Northop, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales understands that Delyn borough council is meeting today to determine this planning application. Should it be minded to grant planning permission for the proposal development it has indicated that it will refer the application to my right hon. Friend, under the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans) (Wales) Direction 1981, as a material departure from an approved development plan. He will then decide whether to call it in for his determination and I shall ensure that the hon. and learned Gentleman is informed of that decision when it has been taken.

Mr. Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policy concerning the relevance of subjective financial criteria affecting the viability of planning applications in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Generally speaking, financial considerations play no part in the determination of planning applications, the viability of a proposal being essentially a matter for the developer. There will be occasions, however, when the planning consequences of the financial viability of a development must be taken into account, for example, the likelihood of a development being only partially completed or the viability of a farming enterprise in assessing the need for an agricultural dwelling. The relevance of those factors will depend upon the particular circumstances of individual cases.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Video Recordings (Prosecutions)

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought under the Video Recordings Act 1984 in the last convenient period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Waddington: In 1988, 27 defendants were prosecuted under the Video Recordings Act 1984. Information for 1989 will not be available until the autumn.

Prison Service Headquarters

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the factors involved in the shortlisting of Birmingham, Coventry, Derby and Nottingham for consideration as a location for the prison service headquarters; and if he will make a statement on the decision-making timetable.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 11 January that he had accepted the recommendation of a joint prison service and PA Consultants Group review team that the headquarters of the service should move from London to the midlands. Since then, further work has been done to identify specific options. Specialist consultants have conducted an evaluation of the area to identify which cities would be best able to support a substantial headquarters operation of around 1,500 staff. Among the criteria which they took into account were the availability of secretarial and clerical staff, the capacity of the local housing market to absorb a significant influx of new residents, the quality of local amenities and infrastructure and ease of access to prison service establishments around the country. In the light of their assessment it was decided that six cities merited further consideration, subject to the availability of suitable sites. Particular options in Birmingham, Coventry and Derby are now being explored. It is likely to be some months before a decision is taken.

San Salvador Killing (Police Report)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whose property is the report of the investigation carried out by Detective Chief Inspector Tony Comben into the killing in San Salvador on 16 November 1989; and what plans exist to make it public;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the costs arising from sending a team to El Salvador to investigate murders by death squads in San Salvador.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Officers from the Metropolitan police went to El Salvador at the request of President Cristiani. Their report will be sent to the Government of El Salvador. It will be for the Salvadorean authorities to decide on future action, including publication. The costs are a matter for the FCO and the Salvadorean authorities.

Fire Risk Areas

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many A category fire risk areas there are in each fire brigade area in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The information which is available centrally and shown in the following table relates to the number of hectares within the area of each fire authority in England and Wales which that authority has reported as fire risk A.

Fire authorities in England and Wales
Areas categorised 'A' fire risk

Fire authority	*Hectares categorised 'A' fire risk*
Avon	975
Cleveland	7,222
Derbyshire	850
Devon	375
Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence Authority	1,300
Hampshire	741
Humberside	3,321
Kent	106
Leicestershire	225
London Fire and Civil Defence Authority	14,175
Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority	3,259
South Glamorgan	125
South Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority	1,010
Suffolk	565
Tyne and Wear Fire and Civil Defence Authority	900
West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority	4,525
West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority	1,351

Source: figures provided by fire authorities September 1989.

The remaining fire authorities in England and Wales have reported no areas of category A fire risk. Areas of fire risk are categorised on the basis of the predominating risk within the area. Areas with fire risk categories other than A may contain individual premises which would otherwise be categorised A risk; isolated higher risks of this kind are generally categorised as special risks.

Vagrancy Act

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider seeking to amend the sections of the Vagrancy Act 1824 under which young persons sleeping on the streets have been arrested and convicted.

Mr. Waddington: The Vagrancy Act 1824 has already been amended, in particular by the Vagrancy Act 1935 and the Criminal Justice Act 1982, so that no one can be convicted for sleeping rough unless it can be proved that he had first refused or failed to apply for free and reasonably accessible accommodation to which he had been directed, or it can be proved that his doing so causes harm. Sleeping rough is not now either an arrestable or imprisonable offence. It is extremely rare for anyone under the age of 18 to be prosecuted for this offence.

We have no present plans to amend the vagrancy laws.

Child Migrants

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter of 25 June from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East concerning a case of adoption from Romania under his reference 18059/90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as I am in a position to take a decision in this case.

Acid House Parties

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines his Department has given to regional or other police forces concerning acid house parties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office has not issued any guidelines to the police specifically concerning acid house parties, but we have discussed the problem and how best to tackle it with the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to issue revised codes of practice in accordance with section 67(7) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Waddington: I have today laid before Parliament draft revised codes in accordance with section 67 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I intend to bring them into operation with effect from 1 January 1991 by order made by statutory instrument and I will seek their approval by resolution of each House of Parliament as soon as possible.

Remand

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the changes in the number of people in police cells on remand in Greater Manchester over the last four weeks.

Mr. Mellor: Over the past four weeks the numbers of people in police cells, on remand in the Greater Manchester area, have been as follows:

	Number
1 June 1990	505
8 June 1990	551
15 June 1990	574
22 June 1990	569
29 June 1990	581

The number of prisoners held in police cells was initially a result of the recent prison disturbances but is now largely due to industrial action or lack of good will on the part of prison officers in some establishments.

There is room to accommodate the majority of these prisoners in prison accommodation. Holding prisoners in police cells is bad for everyone concerned. It draws scarce police resources off the streets and means prisoners are held in unsuitable conditions. I hope prison officers in the establishments concerned will cease this unwarranted action at the earliest opportunity. We are pursuing discussions to bring this about.

Police Forces

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to carry out a major restructuring of the police forces in England and Wales in the near future.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Police Pay and Manpower

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase in police pay and manpower since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since this Government came to office, the pay of police constables has increased by just over 41 per cent. in real terms. Police manpower has increased by 15,284 to 126,777, an increase of just under 14 per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the money and real terms pay increases of a police constable, sergeant, inspector and chief inspector in each year since 1974.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 11 June 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:

	Constable		*Sergeant*		*Inspector*		*Chief inspector*	
	Minimum	*Maximum*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
1974								
Salaries	1,497	2,349	2,388	2,745	2,808	3,162	3,689	4,097
1975								
Salaries	2,202	3,120	3,138	3,651	3,678	4,287	4,341	4,974
Percentage change	(18·4)	(6·9)	(5·8)	(7·05)	(5·4)	(9·1)	(−5·3)	(−2·3)
1976								
Salaries	2,332	3,276	3,295	3,834	3,862	4,495	4,549	5,182
Percentage change	(−9·1)	(−9·9)	(−9·9)	(−9·9)	(−14·1)	(−10)	(−10)	(−10·6)
1977								
Salaries	2,553	3,603	3,624	4,218	4,248	4,929	4,989	5,688
Percentage change	(−5·5)	(−5·1)	(−5·1)	(−5)	(−5)	(−5·3)	(−5·3)	(−5·2)
1978								
Salaries	3,189	4,809	4,683	5,406	5,406	6,198	6,198	6,966
Percentage change	(15·3)	(23·2)	(19·3)	(18·3)	(17·5)	(16·1)	(14·7)	(13)
1979								
Salaries	4,086	6,471	6,186	7,095	7,095	8,058	8,058	8,967
Percentage change	(13)	(18·6)	(16·5)	(15·7)	(15·7)	(14·7)	(14·7)	(13·5)
1980								
Salaries	4,956	7,848	7,503	8,607	8,607	9,774	9,774	10,875
Percentage change	(2·8)	(2·8)	(2·8)	(2·8)	(2·8)	(2·8)	(2·8)	(2·8)
1981								
Salaries	5,610	8,883	8,493	9,744	9,744	11,064	11,064	12,309
Percentage change	(1·2)	(1·2)	(1)	(1·2)	(1·2)	(1·2)	(1·2)	(1·2)

	Constable		Sergeant		Inspector		Chief inspector	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
1982								
Salaries	6,189	9,798	9,369	10,749	10,749	12,204	12,204	13,578
Percentage change	(1·6)	(1·6)	(1·6)	(1·6)	(1·6)	(1·6)	(1·6)	(1·6)
1983								
Salaries	6,708	10,620	10,155	11,652	11,652	13,230	13,230	14,718
Percentage change	(3·6)	(3·6)	(3·6)	(3·6)	(3·6)	(3·7)	(3·7)	(3·6)
1984								
Salaries	6,708	11,193	10,704	12,282	12,282	13,944	13,944	15,513
Percentage change	(−4·7)	(0·4)	(0·4)	(0·4)	(0·4)	(0·4)	(0·4)	(0·4)
1985								
Salaries	7,212	12,033	11,508	13,203	13,203	14,991	14,991	16,677
Percentage change	(1·3)	(1)	(1·3)	(1·3)	(1·3)	(1·3)	(1·3)	(1·3)
1986								
Salaries	7,752	12,936	12,372	14,193	14,193	16,116	16,116	17,928
Percentage change	(1·1)	(5·7)	(5·7)	(5·7)	(5·7)	(5·7)	(5·7)	(5·7)
1987								
Salaries	8,352	13,938	13,332	15,294	15,294	17,364	17,364	19,317
Percentage change	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)
1988								
Salaries	8,352	15,125	14,466	16,593	16,593	18,840	18,840	20,958
Percentage change	(−4·7)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)	(3·4)
1989								
Salaries	9,900	16,521	15,804	18,129	18,129	20,583	20,583	22,896
Percentage change	(10)	(1·4)	(1·4)	(1·4)	(1·4)	(1·4)	(1·4)	(1·4)

Notes: Salaries are based on 1 September for each year. Figures in brackets show yearly percentage change in real terms.

Prison Disturbances

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the ratio of prisoners to prison officers injured in the recent prison disturbances.

Mr. Mellor: During incidents in April and May involving numbers of inmates acting in concert and using violence towards staff or property, the ratio of injuries was approximately one prisoner to two prison officers.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he plans to take to reduce the number of experiments conducted on animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Applications for licences are considered individually on their merits. As figure 5 of the Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 1988 (Cm. 743) shows, however, the number of experiments has fallen consistently for many years and this trend is continuing under the strict controls of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Prisoners (Payments)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement setting out the uses to which the general purposes fund was put, the classes of prisoner to whom payments were made and the basis on which the payments were calculated.

Mr. Mellor: The general purposes fund is used to provide recreational and sporting facilities for all prisoners in addition to those provided from public funds and to provide facilities for inmates' spouses and families. Cash payments may be made at the discretion of governors on special occasions.

Prisoners (Deportation)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are subject to orders for their deportation at the conclusions of their sentences or otherwise liable to be deported; how many of these are held in open prisons; and whether his Department issues any guidelines as to the granting to such prisoners of facilities such as home leave and education at outside establishments and who is responsible for taking decisions on the granting of such facilities.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Prisoners subject to a court recommendation that they should be deported at the end of their sentence or to a notice of intention to deport issued by the Secretary of State may be granted some leave or temporary release by the governor for a variety of purposes, including education, subject to the agreement of the immigration department. Prisoners who are the subject of a signed deportation order are not eligible for home leave or temporary release.

Immigration (Carriers' Liability)

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received, and on what dates, from United Kingdom and international airlines suggesting possible changes to the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987; and whether he is considering amendments to the Act.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The dates and precise nature of representations received from airlines could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I can, however, say that the only fundamental changes proposed by the airlines or their representatives have been (i) the introduction of a variable charge up to a maximum of £1,000 per passenger, (as opposed to the existing set charge of £1,000 per passenger); (ii) the removal of liability

in respect of those passengers who, notwithstanding the absence of proper documentation, are granted leave to enter the United Kingdom. British Airways, in particular, has raised a number of issues about the implementation of the Act, and these are under consideration.

I have no present plans to amend the Act.

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, according to airline, the number of convictions and fines and costs involved, all United Kingdom and international carriers penalised for contraventions of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The Act gives rise to a civil liability in respect of improperly documented passengers brought to the United Kingdom. It is not the practice to disclose information on the record of individual airlines under the Act.

HEALTH

Radioactive Caesium

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by county, and by year for the last five years, the number of reported cases of radioactive caesium in people.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is not available in the form requested.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his latest estimates of *(a)* HIV and *(b)* AIDS cases in the United Kingdom currently; and what are the projected figures on current trends by the year 2000.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At the end of May 1990, the cumulative United Kingdom total of AIDS cases reported was 3,346 of whom 1,845 are known to have died.

It is not possible to predict how many HIV-infected individuals or cases of AIDS there will be by the year 2000. The Day report, "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in England and Wales to end 1993" published by the public health laboratory service in January 1990 as a supplement to the communicable disease report, made it clear that AIDS predictions beyond 1993 are subject to great uncertainty, and made no estimate of the number of HIV-infected persons beyond 1990.

The Day report estimated that there were between 12,250 and 26,400 HIV-infected persons in England and Wales at the end of 1988. On the assumption that the behavioural trends necessary to produce the upper 1988 estimate continued unchanged, the Day report estimated that there could be 46,450 people infected by the end of 1990. From the report, the expected cumulative total of AIDS cases in England and Wales for the period 1979-1993 for planning purposes is 11,360; with a lower band of 8,115 cases and an upper band of 16,390 cases.

A separate group is currently preparing new estimates of short-term predictions of HIV incidence and prevalence estimates of the numbers of AIDS cases in Scotland as a revision of the projections contained in the report of the national working party on health service implications of HIV infection (the Tayler report). Copies of both the Day and Tayler reports are available in the Library.

Reported incidence in Northern Ireland is too low to make accurate estimates of the likely spread of HIV infection.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of hospital units interested in self-governing status where *(a)* a ballot includes more than 50 per cent. of consultants in support of an application, *(b)* more than 50 per cent. of consultants opposed to an application and *(c)* no ballot has taken place and is unlikely to do so.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have consistently made it clear that it would not be appropriate for changes in management of National Health Service services to be subject to ballots, and we have not asked for data on ballots. Regional health authorities will seek the views of community health councils and other parties with an interest, including consultants and other staff, on individual proposals before any decisions are made.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total financial cost of family practitioner committees nationwide.

Mr. Dorrell: The total net administrative costs related to family practitioner committees in England and included in the supply estimates 1990-91 amount to £118·389 million.

Infant Mortality

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of infant mortality rates in 1979; and what they are today.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the table:

Infant mortality rates[1] England and Wales 1979, 1989

Year	*Rate[1]*
1979	12·8
1989	8·4

[1] Rate per 1,000 live births.

Maternity Mortality

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of maternity mortality rates in 1979; and what it is today.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the table.

Maternal mortality rates[1], England and Wales 1979, 1989

	1979	*1989*
Maternal mortality including abortion	11·51	8·10

[1] Rate per 100,000 total births.

General Practitioners (Prescribing)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he intends to issue fresh guidelines *(a)* to general practitioners in respect of over-prescribing and *(b)* to family practitioner committees in respect of the operation of regulation 16 of the Service Committee and Tribunal Regulations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The recently published working paper, "Improving Prescribing", (a copy of which is available in the Library), describes a range of new initiatives to improve the quality of general practitioner prescribing. It is the Government's intention, as set out in paragraph 10.2 of that working paper, to amend regulation 16 of the Service Committee and Tribunal Regulations.

National Health Service Reforms

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether it is the Government's intention to use outside consultants in its proposed publicity campaign in respect of its national health service reforms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated total cost to his Department of the Government's proposed publicity campaign in respect of its national health service reforms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 5 July at column *675*.

General Practitioner Budgets

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners will be equipped with the necessary software to enable them to be responsible for their budgets from 1 April 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: We are currently engaged in discussions with the computer companies. The details of these discussions are commercially sensitive, but the general objective is to ensure that the necessary software will be available to all the general practitioners wishing to take part in the practice funding scheme.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimated cost of developing and supplying the computer software systems for doctors eligible and electing to run their own budgets.

Mr. Dorrell: Development and supplying of the software for practice funding is a matter for the general practitioner computer suppliers. The Department does not hold the information necessary to estimate individual companies' costs.

Hospital Care (Cost)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the latest information he has on the cost of operations and hospital care in each hospital; and when he expects all hospitals to publish a price list for all operations and treatments available for patients.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the cost of operations and hospital care by individual hospitals is not collected centrally. From 1 April 1991 health authority contracts for health services with both public and private providers will be publicly available once they are signed. This will permit a steady improvement of information on the outcome of contract negotiations in terms of service covered and quality as much as price.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the percentage increase or decrease in the numbers of people waiting for treatment between March 1987 and September 1989 for *(a)* general surgery, *(b)* trauma and orthopaedics, *(c)* ear, nose and throat and *(d)* obstetrics and gynaecology; and if he will rank each health authority, giving the greatest increase first and the greatest decrease last.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* Figures for waiting lists in themselves are of little value unless considered with figures for waiting times, which are far more important for patients and figures for patient cases which are a much better measure of a unit's activity level. Comparisons between waiting lists in one place and another are also unreliable because of variations in referral practice, the acceptance of patients onto lists and the verification of the lists themselves. Changes in individual waiting lists between two points in time in at district level should also be interpreted with care as large changes can for example be due to errors in the data or transfer of responsibility between districts. However, the information requested will be placed in the Library. Nationally, the in-patient waiting lists for these four clinical specialties fell by 3 per cent. over the period March 1987 to September 1989 from 475,000 to 461,000. Over approximately the same period, the number of in-patient cases remained roughly constant at 2,375,000 per year but the number of day cases rose by over 4 per cent. from 530,000 to 552,000. Since 1979 the total number of in-patient cases in these four specialties has risen by 12 per cent. and day cases by 68 per cent. In-patient waiting lists have fallen by 7 per cent. overall and by 18 per cent. for these four specialties, including by more than a quarter for general surgery and gynaecology over the same period.

General Practitioners (Information)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been conducted into whether general practitioners read letters from *(a)* the Committee on Safety of Medicines and *(b)* pharmaceutical companies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* Inquiries and increases in adverse drug reaction reports (yellow card reports) indicate that general practitioners and hospital doctors read and take appropriate notice of the information they receive.

The Department does not conduct research into the readership of letters issued by pharmaceutical companies.

Health Service Spending

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give figures for each financial year of the amount spent on the national health service from 1979-80 inclusive *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* as a percentage change after adjustment for medical inflation, and using 1979-80 as a base year; and if he will give similar estimates for 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The table shows total National Health Service gross expenditure in cash for 1979-80 to 1989-90 and planned expenditure for 1990-91 and 1991-91 in cash. There is no specific index for medical inflation in the national health service but there is

a composite National Health Service index of changes in input unit costs and this has been used to adjust the cash figures to a 1979-80 basis. Estimates of changes in unit costs are not made until after the end of the relevant financial year and so it is not possible to put the 1990-91 and 1991-92 figures on this basis.

Year	*National Health Service expenditure England (cash)*	*Adjusted for input unit costs (1979-80 prices)*	*Percentage change*
1979-80	7,755	7,755	
1980-81	10,103	7,887	1·7
1981-82	11,329	8,180	3·7
1982-83	12,353	8,372	2·3
1983-84	13,113	8,455	1·0
1984-85	14,103	8,592	1·6
1985-86	14,919	8,645	0·6
1986-87	16,052	8,700	0·6
1987-88	17,652	8,816	1·3
1988-89	19,597	8,858	0·5
[1]1989-90	21,162		
[2]1990-91	23,552		
[2]1991-91	24,690		

[1] Estimate.
[2] Plan.

Cholesterol Screening

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to the early introduction of cholesterol screening by general practitioners for those individuals judged to be most at risk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* Opportunistic blood cholesterol testing is already undertaken by many general practitioners. The Standing Medical Advisory Committee has now reviewed the cost-effectiveness of various levels of opportunistic cholesterol testing, and their economic appraisals of these were based upon testing in general practice. I have today issued the committee's report for wide consultation.

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received the Standing Medical Advisory Committee report on cholesterol screening.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* In July 1988 I asked the Standing Medical Advisory Committee to consider whether opportunistic cholesterol testing could make a cost-effective contribution towards identifying and treating people at increased risk of coronary heart disease. I have now received the committee's report and have thanked them for their work.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Library. The report sets out the results of a detailed study which the committee advises is full of scientific complexity. The report explains that opportunistic blood cholesterol testing can make a cost-effective contribution to coronary heart disease prevention in certain circumstances and sets out a number of possible options for consideration.

In those circumstances, I believe that all those with an interest in the prevention of coronary heart disease should now have the opportunity to consider the report's findings and let me have their comments on them. I am therefore today issuing the report for consultation.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephones

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any plans to review telephone facilities in the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Arrangements are in hand to provide direct dialling access to a limited number of European Community institutions and organisations; plans exist for the Palace of Westminster telephone exchange to be upgraded to make the most economic use of available telephone routes.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Attendance and Mobility Allowances

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security *(a)* how many people who apply for mobility allowance are refused after their initial medical; and how many are awarded the benefit, *(b)* how many appeal against refusal; how many are subsequently awarded the benefit after a further examination at a medical centre, and how many are refused; and *(c)* how many are awarded mobility allowance resulting from an appeal to a medical appeal tribunal and how many are refused; and if he will express these figures for each region over the past 12 months.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. The available information, which relates to decisions made during the year ending 31 March 1990, is as follows:

	Decision in claimant's favour	*Decision adverse to claimant*
Decisions on initial claims	105,500	113,590
Decisions on renewal claims	29,490	10,800
Appeals and references decided by medical boards	6,989	18,675
Appeals decided by medical appeal tribunals	2,821	5,980

As mobility allowance is administered centrally, it is not possible to break those figures down by regions.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will commission research into the possibility of extending mobility allowance or the mobility component of the disability allowance to people with a mental handicap and behaviour problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: On 10 January we laid before Parliament "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People", which details our major proposals arising from our review of the balance and structure of social security benefits for disabled people and their carers. One of the proposals concerns the introduction of a new disability allowance for people of working age or below which will extend help to less severely disabled people, and will also subsume the help currently provided through attendance allowance and mobility allowance. The initial rate of the mobility component—set at £10—will be awarded to people who are not independently mobile, for example those with a

severe mental handicap or behavioural disturbance, and who do not otherwise fulfil the current criteria for mobility allowance. We estimate that 150,000 people will receive this new form of help.

Benefit Leaflets

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what reason his Department has ended the practice of sending sample leaflets on benefits, as they are published to local authorities and welfare rights organisations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department has not ended the practice. The mailing of sample leaflets is carried out by Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) on behalf of the Department.

I understand that HMSO experienced temporary difficulties in providing the service recently but that the service has now been restored. Arrangements are in hand to issue not only future material but those items which should have been sent earlier.

Pensions

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the percentage of the average wage paid in pensions to single people and married couples in each European Community country, including the United Kingdom; what increase would be required to bring United Kingdom pensions up to the level of the highest pension rate in the European Community; and what that would cost in additional public expenditure in a full financial year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Pensions in other member states of the European Community are usually related to length of the individual's contribution record and the level of earnings on which contributions have been paid. The relationship with the overall average wage in the country concerned will therefore vary from individual to individual. Details of pensions in all member states are set out in "Tables of Social Benefits in the European Community" published by the Department, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Discretionary Awards

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and percentage of people who were refused discretion-based awards because the items for which they are requesting assistance are excluded by the social fund directions, by local office in Scotland.

Mr. Scott: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by local office in Scotland the number and percentage of people who were refused discretion-based awards because they had insufficient funds to repay the loan.

Mr. Scott: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number and percentage of households and persons in Scotland below and at 40 per cent. above the income support level for the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90, by local office in Scotland.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is not available.

Social Fund

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the percentage expenditure take-up of the social fund from 0 to 10 per cent. to 90 to 100 per cent. for each of the local offices in Scotland, for the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: Figures on expenditure in all local offices can be obtained from the information placed in the Library.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are repaying social fund loans at *(a)* 15 per cent., *(b)* 10 per cent., *(c)* 5 per cent. and *(d)* less than 5 per cent. of their income support.

Mr. Scott: At 31 May 1990, the latest date for which data are available, 418,604 social fund loans were being recovered. A detailed breakdown of the percentage rates at which loans are being repaid by individual applicants is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

I regret that there was an error in my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 28 June at column *352*. The number of social fund loans being recovered at 30 April 1990 should have read 422,055.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to review the payment of unemployment benefit before the next election.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Unemployment benefit, in common with other benefits, is reviewed each year as part of the process of uprating.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, for students who will still be eligible for housing benefit and non-student partners who are in receipt of housing benefit, he plans any amendments to reflect the new arrangements for grants to be paid for the whole year as opposed to the previous practice of grants awarded for the academic year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We propose that the student grant, which is not intended to provide financial support for the long vacation, will continue to be treated as now in the calculation of housing benefit. The new student loans will provide support throughout the whole of the course including the long vacations falling within it. We propose that income from loans will be apportioned over the whole year for the purpose of calculating benefit entitlement. We also propose that income from top-up loans will attract a weekly disregard of £10 so long as the recipient remains a student.

Student Grants

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provisions he intends to make within the Social Security Benefits (Student Loan) Amendment Regulations 1990 with regard to students in receipt of discretionary grants from local authorities.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Students are not currently treated differently for benefit purposes on the basis of the type or source of the educational grant or bursary they receive. This will remain our intention under future arrangements.

Disability and Care Allowances

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how many women would be entitled to *(a)* severe disability allowance and *(b)* invalid care allowance if women could claim these benefits up to the age of 65 years.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that the additional number of women who would qualify each year if they could make a new claim between the ages of 60 and 65 is as follows:

	Number
(a) Severe disablement allowance	2,000
(b) Invalid care allowance	1,800

Low Incomes

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what help is currently being given to families on low incomes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A range of benefits is available to families on low income. Child benefit continues to provide a worthwhile contribution to the costs of bringing up children. Lone parents are also eligible to receive one parent benefit. In addition help is available in the form of a range of income-related benefits—income support, family credit, housing benefit and community charge benefit. Expenditure on each main benefit is set out in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93" (Cm. 1014), copies of which are in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each office and its region making deductions from income support to pay the community charge; and how many claimants are having deductions made by each office for this reason.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is collected centrally on a quarterly basis. The latest available figures are for May 1990 and I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 2 July at columns *460-61*.

Fraud

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he intends to reorganise fraud resources within his Department into sector teams; and when such reorganisation will be complete.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We intend, wherever possible, to align the new fraud sectors with our local office network for benefit payment. Existing fraud resources will be merged to form approximately 170 sector teams, grouped with some 20 areas for line management purposes. We plan to have this new organisation in place by the end of the year.

Household Incomes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will revise the data given in his answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) *Official Report*, 17 March 1989, column *390*, on household incomes, to take into account the errors in the originally published data.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figures quoted in the answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) on 17 March 1989 were only marginally affected by the recalculated data.

The main figures are as follows:

Real growth in mean net income before housing costs: 1979 to 1985

by decile group		*by family type*	
Lowest	6	Married pensioners	15
2nd	5	Single pensioners	15
3rd	4	Married with children	9
4th	4	Married without children	6
5th	4	Single with children	10
6th	6	Single with children	6
7th	7*		
8th	9		
9th	11*	Total population	9
Highest	18		

Notes:

All these figures are as previously published, except the two marked *, which were previously shown as 6 per cent. and 10 per cent. respectively.

Any changes in the detailed figures contained in the original table are likely to be equally trivial. Moreover, as explained in the original answer, those figures are of limited significance, because the deciles used were for the whole population rather than specific to each family type.

Water Charges

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to raise benefits to take account of water charge rises above inflation in each of the next five years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Benefit levels are considered for uprating each year, and we seek to take account of all relevant factors.

Pensions

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what he estimates would be the cost to his Department of adding £3 per week to the pensions of pensioners over 75 years of age;

(2) what he estimates would be the cost of adding £5 per week to the state pension for a single pensioner at current prices;

(3) how much he estimates it would cost his Department to increase the pension for a married couple by £8 per week at current prices;

(4) how much it would cost his Department to provide every pensioner aged 75 years and over with £10 per week extra at 1990-91 prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answers 5 June and 12 June 1990]:* The estimated gross and net costs with the accompanying estimated savings in income-related benefits for each of the additions is shown in the table.

Addition	*Estimated gross cost* £ billion	*Estimated net cost* £ billion	*Estimated savings in income related benefits* £ billion
£3 per week to all pensioners over 75	0·61	0·42	0·20
£5 per week to single pensioners	1·15	0·73	0·43
£8 per week to married couple pensioners	1·37	1·10	0·26
£10 per week to any pensioner aged 75 or over	2·03	1·50	0·53

Note: Costs shown use 1990-91 benefit rates.

Local Councillors

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance he has issued to his Department's offices with regard to *(a)* the new arrangements relating to allowances payable to local authority councillors in general and *(b)* how the new lump sum payments will be treated in calculating councillors' entitlements to means-tested benefits in particular; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The office of the chief adjudication officer is responsible for issuing guidance to the Department's offices and will be doing so shortly on the treatment of the revised allowances payable to local authority councillors.

These allowances, including any lump sum payments, will continue to be treated as earnings for benefit purposes in the normal way and apportioned on a weekly basis.

Cohabitees

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his best estimate of the savings made by *(a)* treating cohabitees as a couple for the purpose of claiming benefit and *(b)* refusing spouse additions to cohabitees' benefits on the basis that they can be paid only to legally married couples; and what proportion of the savings accrue from national insurance and non-contributory benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Current statistical information does not permit us to make such an estimate other than in relation to widow's benefit. In the 12-month period ending 31 March 1990 widows benefit was disqualified on grounds of co-habitation in 2,313 cases. Resulting benefit savings for the same period are estimated to be approximately £1·9 million. All the estimated savings accrue from contributory benefits.

The best estimate of the savings arising from non-payment of spouse additions of benefits where a couple are not legally married is £4·3 million per annum; 0·6 per cent. of the estimated savings accrue from non-contributory, non-income related benefits and the rest relate to national insurance benefits.

Maintenance Orders

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many maintenance orders for the support of children of lone mothers have *(a)* not been served and *(b)* have fallen into abeyance because the fathers cannot be traced, for each of the years 1979 to 1989.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

In 1988, 11,280 maintenance orders were made in magistrates courts. The further information sought is not available.

Grants and Loans

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of local offices in Scotland which received additional allocations of moneys for (i) maternity payments, (ii) funeral payments, (iii) cold weather payments, (iv) community care grants, (v) budgeting and (vi) crisis loans, for the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90; and what was the additional amount paid for each category and the total additional amount paid.

Mr. Scott: Local offices do not receive specific allocations for maternity payments, funeral payments and cold weather payments. Expenditure is demand led within the provisions contained in class XIV, vote 4.

There were no revised allocations to local offices for the year 1988-89. Information on revised allocations for 1989-90 has been placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Motorway Repairs

72. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposed motorway lane rental repair scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In June 1989 I announced that lane rental would be adopted as the norm for maintenance schemes on major strategic motorways and trunk roads. Since then over 10 schemes have been identified as suitable for this form of contract, and it will continue to be adopted on all future schemes amenable to this treatment. Although lane rental costs slightly more, the evidence shows that the additional costs are handsomely recouped from the greatly reduced delay costs to traffic at roadworks on our key routes.

Steel Industry

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if his instruction to the Scottish Development Agency to carry out an analysis of the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland allows it to examine the prospects for an independent steel industry;

(2) if he will give a specific instruction to the Scottish Development Agency to engage in a study of the feasibility of an independent Scottish steel industry based upon British Steel plant and assets in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Development Agency has been asked to examine the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland and to seek to identify any opportunities. It is intended that the analysis will be wide ranging and will seek to identify any present and future opportunities in the sector. It would not be appropriate to restrict the scope of this exercise by imposing any prior assumptions about the ownership or control of existing or potential operations in Scotland.

Agency Nurses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many agency-based nursing and auxiliary staff are currently employed in acute wards of hospitals managed by the Greater Glasgow health board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The board's policy is that agency nurses will be employed to cover for absent staff only when there is no alternative to doing so. The number therefore varies from day to day and I understand that on 5 July, 31·95 whole-time equivalents were employed in acute wards.

Adult Basic Education

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent each year on a constant price basis on adult basic education in the community since 1979.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

European Environment Agency

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Scottish-based organisations which he has recommended for consideration as part of the European Environment Agency network.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The EC regulation establishing the agency was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 7 May 1990 and will take effect once its location has been decided by the Council. Once the agency begins its work, which will not be before that date, we shall be considering the merits of organisations for inclusion in a list of candidates for the agency's information network.

Hillington Skill Centre

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received representations from M. I. Technologue Ltd. about the sale of Hillington skill centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No such representations have been received.

Education Costs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the cost in each education authority of providing a place for each child between five and 11 years; and what additional cost is deemed necessary for each child with special needs in *(a)* a special school and *(b)* an integrated unit of a school for children under 11 years;

(2) what is the cost in each education authority of providing a place for each student between 11 and 18 years; and what additional cost is deemed necessary for each child with special needs in *(a)* a special school and *(b)* an integrated unit in a secondary school.

Mr. Lang: The available information is given in the table which has been compiled from local authority financial returns. Information on the cost of special education is not recorded separately for primary and secondary age pupils. Expenditure on special units in primary and secondary schools is recorded under special schools, but is not separately identified.

Net current expenditure per pupil in primary, secondary and special schools—1988-89

	Primary £	*Secondary* £	*Special* £
Region			
Borders	1,333	2,188	8,119
Central	1,224	2,114	11,289
Dumfries and Galloway	1,204	2,273	17,922
Fife	1,302	2,251	3,909
Grampian	1,192	2,281	8,239
Highland	1,284	2,095	7,704
Lothian	1,175	2,282	9,953
Strathclyde	1,262	2,252	8,910
Tayside	1,215	2,331	9,385
Orkney	1,380	2,991	19,750
Shetland	1,655	3,544	63,778
Western Isles	1,580	2,814	8,786

International Literacy Year

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what special initiatives his Department has taken to support International Literacy Year.

Mr. Lang: None. The Department does, however, provide resources to the Scottish Community Education Council to co-ordinate and develop provisions in adult literacy in Scotland and, in 1989, for the first time, funds were made available to voluntary organisations towards new development projects concerned with adult basic education.

Employment Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken to safeguard basic literacy and numeracy training from budgetary restrictions in the employment training programme.

Mr. Lang: I am satisfied that the Training Agency has sufficient resources to meet the demand for training places for unemployed people with special needs in relation to literacy and/or numeracy.

Care in the Community

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contribution the Scottish Education Department is making to plans for care in the community.

Mr. Lang: The social work services group, which is part of the Scottish Education Department, is responsible for co-ordinating, within the Scottish Office, work on the implementation of the Government's community care policy. This includes the preparation of guidance for local authorities. Four consultation papers have so far been issued, including one on community care planning, and formal guidance will be issued in the light of the comments received.

Health Board Members (Payments)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what payment is made to Mrs Iris Isbister as chairperson of Tayside health board; and whether this is a part-time post.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on Friday 6 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), *Hansard*, volume 175, column *733*. All health board chairmen are appointed on a part-time basis.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the payments made to each health board member in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health board members currently receive allowances to cover travel, subsistence and loss of remunerative time expenses resulting from board duties.

Mental Welfare Commission

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether civil servants can be appointed to the Mental Welfare Commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Section 2(6) of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 debars serving civil servants from appointment to the Mental Welfare Commission.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations involved in mental illness and mental handicap that he consulted prior to recommending appointments to the Mental Welfare Commission; and if he will give the dates when they were consulted.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Before my right hon. and learned Friend makes recommendations to the Mental Welfare Commission he must, in accordance with section 2(5) of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984, consult such bodies as appear to him to be concerned. Most recently, the following bodies were consulted, on 19 June 1989:

Scottish Association for Mental Health
Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped
Royal College of Psychiatrists (Scottish Division)
Psychiatric Nurses Association of Scotland
National Schizophrenia Fellowship
British Medical Association
Royal College of General Practitioners
Standing Conference of Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland
The Faculty of Advocates
The Law Society of Scotland
British Association of Social Workers
Association of Directors of Social Work
Royal College of Nursing
Edinburgh Association for Mental Health
British Psychological Society
The Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what payment is made to Mrs. Iris Isbister as a member of the Mental Welfare Commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As a part-time member of the Mental Welfare Commission, Mrs. Isbister is paid an annual fee, currently amounting to £1,420, together with travelling and subsistence expenses.

TRANSPORT

Road Safety

3. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to improve road safety.

Mr. McLoughlin: A wide range of measures to improve road safety have been taken under the umbrella of our "Safety on the Move" campaign. Britain has a good record on road safety. An area of great concern is that of child safety—especially child pedestrians, where there is particular scope for improvement. A sustained programme of measures on child safety was launched in May including proposals to enable local authorities to make residential streets safer. We will be launching a further phase of this campaign concentrating on child pedestrian safety shortly.

Rail Ramblers

5. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding rail ramblers.

Mr. Freeman: I have received no representations about rail ramblers apart from those from the hon. Member and the Lancashire Rail Ramblers Committee.

London-North West Rail Service

14. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on British Rail's proposals to improve the London to the north-west of England main line.

Mr. Freeman: I welcome British Rail's recent announcement of its strategic plans for further improvements on the west coast main line, and I look forward to seeing British Rail's detailed investment case when this comes forward in due course.

London Underground

15. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much is being invested in London Underground over the next three years.

Mr. Freeman: London Underground Ltd. alone is planning to invest approximately £1·7 billion over the next three years. This is more than double in real terms the amount invested over the three years to 1989-90.

66. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of his consideration of foreign investment in underground railways in central London.

Mr. Freeman: I am not aware of any significant foreign interest in underground railways in central London beyond the funding contributions to the Jubilee line extension and the Bank extension of the docklands light railway which have been agreed by Olympia and York.

63. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make more resources available to London Underground for improved passenger security.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have given London Underground Ltd. £15 million to introduce a programme

of passenger security measures as recommended in this Department's 1986 report on crime on the London underground. Implementation of this programme is currently under way. London Underground Ltd. will additionally be spending about £80 million over the next 10 years on extending the most successful of these measures throughout the Underground network. London Underground Ltd. funds the Underground division of the British Transport Police, the complement of which has been increased to 400 officers.

45. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of investment in London Underground this year; and what the level was in 1984-85.

Mr. Freeman: Investment by London Underground Ltd. will be approaching £400 million in 1990-91. In the financial year 1984-85, when funding was determined by the GLC, the corresponding figure was about £117 million. This represents an increase of 148 per cent. in real terms.

Privately Financed Roads

16. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are for privately financed roads in Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The Dartford-Thurrock crossing will be the first major privately financed road this century. In addition, I recently invited views on the suitability of six further possible privately financed schemes. Three of these would serve Essex if the schemes were taken forward: a lower Thames crossing, a new link between Chelmsford and the M25 and a new route parallel to the A127 from the M25 to Rayleigh.

Compulsory House Purchases (Compensation)

17. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to improve present arrangements for compensating house owners where properties are acquired for transport improvement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is presently considering the responses to a consultation paper, containing proposals for improvements to land compensation, issued last year. He intends to bring forward legislation when the parliamentary timetable permits.

Tankers, West Coast

18. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to complete his detailed consideration of the findings of the review of tanker traffic in the deep water route west of the Hebrides and in the Minches.

Mr. McLoughlin: I hope to report my conclusions to the House before the summer recess.

Submarines

19. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current state of studies sponsored by his Department into systems to help submarines avoid fishing nets.

Mr. McLoughlin: A prototype system, based on specifications prepared by the Admiralty Research Establishment (ARE), to help submarines to avoid fishing nets will be tested this summer.

Network SouthEast

20. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the figures for investment in Network SouthEast for 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Freeman: The figures are as follows:

Network SouthEast investment 1988-89—1991-92

	Cash prices £ million
1988-89	300
1989-90	325
1990-91	[1]325
1991-92	[1]415

[1] Planned.

Bus Services

21. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will consider the introduction of regional and national awards for best bus services.

Mr. Freeman: The quality of bus services is a matter for the operators. The Bus and Coach Council already promotes a competition entitled "Britain's Brightest Bus Service".

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

22. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure that the cancellation of high-speed train links with the channel tunnel does not damage access of passengers and exports from Scotland to the continent.

Mr. Freeman: The recent announcement related to a particular proposal for a joint venture by British Rail and Eurorail. BR is continuing to develop proposals for a new passenger rail link between the tunnel and London to cater for traffic growth in the longer term. It was never intended that the new line or the high-speed link to the tunnel in France should carry freight. British Rail intends to provide both passenger and freight services to cater for the Scottish market from the outset.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to give his approval to British Rail for investment plans in relation to King's Cross being the international terminal linking the North with the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has not yet submitted its investment plans, which I would not normally expect to see before they get parliamentary approval.

61. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning the need for a fast rail link between Scotland and the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: I have recently received several representations from various parts of the country, including Scotland, about the desirability of fast and efficient rail links to the channel tunnel.

Transport, London

23. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chair of London Transport to discuss future transport strategy in London.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I regularly meet the chairman of London Transport to discuss all aspects of London Transport's operations including its plans for the future.

Public Transport, Manchester

24. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about public transport in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Freeman: This is essentially a matter for the operators and the passenger transport authority and executive. The Government are at present making resources available for two major projects to improve public transport in Manchester, Metrolink and the airport rail link.

M1 (Junction 21)

25. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement regarding traffic congestion at junction 21 of the M1 motorway.

Mr. Parkinson: Works commenced on an interim scheme to reduce congestion at junction 21 of the M1 motorway on 18 June. The scheme will be completed later this year. It will provide relief to the junction until the mid-1990s.

A longer-term improvement at this junction is being investigated as part of the motorway widening and junction improvement scheme announced in the 1989 White Paper "Roads for Prosperity".

Roads, London

26. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a further announcement on the public transport proposals of the London assessment studies.

Mr. Parkinson: We asked British Rail and London Transport in March to give further consideration to public transport proposals recommended by the London assessment studies which were not already under active examination. Announcements will be made after this work has been completed.

British Rail (Land Sales)

28. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total income received by British Rail from the sale of surplus land in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1989.

Mr. Freeman: Gross income received by British Rail from the sale of surplus land for each of the years, at constant 1990-91 prices, was as follows:

1974	*1979*	[1] *1988-89*
£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*
63	29	299

[1] British Rail changed the basis for recording this information from calendar to financial years with effect from 1984-85.

Roads (Environmental Impact)

29. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made an assessment of the environmental implications of his Department's road building programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The environmental benefits and disadvantages of all schemes are considered carefully. Protecting and enhancing the environment will continue to be a major priority in our plans.

Inner City Transport

30. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to improve transport in the inner cities.

Mr. Parkinson: National road schemes worth £3 billion are under construction or planned to assist the inner cities including major schemes on the A13 to aid revival of London's docklands, the M66 Denton to Middleton scheme and the A69 Newcastle western bypass. Over 100 major local road schemes to assist inner city areas, costing nearly £1 billion, are supported by 50 per cent. transport supplementary grant; examples are the Birmingham heartlands spine road, the Leeds inner ring road and the Haringey north-south route. We provide grant under the Industrial Development Act 1982 to help build access roads to development sites, such as the Meadowhall development in Sheffield and improvement of Aldwarke lane in Rotherham. In February I announced approval for the electrification of the Birmingham cross-city railway line. We are providing grant under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968 for the Manchester Metrolink. The Docklands Light Railway has contributed greatly to the regeneration of London's docklands. It is now being extended westwards to Bank and eastwards to Beckton and we are consolidating the revitalisation of the area with the Jubilee line extension.

Marchioness

31. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the publication of the final report into the sinking of the Marchioness.

Mr. McLoughlin: Solicitors representing next-of-kin and survivors, and others, have written to my right hon. Friend urging publication as soon as possible. My right hon. Friend also saw a deputation of representatives of the Marchioness disaster group on 16 May.

Roads, Yorkshire

32. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects new trunk road provision to serve east-west transportation and movement in South Yorkshire.

Mr. Atkins: There are no proposals at present for a new east-west trunk road in South Yorkshire. Barnsley metropolitan district council has included a proposal for a link between the M1 and the A1, the "Dearne towns link road", in its forward plans. I understand that it hopes to complete the route by the mid-1990s.

Buses (Official Journeys)

33. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the occasions in the last 12 months when he made an official journey by bus in London.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend and I have travelled by bus, underground and rail in London on a number of occasions in the last 12 months.

Air Traffic Control, Wales

34. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about air traffic control over Wales.

Mr. McLoughlin: The control of air traffic in the United Kingdom is the responsibility of the national air traffic services, which is a joint organisation of the Ministry of Defence and the Civil Aviation Authority.

Air traffic over Wales is controlled in precisely the same manner as air traffic over the rest of the United Kingdom. The controlling centre for en route traffic over Wales and much of England is the London air traffic control centre.

M40

35. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the construction of the M40.

Mr. Atkins: Construction work is progressing quickly and we are now working towards a full opening of the route in the spring of 1991.

Buses (Passenger Seat Belts)

36. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has given the bus and coach industry concerning passenger seat belts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State promised the House on 5 June, he met representatives of the Bus and Coach Council on 8 June to discuss the fitting of seat belts in coaches.

The Government believe that operators should provide good quality, easy-to-use retractable seat belts on all seats. Belts are offered for sale by manufacturers, but most operators do not buy them. At the meeting on 8 June, the Bus, and Coach Council undertook to recommend to its members that all new vehicles purchased should in future be equipped with appropriate seat belts on all seats. Officials are meeting the BCC today to explore further how existing vehicles might best be equipped with seat belts.

Bus Miles

37. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of bus miles operated in the United Kingdom in 1974, 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Freeman: The table shows the number of vehicle kilometres (in millions) operated by buses and coaches in Great Britain.

	1974	*1979*	*1988-89*
Local (stage) Services	2,360	2,238	2,416
Other Services	1,102	1,099	1,365
All Services	3,462	3,338	3,781

Data for 1989-90 will not be available until later in the year.

Light Rapid Transit Schemes

38. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to light rapid transit, metro and tramway schemes under construction or proposed.

Mr. Freeman: The docklands light railway is being extended to Bank and Beckton, the Tyne and Wear Metro is being extended to Newcastle airport and work has begun on the Manchester Metrolink, for which the Government are providing grant. Some 40 other light rapid transit schemes have been proposed or are being considered. These include light rail schemes in South Yorkshire, west midlands, and Avon.

Jubilee Line

39. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on proposals for private finance for the construction of the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Freeman: Olympia and York, Regalian and British Gas have agreed to make contributions towards the costs of construction of the Jubilee line extension.

British Rail (Rental Income)

40. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what rental income was received by British Rail in respect of commercial lettings to private companies in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1989.

Mr. Freeman: Gross rental income received by British Rail from commercial lettings to private companies for each of the years, at constant 1990-91 prices, was as follows:

	£ million
1974	85
1979	91
[1]1988-89	114

[1] British Rail changed the basis for recording this information from calendar to financial years with effect from 1984-85.

Road Accidents

41. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of people killed on Britain's roads in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1989.

64. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of people killed on Britain's roads in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1989.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
1974	6,876
1979	6,352
1989	[1]5,282

[1] Latest provisional estimate.

This 23 per cent. fall in fatalities has been achieved despite an increase of 68 per cent. in total traffic.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of *(a)* fatal accidents, *(b)* serious accidents and *(c)* other accidents on the A36 between Wylye and Plaitford in each of the past five years.

Mr. Atkins: The personal injury accidents recorded over the last five years are as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
(a) fatal accidents	2	2	2	1	5
(b) serious accidents	18	10	16	14	25
(c) slight accidents	89	54	53	55	74

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Totals	109	66	71	70	104

Unleaded Fuel

42. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of vehicles used unleaded fuel in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Atkins: The percentage market share enjoyed by unleaded fuel in December of each of the years mentioned was as follows.

	per cent.
1987	0·13
1988	3·14
1989	28·34

We do not have figures relating these percentages to numbers of vehicles.

Disabled People

43. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the petition recently presented to him concerning disabled people's access to public transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We fully support the principle of moving towards more accessible vehicles. However, in view of the operational and technical difficulties to be resolved, we believe that the target date of 1992 is unrealistic.

We are currently working on the development of a new generation of low floor buses that can accommodate wheelchair users on regular services. We are concerned that for the benefit of both the operators and the potential passengers such vehicles should be able to provide effective and sustainable services. We have some way to go in the development of these vehicles before we can be sure that those concerns have been met. We hope to start trials on what is likely to be the first in a series of low floor accessible demonstration vehicles later this year.

We are also working with coach manufacturers on design requirements for lifts to be fitted to high floor coaches. For both buses and coaches the most effective way forward is likely to be through Europe-wide legislation.

Bypasses

44. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses will be started or completed this year.

Mr. Atkins: Some 30 bypass schemes with a works cost of over £500 million are programmed to start or be completed this year, totalling over 110 miles of new road. Whether classified as bypasses or not, nearly all new road schemes bring relief to local communities from intrusive through traffic.

Vehicle Emissions

46. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made to reduce vehicle emissions.

Mr. Atkins: I have recently laid before the House regulations which will introduce the strict limits on vehicle emissions which have been agreed by the European Community.

The regulations include for the first time a requirement for the motorist to keep his vehicle in good emissions tune. This has paved the way for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's recent announcement that we propose to include a check on emissions in the MOT test.

Negotiations are now taking place on a further directive to limit emissions from cars. In addition to setting stricter limits for medium cars, the new directive will include provisions on evaporative emissions, durability of emission control equipment and a longer test cycle which includes a new high speed element. I hope the negotiations can be concluded quickly. The timetable is short if the new requirements are to take effect by the end of 1992.

When these new requirements are agreed, it will mean that from 1992 virtually all new petrol-engined cars will have to be equipped with three-way catalysts.

The Commission has also announced recently proposals for tighter limits on gaseous emissions from heavy diesel-engined vehicles and for the introduction of limits on particulate emissions from these vehicles. From what we have seen, the proposals may not go far enough. We are looking for standards similar to the United States 1994 limits by the mid-1990s. These are the strictest standards for heavy diesels being considered anywhere in the world.

British Rail (Quality of Service)

47. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures the Government are taking to improve the quality of service on British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have agreed quality of service objectives with the board which cover, among other things, train reliability and punctuality and, for most subsidised passenger services, passenger loading standards. The details are set out in my right hon. Friend's letter of 19 November to the chairman (*Official Report*, 19 December 1989, column *227-31*).

British Rail has plans to invest £3·7 billion over the next three years, much of which is for new rolling stock and infrastructure works to improve quality of service and cater for growth in demand. I shall be discussing progress with British Rail very shortly.

Rural Transport

48. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of local authorities to discuss transport in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Ministers frequently meet representatives of local authorities to discuss a wide range of issues. The provision of rural transport is a matter for the operators and the local authorities concerned. In addition, the Department of Transport provides £1 million a year for the rural transport development fund to support innovative public transport schemes in rural areas.

A40 Western Avenue

49. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning the cost of the A40 Western avenue improvement at the junction with Long lane, Hillingdon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Since the beginning of May the hon. Member has himself forwarded two letters on behalf of three constituents concerning the estimated cost of the scheme, and the National Farmers Union wrote in support of one of the constituents.

Trolleybuses

50. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any proposals to introduce trolleybus routes.

Mr. Freeman: The West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire passenger transport executives have both obtained powers to introduce trolleybus routes in their areas. The West Yorkshire PTE has put worked up proposals to the Department for an experimental route in Bradford, and I recently agreed to provide credit approvals for the costs of the infrastructure.

Women Travellers

51. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss new plans to improve the safety of women.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has frequently discussed passenger safety with the chairman and his predecessor and expects to do so in further meetings. Much has already been done to improve passenger security including better lighting at stations and station car parks. Closed circuit television has been installed where appropriate. The British Transport Police have increased patrols at likely trouble spots and BR is working on a standard specification for customer security in co-operation with the police.

56. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make public transport more attractive to women.

Mr. Freeman: Such matters are primarily for the transport operators. The Government welcome any efforts to make public transport more attractive to all types of users, and potential users.

A13

52. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to commence on the A13 trunk road improvement between the M25 and Dagenham.

Mr. Atkins: In spring 1992, subject to the satisfactory completion of the remaining statutory procedures.

Transport Investment

53. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of investment approved by Government in all types of transport for the next three years.

Mr. Atkins: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on 23 April this year.

Rail Links, Europe

54. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the impact of rail links into Europe on all regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: The opening of the channel tunnel will be a great opportunity for the railways to compete more effectively in the international passenger and freight markets and to bring extra choice of services to all parts of the United Kingdom.

British Rail (Discussions)

55. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what was discussed.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of British Rail on 27 June for one of their regular discussions.

59. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with the chairman of British Rail.

Central Line

57. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total amount of planned investment in new stock on the Central line by London Underground Ltd.

Mr. Freeman: About £350 million. This is the biggest rolling stock order ever placed by London Underground, and is part of the £700 million modernisation of the Central line which the Government approved in 1988. The 85 new trains, along with the rest of the programme, will substantially increase peak capacity, improve regularity of services, and reduce journey time.

Transport Supplementary Grant

58. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the increase in real terms in transport supplementary grant for local authorities in 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins: The provision for transport supplementary grant in class VII, vote 5 for 1990-91 is £233,125,000, an increase of 7·3 per cent. in real terms on the corresponding provision for 1989-90.

Street Works

60. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations he has received concerning his proposals to introduce legislation to implement the recommendations of the Horne committee.

Mr. Atkins: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 11 June 1990 at column *20*.

British Rail (Investment)

62. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of investment in British Rail over the next three years.

Mr. Freeman: BR plans to invest some £3·7 billion over the three financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Rail Services

65. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage further private sector participation in the provision of rail services.

Mr. Freeman: In December 1989 the Government set the British Railways Board the objective of increasing further the contribution of the private sector where this enabled more cost-effective and competitive services to be provided. For the longer term we are continuing to consider the privatisation of British Rail.

Rail Electrification

67. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of railway line have now been electrified; and what estimate he has as to the amount of electrification due to take place over the next five years.

Mr. Freeman: At 31 March 1990, BR had 2,830 route miles electrified. BR's 1989 plan proposed electrification of a further 560 route miles by 1993-94, three quarters of which have already been authorised. Major electrification projects are expected to include Cambridge to King's Lynn, the Birmingham cross-city link and the final stages of the east coast main line electrification.

Channel Tunnel

68. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail the sites for channel tunnel depots in the regions.

Mr. Freeman: This is a commercial matter for British Rail.

69. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he expects the first train to travel through the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for Eurotunnel. Its projected completion of the tunnel system is 15 June 1993.

70. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Minister last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss the channel tunnel terminal at Waterloo.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's approval for BR's investment at Waterloo was announced on 18 May.

Road Maintenance

71. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the increase in capital spending on national road maintenance between 1974 to 1979 and 1979 to 1990.

Mr. Atkins: Capital spending on motorway and trunk road maintenance in the years 1975 to 1990 is set out in the table below. Before 1975 capital and current expenditure were not separately recorded. Capital spending on road maintenance includes roads renewal, bridges renewal, and the purchase of vehicles and equipment.

Financial year	*Capital spending £ million (cash)*
1975-76	26·9
1976-77	29·5
1977-78	33·5
1978-79	46·0
1979-80	64·2
1980-81	68·4
1981-82	111·0
1982-83	148·1
1983-84	130·0
1984-85	154·1
1985-86	165·9
1986-87	220·4
1987-88	264·5
1988-89	190·6
1989-90	[1]330·4

[1] Provisional.

Aircraft (Vapour Levels)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *302*, what advice he has received from Professor Hoskins on vapour levels and aircraft.

Mr. McLoughlin: None as yet. The necessary basic data are currently being assembled.

Fishing Boats

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to station one inspector-surveyor to check small fishing boats at either Lowestoft or Great Yarmouth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The location of all fishing vessel surveyor posts, including that vacant at the Great Yarmouth office, is presently under review. A decision on the future location of such posts will be made shortly.

Level Crossings

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last 10 years the number of accidents occurring in the immediate vicinity of automatically opening locally monitored level crossings, specifying for each year the number of such incidents which involved *(a)* loss of life, *(b)* personal injury and *(c)* damage to property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The following table shows for each year in the period 1979-88, the number of automatic open

crossings locally monitored (AOCLs) on British Railways only, the number of accidents, and the number of casualties on both BR and other railways. The latter are shown in brackets. Where the information is available, I have shown damage to property. We do not have details of road traffic accidents near a level crossing, which do not affect the operation of the level crossing or the safety of a train.

The reports on 72 of these accidents show that the road vehicle driver failed to obey the "stop" road traffic signals. Of the other four, one accident was caused when a lorry skidded on ice, one was caused when a car drove in front of a Tyne and Wear Metro train proceeding slowly over a crossing as a result of a signal failure, two were caused by train drivers not following the set procedures for crossing a road when there is a signal failure.

British Rail is undertaking a programme of improvements to AOCLs in accordance with the recommendations made by Professor P. F. Stott to make the signs and signals even more conspicuous.

Year	*Number AOCL*	*Number of accidents*	*Number dead*	*Number injured*	*Property damaged*
1979	84	1	—	1	1 motorcycle
1980	107	1	—	—	1 motorcycle
1981	114	2	—	2	2 cars
1982	122	4	—	3	1 car, 1 bus, 1 pick-up truck,
	(19)	(4)	—	(4)	1 dumper-truck (4 cars)
1983	128	4	—	7	1 taxi, 2 cars, 1 van. (1 car, 1 van,
		(3)	—	(2)	1 steam locomotive, 1 bus)
1984	144	4	1	7	1 lorry, 3 cars (2 cars, 1 taxi, 1 tram)
		(3)	—	(1)	
1985	188	11	2	7	10 cars, 1 motorcycle, 1 lorry
		(1)	—	(1)	
1986	206	8	—	9	7 cars, 1 van, 1 DMU train, (1 car)
		(1)	—	—	
1987	206	10	2	8	7 cars, 3 vans (2 cars)
		(2)			
1988	211	16	1	8	1 minibus, 15 other vehicles,
		(1)	—	(1)	(1 permanent way trolley, 1 car)
British Rail		61	6	52	
Other railways		(15)	—	(9)	
Total		76	6	61	

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number and locations of uncontrolled pedestrian and vehicular level crossings on the British Rail system; whether he plans any discussions with the chairman of British Rail about additional safety devices at such crossings; if he will make additional funds available for the installation of such devices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: At the end of 1988, the most recent year for which detailed figures are currently available, there were 2,213 uncontrolled footpath crossings and 5,721 uncontrolled vehicular crossings, the majority of which are on private roads.

My Department's published requirements for level crossings lay down safety criteria for open crossings on public roads which are lightly but regularly used. Other vehicular crossings used by very low levels of local traffic are provided with user-worked gates or barriers in accordance with the requirements. The requirements do not cover private accommodation or occupation crossings which may be accessible to the public, but the railways inspectorate and British Rail have agreed safety criteria for such crossings and a programme of implementation is in progress.

The inspectorate will be reviewing the use of footpath crossings with British Rail to define criteria for practical and cost-effective measures to improve safety. The chairman and I meet regularly; safety is his top priority.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list incidents involving unmanned level crossings, involving risk to the public, in the past two years.

Mr. Freeman: The table shows the number of accidents and "systems failures" at the various types of unmanned crossings during 1987 and 1988, the most recent years for which full figures are currently available, together with total crossing numbers. "Systems failures" are occasions when a controlled crossing fails to operate currently but no accident occurs. Safety procedures for failures, laid down in the authorising statutory orders, are designed to minimise risks to the public. There are, of course, no records of occasions on which crossing users put themselves at risk—for example, by ignoring the flashing red traffic signals which warn of an approaching train—but where no accident occurs.

Crossing Type	Number in use 1987	Number in use 1988	Number of accidents 1987	Number of accidents 1988	Number of failures 1987	Number of failures 1988
Automatic half barrier	323	357	3	4	7	3
Auto half barrier locally monitored	—	1	—	—	—	—
Auto open remotely monitored	44	33	3	3	—	—
Auto open locally monitored	206	211	13	17	3	2
User-worked gates + Min warning lights	116	140	3	2	—	—
User-worked gates	4,004	4,919	15	12	—	—
User-worked gates + telephone	733	738	5	6	—	—
Open crossing	63	64	4	4	—	—
Footpath crossing	2,195	2,213	5	6	—	—
Total	7,684	[2]8,676	50	54	10	5

[1]Includes accidents on minor railways.
[2]Figures for 1988 are based on a survey which updated previous records of crossings and for both years are for British Rail only.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 26 March, *Official Report*, column *63*, whether any further consultation with chambers of commerce about TECs has taken place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department liaises closely with the Association of British Chambers of Commerce about the development of training and enterprise councils (TECs). TECs themselves work closely with local chambers of commerce, and a number of business leaders who are also senior office holders from chambers have accepted invitations from TECs to serve on their boards.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the date of publication of the study on employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: The report of the efficiency scrutiny of take-up of Employment Department programmes, including employment training, will be made publicly available before the summer recess.

Women Workers

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment has been made of the reasons why mothers undertake paid employment; and what proportion indicate that without such work their family income would fall below poverty levels.

Mr. Nicholls: The 1984 British social attitudes survey asked women in paid work (of at least 10 hours per week) with a child aged under 16 to give their main reason for working. The results were as follows:

	per cent.
Need money for basic essentials	50
To earn money to buy extras	22
Enjoy working	17
To follow my career	4
To earn money of my own	3
For the company of other people	2
For a change from my children or housework	2
Working is the normal thing to do	1

Percentages total more than 100 per cent. due to rounding

There is no generally accepted definition of what constitutes a poverty level. No evidence is available on the proportion of mothers who indicate that their family income would fall below poverty levels without paid employment.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column 375, on minimum wage effects, what other assumptions on the restoration of pay differentials besides that given in the note deposited in the Library have been considered; on what evidence they are based; and what would have been the impact of a minimum wage set at half average earnings on each of these assumptions.

Mr. Nicholls: The estimates produced by my Department of the job losses arising from the introduction of a national minimum wage assumed, on a central estimate, that differentials for those employees earning more than the minimum would be half-restored.

To establish a lower limit for the impact of a national minimum wage on jobs, a second estimate was produced on the basis of there being no restoration of differentials at all. My Department estimates that, in this case, about 100,000 jobs would be lost.

Also a third estimate, to establish an upper limit, was produced on the basis of there being a full restoration of differentials. My Department estimates that, in this case, about 1·4 million jobs would be lost.

Both the assumptions of no restoration and full restoration are implausible.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* each of the research studies and *(b)* all other sources of evidence which his Department used in determining the assumptions contained in the note placed in the Library entitled "Estimating the Effect of a National Minimum Wage"; and if he will identify separately the evidence and research used to formulate the assumption that differentials are half-restored in percentage terms following the introduction of a national minimum wage.

Mr. Nicholls: The assumptions made by officials in my Department in constructing the estimate of the effect of a national minimum wage, were derived mainly from the published Treasury paper "The Relationship between Employment and Wages: Empirical Evidence for the United Kingdom" (January 1985) and data from the New Earnings Survey (1989).

The Treasury paper estimates the relationship between employment and real wages in the United Kingdom, and the relationship expected between increases in money

wages and real wages given an unchanged nominal framework. The new earnings survey each year indicates the earnings distribution prevailing in the country at a stated time.

Apart from those reviewed in the Treasury paper, other papers studied included:

From The Dole Queue to the Sweatshop: Minimum Wages and Government Policy—Henry Neuburger (Low Pay Unit, 1984);

Minimum Wage Fixing—Gerald Starr (ILO 1981);

On the Employment Effects of Introducing a National Minimum Wage In the UK—Stephen Bazen (University of Kent Working Paper 88/5, 1988);

Wages Floors in the Clothing Industry 1950-81—Phillip Morgan, Don Paterson, and Robert Barrie (Department of Employment Research Paper No. 52, 1985);

Low Pay or No Pay?—David Forrest and S.R. Dennison (Institute of Economic Affairs Hobart Paper 101, 1984);

The assumption that differentials are half-restored in percentage terms is a justified central estimate. Similar assumptions are made in some of the work listed above.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assumptions about the effects of increased productivity and competitiveness as firms switch to higher wage and higher skill strategies were taken into account in the estimates contained in the note placed in the Library entitled "Estimating the Effect of a National Minimum Wage".

Mr. Nicholls: The estimates, produced by my Department, of the job losses arising from the introduction of a national minimum wage were not based on any explicit assumptions about the effects of higher real wages on productivity, competitiveness, and employers' skill strategies.

However, the estimates utilise results from the Treasury model (published in the Treasury paper "The Relationship between Employment and Wages: Empirical Evidence for the United Kingdom", January 1985), which are based on the past performance of the economy and take into account substitution between labour and capital as their relative prices alter and the consequent effects on productivity and competitiveness.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, to the hon. Member for Stretford, *Official Report*, column *375*, what assumptions about increased demand for consumer goods by those receiving higher pay, as a result of the introduction of a statutory minimum wage, have been taken into account in reaching the conclusions on the effects of the introduction of a minimum wage.

Mr. Nicholls: The estimates, produced by my Department, of the job losses arising from the introduction of a national minimum wage used results from simulations reviewed in the published Treasury paper "The Relationship between Employment and Wages: Empirical Evidence for the United Kingdom" (HM Treasury, January 1985).

These Treasury estimates of the impact of changes in real wages on employment do take account of the effects on consumer demand of changes in real wages, as well as the offsetting effects on company sector demand which arise from corresponding changes in their costs.

Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what assessment he has made of the financial contribution of employers in 1990-91 to the training of young people with special needs;

(2) what assessment he has made of employer contributions to youth training since the renegotiation of training contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 2 July at column *472*.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans for an autumn advertising campaign on training.

Mr. Eggar: Discussions are continuing within the Department on publicity matters, but no decisions have been taken on an autumn training campaign.

Youth Training (Payment)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards the payment in arrears of voluntary sector training providers of youth training.

Mr. Nicholls: Voluntary sector providers make an important contribution to youth training. The level and timing of funding is a matter for negotiation between training providers and Training Agency area offices or training and enterprise councils.

Community Industry Scheme

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers joining the community industry scheme for the years 1987-88 to 1989-90; and what are the plans for the years 1990-91 to 1992-93.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is as follows:

Year	*Entrants*	*Agreed places*
1987-88	9,844	7,000
1988-89	10,793	7,000
1989-90	13,094	7,000

An average of 6,200 places nationally have been agreed with the training provider, Community Industry Ltd., for 1990-91. No plans have been made for 1991-92 to 1992-93.

Publicity

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total estimated expenditure on Employment Department Group publicity in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar: The total estimated expenditure on Employment Department Group publicity in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 is set out in table 6.31 in the Public Expenditure White Paper, Cm. 1006.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy that the Employment Department Group publicity will continue to be based on the principles set out in the public expenditure White Paper, Cm. 1006, page 27, paragraph 95.

Mr. Tim Eggar: It is and will remain my policy that Employment Department Group publicity will continue to be based on paragraph 95 of the Public Expenditure White Paper.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will *(a)* list the companies involved in the Employment Department Group's publicity in 1990-91 and *(b)* estimate the total expenditure to be paid to each of them.

Mr. Eggar: Companies involved in the Employment Department Group's publicity in 1990-91 are Saatchi & Saatchi; Gold Greenless Trott; Industrial Publicity Services; Ogilvy & Mather; Delaney Fletcher Slaymaker Delaney and Bozell; FCO; BMP DDB; WBH Advertising; Yellowhammer.

It is not yet possible to estimate how much will be spent with each agency.

Private Office (Expenditure)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total expenditure of his private office in 1988-89, 1989-90 and the estimated expenditure in 1990-91.

Mr. Eggar: Information on the expenditure of individual Ministers' private offices is not available. Total expenditure on Ministers, senior management and their offices is set out below.

Year	*Expenditure (000s)*
[1]1990-91	£1,592
1989-90	£1,775
1988-89	£1,535

[1] Estimated

Note: Figures include salary costs of Ministers, the permanent secretary and two deputy secretaries but exclude accommodation costs.

Youth Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the proportion of trainees under the youth training scheme or youth training who fail to complete their full entitlement of training.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on Monday 30 April at column *541-42*.

Skill Centre Sale, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions he has given to King and Company, chartered surveyors, to sell his interest in the land and buildings occupied by the skill centre at Western avenue, Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: King and Company has been instructed to market the Government's remaining skill centre property interests—which includes the freehold site at Western avenue, Cardiff—and to recommend to the Secretary of State which offer or offers to accept. As an aid to marketing the properties, King and Company has also been instructed to advise as appropriate on planning consents, dilapidations and other property matters.

Small Businesses

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from small businesses urging prompt payment by Government Departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have received a number of representations in the past year on the general subject of prompt payment, some of which referred to Government Departments' payment practices. However, I have received only six representations from small businesses which refer to specific cases of late payment by Government Departments. In only one of these cases has it been shown that a Department was directly responsible for the late payment of a debt. The delay was due to an administrative error.

The Government as a major purchaser of supplies and services, worth about £15 billion each year, have a good record on prompt payment which demonstrates our commitment to the policy that all payments should be made on time. Furthermore, I am always prepared to take up any specific examples of late payment by Government Departments to small firms that are brought to my attention.

Employment Service Agency

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the replies to hon. Members' questions from Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Hon. Members are offered the option of having placed in the Library of the House replies from the chief executive of the Employment Service Agency.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Artioposthia Triangulata

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the distribution in Britain of artioposthia triangulata; what assessment he has made about its impact on the nature ecosystem; and if he has any proposals for control measures.

Mr. Curry: The New Zealand flat worm needs damp conditions and is unlikely to survive in well drained agricultural land. It is sporadically sighted in Scotland but has not been found in England since 1965.

North Sea (Nitrogen)

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the percentage of the nitrogen load in the North sea off the British coast which has been caused by *(a)* agriculture and *(b)* forestry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Of the total nitrogen inputs to the North sea from all sources, some 80 per cent. is attributable to the inflow of water from the north Atlantic and English channel. The remainder is attributable to inputs from all countries via the atmosphere and rivers together with a small contribution—1 per cent.—from direct dumping and

discharges. Of the total inputs of nitrogen, the contribution from United Kingdom agriculture and forestry, both via the atmosphere and rivers is estimated to be around 2 per cent. The greater part of this input derives from agriculture rather than forestry.

Coastal Protection

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on his Department's role in protecting Southwold, Reydon, Walberswick and surrounding villages from the sea *(a)* currently, *(b)* in the next financial year and *(c)* till the year 2000;

(2) if he will make it his policy urgently to assess the criteria for saving domestic dwellings from the sea to take account equally of environmental factors, cost benefits and housing.

Mr. Curry: A scheme under the Coast Protection Act 1949 to protect Southwold harbour is with the Department for approval. Many additional schemes are being undertaken in this financial year following the winter storms and they also have priority, so some schemes approved this year may be delayed into the next financial year.

I am not aware of any plans to protect Reydon, Walberswick and the surrounding villages. However, if a scheme satisfying our normal technical, economic and environmental criteria is submitted to the Department it will be given full consideration.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will bring forward an urgent scheme to compensate people who lost their homes to the sea in cases where environmental considerations outweigh coast protection schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Works carried out to protect land under the terms of the Coast Protection Act 1949 require my prior consent. In deciding whether to give such consent our policy is to require a proposal to be technically sound, cost effective and environmentally sympathetic, and we have no plans to change that policy.

We are not aware of any case in which a coast protection authority has decided not to seek our approval for works because environmental considerations were judged to override protection of homes. No proposal submitted to us has been denied our consent solely by reason of environmental considerations. The Coast Protection Act does not provide for compensation to be paid for losses arising from coastal erosion and we have no plans to change our policy in this respect.

Pollution Control

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money is allocated under the capital grant scheme for pollution control measures for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In England, provision for the farm and conservation grant scheme as a whole in 1990-91 is £23·23 million. There is no separate allocation for pollution control measures which are among several other types of investment eligible under the scheme.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money has been paid out under the farm capital grants scheme for pollution control measures for *(a)* February 1989 until March 1990 and *(b)* April 1990 until the present day; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Grant paid in England for pollution control measures under the farm and conservation grant scheme for the periods requested is as follows:

(a) February 1989 to March 1990—£5,252,524.
(b) April to May 1990[1]—£2,760,577.

[1] Figures for June not yet available.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farms, by county basis, have taken up grants under the capital grant scheme for farm pollution control measures since the scheme was introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the number of items claimed in the category of waste facilities under the farm and conservation grant scheme in each division of the Ministry.

Division	*Counties covered by division*	*Number of items claimed*
Chelmsford	Essex, Hertfordshire, parts of Greater London	15
Huntingdon	Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire	7
Lincoln	Lincolnshire	21
Norwich	Norfolk and Suffolk	22
Crewe	Cheshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire	345
Nottingham	Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire	33
Preston	Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester	91
Worcester	Warwickshire, West Midlands, Metropolitan County, Hereford, Worcester	35
Beverley	Humberside, South and West Yorkshire	44
Carlisle	Cumbria	134
Newcastle	Northumberland, Durham, Tyne and Wear, Cleveland	26
Northallerton	North Yorkshire	82
Guildford	Hants, IOW, Surrey, West Sussex, parts of Greater London	39
Maidstone	East Sussex, Kent, parts of Greater London	18
Oxford	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire	30
Exeter	Devon	237
Gloucester	Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire	86

Division	Counties covered by division	Number of items claimed
Taunton	Dorset and Somerset	117
Truro	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	84
	Total	1,466

Source: MAFF statistics.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 10 July 1990

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fur Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who is empowered to slaughter mink and foxes on fur farms.

Mr. Maclean: There are no restrictions on who may slaughter fur-bearing animals on farms. The operation must, however, be done with due care and humanity as required by the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and without unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress as required by the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968.

Animal Feed

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to ensure that animal feed materials are not contaminated with agents harmful to humans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The safety standards of animal feed materials are laid down by EC legislation and enacted within the United Kingdom by the Agriculture Act 1970 and Feeding Stuff Regulations 1988, as amended. It is an offence for a manufacturer to sell an animal feed which is unsafe for the animal or final consumer.

Cattle (Antibiotics)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to authorise the use of the antibiotics Avoparcin and Virginiamycin in cattle in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Both antibiotics are authorised for use in cattle by EC Directive 70/524 concerning additives in feedingstuffs. Avoparcin is already licensed for this use in the United Kingdom, but, as yet, I have received no application in respect of virginiamycin for use in cattle.

Egg Producers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to provide to those local authorities who request them his list of egg producers and his list of egg producers who have registered with him since 2 April.

Mr. Maclean: Information is provided to local authorities on producers who register with the Department under the Poultry Laying Flocks (Testing and Registration etc) Order 1989. The Department does not hold a comprehensive list of egg producers.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many reports he received during June from laboratories conducting microbiological testing for salmonella of samples from hens where no growth was found.

Mr. Maclean: Full details of tests carried out in June are not available, but, from the reports received, the proportion of samples in which no microbial growth was reported was in the region of 5 per cent. The tests in question are designed to establish whether salmonella is present and will not necessarily show growth of other bacteria even when these are present.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any evidence of the abuse of the competitive exclusion product for salmonella developed by the Bristol Food Research Institute; and if he has any proposals to regulate its use.

Mr. Maclean: We have no such evidence. If such a product were to be sold or supplied for a medicinal purpose, a licence would be required to be issued under the Medicines Act 1968. No such licence is currently in force for the product to which the hon. Member refers.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many poultry flocks with over 100 laying hens are registered in each of the counties of England and Wales; and how many of these have notified him of the results of testing for salmonella between *(a)* 1 January and 21 March and *(b)* 1 April and 30 June.

Mr. Maclean: Up to 27 June a total of 2,435 laying flocks have been registered in England and Wales. The details in the table refer to animal health offices, where registrations are dealt with, rather than counties.

Registered persons are required to notify my Department with the results of tests for salmonella at 12-weekly intervals, commencing with the date after 2 April on which they first receive reports of any such tests. This information is being received and collated at the present time.

Registered laying flocks in England and Wales

Local Animal Health Office	*Laying flocks registered*
England	
Beverley	49
Bury St. Edmunds	62
Carlisle	50
Chelmsford	118
Crewe	99
Dorchester	43
Exeter	97
Gloucester	53
Guildford	92
Huntingdon	50
Leamington Spa	65
Leeds	146
Leicester	32
Lincoln	107
Maidstone	140
Newcastle	86
Northallerton	114
Norwich	125
Nottingham	128
Oxford	133
Preston	139
Shrewsbury	58

Local Animal Health Office	Laying flocks registered
Stafford	83
Taunton	48
Trowbridge	37
Truro	57
Winchester	69
Worcester	59
Wales	
Caernarvon	10
Cardiff	8
Carmarthen	38
Llandrindod Wells	17
Ruthin	23

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what names are used in European Community countries other than the United Kingdom to describe bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and whether this disease is present or endemic under these names in any European Community country.

Mr. Maclean: Bovine spongiform encephalopathy has been a notifiable disease in the European Community under that name since 1 April 1990 and to date has been confirmed only in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make it his policy to ban the tethering of sows in stalls; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has made an assessment of the animal welfare implications of the use of narrow stalls to contain sows; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has made an assessment of the space required to allow a sow to perform her natural functions, including grooming, turning and stretching; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Farm Animal Welfare Council has undertaken an assessment of pig production systems. It concluded that stall and tether systems for dry sows fail to meet important welfare criteria including freedom to exercise and to display most normal behaviour patterns. It recommended that new stall or tether systems should be banned and that existing systems of this type should be phased out as soon as the Government are content that welfare related problems have been eliminated from the emerging alternative systems and that they are commercially viable.

The Government have accepted these conclusions and are seeking to have them implemented through European Community legislation as soon as possible.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the licensing requirements which bovine somatotropin met before milk containing bovine somatotropin was allowed to be offered for sale to the general public.

Mr. Maclean: All milk contains natural BST. Milk from cows treated with manufactured BST may be offered for sale to the public if the treatment was carried out in accordance with an animal test certificate—ATC. Before ATCs were issued the Veterinary Products Committee examined all available data relating to the BST products concerned and concluded that they were of good quality and that their use in field trials would pose no threat to the health of consumers, to persons handling the product or to the environment.

Field Sports

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to promote field sports such as fox hunting, deer hunting and hare hunting and coursing as a method of vermin control or for any other reason.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

Hunting is one of several methods by which the populations of certain wild animals can be controlled. The Government's position is that the choice of method is a matter for the landowner and that participation in field sports is a matter for individual decision and conscience.

THE ARTS

British Theatre Association

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he intends to take to secure accommodation and future support for the British Theatre Association and its library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I am in touch with the British Theatre Association and other interested parties and understand that a number of options are now being considered which should help to secure the future of the library. I have asked to be kept informed of developments.

PRIME MINISTER

Political Union

Q12. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister what decision was made at the Dublin meeting of the European Council on United Kingdom participation in a conference on political union.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the statement my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made to this House on 28 June. The United Kingdom will participate fully in the preparation for and in discussion at the intergovernmental conference.

European Parliament

Q131. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent discussions she has had with the leaders of other European Community states concerning the structure, functions and powers of the European Parliament; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made to this House on 28 June about the European Council meeting in Dublin, at which the roles of the European Parliament and national parliaments were discussed in general terms.

South Africa

Q205. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the outcome of her discussions with Mr. Nelson Mandela with regard to the United Kingdom's contribution to the emergence of a just and equitable society in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had a very good exchange of views with Mr. Mandela on 4 July. Mr. Mandela expressed his appreciation of our efforts to secure his release and accepted our sincerity and determination to get rid of apartheid. My right hon. Friend's discussions with Mr. Mandela concentrated on examining the political and economic way ahead in South Africa.

Divorce

Q226. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister whether the Government have any plans to make divorce easier or more difficult to obtain *(a)* in England and *(b)* in Scotland.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

It would be premature to say what reform might be brought forward in England and Wales ahead of the English Law Commission's report later this year on divorce. In considering any proposals the Government will be concerned to support marriage and the family and to ensure that those contemplating divorce recognise in advance the consequences of divorce, especially for their children, and wherever possible either draw back from it or at least make arrangements to provide a firm basis for the future upbringing and support of their children.

The Scottish Law Commission issued a report on reform of the ground for divorce in 1989 and recommended that the Divorce (Scotland) Act 1976 should be amended.

These proposals are embodied in clause 53 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill which is presently before the House of Commons.

Engagements

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 July.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the economic summit in Houston.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Interest Rates

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the reduced availability of German and Japanese capital on the international market and its effect on long-term interest rates in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Data for the current and capital accounts of Japan and Germany are published by the IMF in "International Financial Statistics". The availability of capital from Japan and Germany is one of a number of domestic and international influences on United Kingdom long-term interest rates.

Royal Mint

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to the royal mint of the recent investigation into staff salaries carried out by Hay MSL.

Mr. Ryder: The cost of this study is commercially confidential.

EC Contributions

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the various published estimates or projections by Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Community in 1989; and if he will indicate the date on which each such estimate or projection was made.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The "Statement on the 1990 Community Budget"—Cm. 1059—which was published on 26 April 1990, included the outturn of £2,315 million for the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Community in 1989. The previous forecast for the 1989 net contribution, £1,966 million, was contained in the "Statement on the 1989 Community Budget"—Cm. 680—published on 27 April 1989. In addition, the Central Statistical Office balance of payments press notices of 13 March and 13 June 1990 gave, on a slightly different basis from the annual statements, an estimated outturn of £2,301 million for the United Kingdom's 1989 net balance with the European Community. These forecasts are on a calendar year basis.

The annual public expenditure White Paper includes calendar year forecasts and outturns of United Kingdom contributions and receipts arising out of successive budgets, irrespective of when receipts and payments occur.

VAT

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to reconsider the list of items considered for exemption from value added tax.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* No.

Government Shareholdings

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer of 11 December, *Official Report*, column *463*, on *(a)* the golden shares and *(b)* other shares currently owned by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* The Government hold special shares in the following companies: Britoil, Cable and Wireless; Jaguar; Sealink; British Telecom; British Aerospace; VSEL Consortium; British Gas; Rolls-Royce; BAA; British Steel; Anglian Water; Northumbrian Water; North West Water; Severn Trent; South West Water; Thames Water; Welsh Water; Wessex Water; and Yorkshire Water.

Details of the Government's other shareholdings are given in the "Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Accounts 1988-89: Supplementary Statements" (HC45). The 1989-90 supplementary statements will be laid before the House before the end of the year. In the case

of the 10 water plcs, the Water (Target Investment Limit) Order 1990, laid before the House on 21 May, gave the maximum limits, by percentage, of the Government's residual shareholding. The current market value of the shareholdings can be established from the International Stock Exchange's official list.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Attorney-General how many booklets have been printed advising the public on the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid; and where they have been distributed.

The Attorney-General: No booklets advising the public on the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid have been produced.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Attorney-General whether his Department has sponsored any advertising of the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid.

The Attorney-General: The Legal Aid Board, which is responsible for publicising the legal aid scheme, has not sponsored any advertising of the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration the Legal Aid Board has given to publicising the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid.

The Attorney-General: In paragraph 2.17 of its annual report, which was laid before Parliament on 25 June 1990, the Legal Aid Board reported that it was reviewing its publicity requirements. The board expects to complete its review during the current financial year and publicity for the European agreement on transmission of applications for legal aid is one of the topics to be considered.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Attorney-General how many United Kingdom citizens have received legal aid in foreign countries under the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid.

The Attorney-General: Applications made by United Kingdom citizens under the European agreement on transmission of legal aid applications during the year 1 January to 31 December 1989 as follows:

	Transmitted	[1]*Granted*
England and Wales	30	10
Northern Ireland	3	n/a
Scotland	1	0
United Kingdom	34	10

[1] Information received so far. Information relating to Northern Ireland is not available.

Information relating to earlier years is not readily available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Attorney-General whether his Department has supplied legal firms offering the legal aid scheme with details of the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid.

The Attorney-General: The Legal Aid Board publishes the "Legal Aid Handbook" each year. This guide to practitioners includes at note 52 of the notes for guidance detailed instructions on the preparation of applications including information on payment arrangements.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give the budget for publicising the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid.

The Attorney-General: The Legal Aid Board is currently reviewing its publicity requirements and although at present no part of its publicity budget is spent on publicising the European agreement on the transmission of applications for legal aid consideration will be given to this as part of the review.

TRANSPORT

Bus Fares

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most recent information his Department has on the level of bus fares since deregulation.

Mr. Freeman: The latest information on local bus fares is in the table.

	Great Britain (outside London)		
	English metropolitan areas	*Other areas*[1]	*All outside London*
Percentage increase in fares between 1985-86 and 1989			
(i) in cash terms	[2] + 56	+ 20	+ 29
(ii) adjusted for general inflation[3]	+ 29	no change	+ 7
Journeys using adult single ticket[4]			
Average fare per journey in 1989 (pence)	41p	55p	50p
Average fare per mile in 1989 (pence)	14p	15p	15p
Average journey length	2·9 miles	3·6 miles	3·3 miles

[1] English shire counties, Scotland and Wales.
[2] A sharp rise from a low level following the introduction of precept control in 1986-87. In 1989, fare levels in English metropolitan areas remained below those elsewhere.
[3] Using the retail prices index, which increased by 20 per cent., between 1985-86 and 1989.
[4] 1985-86 national travel survey data adjusted using the appropriate stage fares index.

Speed Limiters

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of coaches in the United Kingdom are now fitted with speed limiters; if he will make a statement about the benefits which have been secured for road users; and what is his policy with regard to speed limiters being fitted to heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Atkins: One hundred per cent. of those first used in Great Britain after April 1984. By next April, all coaches first used since April 1974 will also have to be fitted with limiters, and I am glad that the Bus and Coach Council is urging its members to act ahead of this deadline. It benefits all road users' safety if maximum speed limits are observed. We are currently looking into the merits of the European Commission proposal that speed limiters should also be required on heavy goods vehicles.

Air Services

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects his recent agreement with the United States Government in respect of air services to take effect.

Mr. McLoughlin: Documentation is being completed as quickly as possible and the agreement should come into full effect immediately thereafter. It will however probably take further time for airlines to plan and introduce new services.

Oil Field Workers (Insurance)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statutory provisions cover the insuring of oil field workers carried to rigs by hélicopters.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. However any helicopter operator serving United Kingdom oil and gas fields on the North sea requires an air transport licence from the Civil Aviation Authority. In deciding whether to grant such a licence the authority takes into account the financial arrangements of the operator, including the insurance arrangements which have been made.

Airlines

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that the operating opportunities for American airlines within the United Kingdom and Europe are reciprocated for British airlines in the United States of America.

Mr. McLoughlin: We and the United States Government are jointly to study liberalisation of United Kingdom-United States air services arrangements: issues of the sort my hon. Friend raises are bound to be discussed.

Driving Test

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what revisions are planned to the Department of Transport driving test in preparation for 1992.

Mr. Atkins: The European Commission published its proposals for a second directive on driver licensing in 1989. My Department consulted subsequently with interested parties on the implications of these proposals for driver testing and training. I shall announce the outcome of that consultation shortly.

Driving Instructors

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to restrict the register of approved driving instructors.

Mr. Atkins: Over the past two years the qualifying examinations for the register have been made more thorough. There are no plans to make any further alterations or to restrict entry in order to limit numbers in the profession.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of categories of people excluded from becoming Department of Transport approved driving instructors.

Mr. Atkins: The grounds on which the registrar of approved driving instructors may refuse to enter a person's name in the register are given in section 125 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are *(a)* the number of people admitted to the register of approved driving instructors and *(b)* the total number registered in each year since 1980.

Mr. Atkins: The numbers at the end of each calendar year were as follows:

	New ADIs	*Numbers on the register*
1980	2,490	23,562
1981	2,476	25,098
1982	2,262	26,101
1983	2,281	26,942
1984	2,574	28,090
1985	2,290	28,675
1986	3,147	30,069
1987	2,862	31,336
1988	[1]1,925	[2]32,381
1989	[1]2,421	[3]32,931
1990	[4]1,081	[4]33,080

[1] Figures for new ADIs exclude those joining the register between August 1988 and February 1989 when computerisation of the Register was taking place.
[2] To end July.
[3] A computer count revealed that there has been an overcount during the past of about 1,000.
[4] To end of May.

Internal Service Operations

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the countries with which reciprocal internal United Kingdom and Europe service operations have been agreed.

Mr. McLoughlin: No air services agreements containing cabotage rights exist between the United Kingdom and European partners.

Urban Roads

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the environmental measures taken to protect residents when trunk roads have been constructed or updated in urban areas since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: Measures to mitigate the impact of a new or improved road, and to enhance road safety, form an integral part of our planning and design. Each scheme is considered separately, and there is a wide range of possible measures appropriate in different circumstances. We aim to improve on our existing good practice in minimising the impact of new roads.

Local residents are consulted on route proposals at an early stage. Increased use of discretionary powers to provide noise insulation to dwellings was announced earlier this year.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many sections of trunk roads passing through urban areas have been constructed or updated in the west midlands since 1979; and if he will give the daily flow of *(a)* cars, *(b)* vans and light lorries and *(c)* heavy long distance lorries for the sections of these trunk roads which have (i) the heaviest and (ii) the lightest flow of traffic.

Mr. Atkins: There has been no major new on-line construction or other significant updating of trunk roads in urban areas of the west midlands since 1979. Small-scale new works and improvements to ease congestion or improve road safety are too numerous to list in detail.

A50, Stoke-on-Trent

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current estimate of the daily flow of *(a)* cars, *(b)* vans and light lorries and *(c)* heavy long distance lorries on the A50 at the Meir crossroads, Stoke-on-Trent; and what was the date of the traffic survey on which the estimate was based.

Mr. Atkins: Based on a survey carried out on 22 March 1990, the 12-hour two-way flow on the A50 east of Meir is:

	Number
Cars	14,648
Van and light commercial vehicles	2,760
Medium and heavy commercial vehicles	3,038
TOTAL	20,446

The estimated annual average daily 24-hour flow is 27,193.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the forecast figures for the daily flow of *(a)* cars, *(b)* vans and light lorries and *(c)* heavy long distance lorries on the A50 at the Meir crossroads, Stoke-on-Trent, in the year 2000.

Mr. Atkins: The forecast annual average daily 24-hours two-way flow on the A50 east of Meir is:

	2000 Low	*2000 High*
Cars and vans	31,800	34,300
Other goods vehicles (>30 cwt)	5,900	6,400
TOTAL	37,700	40,700

The forecast proportion of long distance other goods vehicles trips at Meir is approximately 36 per cent.

Winchester Bypass

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* deaths, *(b)* serious injuries and *(c)* minor injuries have been recorded for each of the last 10 years in respect of accidents on the Winchester bypass; and what is the recorded accident rate per 1,000 vehicle miles travelled.

Mr. Atkins: The only information readily available is as follows:

(a) The number of recorded accidents on the A33 Winchester bypass from its junction with A272 (M3) to A31 Compton in each of the last six years were:

	Fatal injuries	*Serious injuries*	*Slight injuries*
1984	2	8	35
1985	3	8	23
1986	0	12	30
1987	1	5	34
1988	1	3	22
1989	0	3	29

(b) the estimated accident rate over the last three years is 0·0002 per 1,000 vehicles miles travelled.

InterCity Routes

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the impact of Government investment on the fastest scheduled journey time on InterCity routes in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* in the current year.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* InterCity journey times improved significantly between 1974 and 1979 as a result of investment in high speed diesel trains approved in 1973. Electrification approved in 1984 is bringing further reductions in journey times on the east coast main line.

A1

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the projected traffic flow figures for vehicles by category travelling north on the A1 from Newcastle following its upgrading to motorway status south of Newcastle.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* A precise assessment has not been carried out for projected traffic flow figures for vehicles by category travelling north from Newcastle upon Tyne following the upgrading of the A1. However, a study for routes south of Edinburgh commissioned by the Scottish Office indicated that completion of a motorway link to Newcastle would not lead to any substantial transfer of traffic with the majority of long-distance travelling from England to Scotland continuing to use the west coast motorway system.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the projected traffic flow figures for vehicles by category travelling north on the A1 from Newcastle for each of the next 10 years.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* Traffic predictions allow for both low and high growth. Based upon 1989 values the annual average daily traffic prediction on the A1 north of Newcastle are as follows:

Location	Year	Low	High
Between Newcastle and Morpeth	1991	21,350	21,970
	1992	21,780	22,700
	1993	22,210	23,430
	1994	22,630	24,170
	1995	23,060	24,900
	1996	23,490	25,630
	1997	23,910	26,370
	1998	24,340	27,100
	1999	24,770	27,830
	2000	25,190	28,570

The proportions of heavy goods vehicles are expected to range from 8 to 12 per cent.

Location	Year	Low	High
Between Alnwick and Berwick	1991	6,770	6,970
	1992	6,900	7,200
	1993	7,040	7,430
	1994	7,180	7,670
	1995	7,310	7,900
	1996	7,450	8,130
	1997	7,580	8,370
	1998	7,720	8,600
	1999	7,850	8,830
	2000	7,990	9,070

The proportions of heavy goods vehicles are expected to range from 25 to 39 per cent.

Planning

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now refund the costs and other expenses funded by the Laven Glaze Group, South Brent, Dartmoor, as a result of the abortive planning appeal made by Shell UK Oil Limited, regarding land adjacent to Carew filling station which ended on 6 September 1989; and if he will make a statement as to the reason for the delay in carrying out his obligations.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* My Department has no legal obligation to refund the costs of the South Brent and Lower Glaze Group in relation to this planning appeal by Shell UK Ltd. My Department has, however, decided to pay 50 per cent. of the appeal costs and is paying the objectors' costs in full, on behalf of itself and Shell. It will also pay half of Shell's costs, when these are quantified fully, less the element already paid to the objectors. The parties will have been informed by letter of this decision and the payments will follow.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to make it compulsory for catalytic converters to be fitted to all new cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* Vehicle regulations of this sort need agreement within the European Economic Community. Now that this has been reached, the regulations laid before the House last month will mean that from 1993 onwards effectively all new petrol engined cars will need to be fitted with catalysts. Details are given in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 8 June at columns *722-23*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Courthouse, Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the opening of the new courthouse in Basildon is on schedule.

Mr. John Patten: Yes. I am very pleased to confirm that the official opening is due to take place on 30 November 1990, as arranged.

Private Security Industry

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to introduce a system of statutory regulation for the private security industry;

(2) if he will publish the membership of the Home Office working group on self-regulation of the private security industry and the date when the group's report will be published.

Mr. John Patten: We are considering, in the light of the report of the working group on the self-regulation of the private security industry, a range of options for improving the regulation of the industry. The working group included representatives from the Home Office, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the British Security Industry Association, the International Professional Security Association and the National Supervisory Council for Intruder Alarms.

When consideration of this issue has been completed, we will decide what circulation to give the working group's report.

Guard Dogs

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what restrictions exist in respect of the length of time a guard dog can work before it is rested.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The use of guard dogs is regulated by the Guard Dogs Act 1975. Section 1 of the Act defines the circumstances in which a guard dog must be secured or under the control of a handler. Neither this section, nor the remaining sections of the Act which have not been brought into force, include explicit restrictions on the length of time for which a guard dog can work before it is rested.

Forensic Pathology

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now make a statement on the Government's response to the recent working party on forensic pathology.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are still considering our response to the working party's report and we will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Child Care

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the strategy of the ministerial groups on women's issues to encourage the growth of child care facilities.

Mr. John Patten: The ministerial group on women's issues believes that high quality in the provision of child

care should be encouraged. To this end, the group has agreed a range of measures designed to maintain and improve the standards of child care for those parents who choose to combine their family responsibilities with employment opportunities.

Summaries of the initiatives on child care agreed by the group are contained in the press releases issued after the group's meetings in April 1989 and February 1990, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Lottery Tickets

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the directors of the state lottery companies in Germany regarding the sending of lottery tickets to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on 8 May at column *30* to his earlier question.

As I have further explained in correspondence with my hon. Friend, the directors have also suggested that action by them to penalise agents who continued to try to promote the lotteries here might be disputed by the agents on the ground that European Community law overrides both our 1976 Act and the lotteries' own operating rules; although there appears to be no specific or related judicial decision on this, it is our view that the prohibitions on foreign lotteries in the 1976 Act are compatible with EC law; Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have impounded huge quantities of promotional material for the lotteries sent here by post; and I understand that some court proceedings are imminent in this country relating to the seizure of some of this material.

Community Charge Defaulters, Coventry

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases the Coventry courts have so far processed against poll tax defaulters.

Mr. John Patten: No information on the processing of community charge enforcement cases in the magistrates courts is yet available. The Home Office is conducting a survey of the workload consequences for magistrates courts; the first return covers the period 1 April to 30 September 1990, and results will be available at the end of 1990 or beginning of 1991.

Management Consultants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each of the contracts awarded by his Department to management consultants on which work is currently in progress *(a)* when they started, *(b)* when they are expected to be completed and *(c)* their cost.

Mr. Waddington: Information about contract costs still extant is a matter of commercial confidentiality which it would not be proper to disclose. The details of contracts with management consultants on which work is currently in progress are as follows:

Management consultants	*Contract details*	*Start*	*Finish*
Coopers Lybrand Deloitte	Study and estimate of costs associated with the start-up and running of a magistrates courts agency.	1 May 1990	31 August 1990
PA Consultancy Group	Training for area managers in connection with reorganisation of the prison service.	February 1990 (This contract is likely to be extended to October 1990.)	July 1990
PA	Study and assistance in moving the forensic science service towards agency status by April 1991.	July 1989	March 1991
Price Waterhouse	Provision of financial advice on the privatisation of the IBA terrestrial transmission system.	26 February 1990	31 December 1990
Sudbury Consultants	Leadership training	December 1989	September 1990
Talisman	Public relations for the safer cities project, Rochdale	1 November 1989	31 October 1990
VISTA Communications	Survey of key communications systems in the prison service	8 June 1990	Autumn 1990
Watts, Reginald Associates	Marketing of fire service college	November 1989	July 1990

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long from arrival at Lunar house or the nationality department at Liverpool it takes for a letter to reach a case worker.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At Lunar house the current average time taken for non-directly addressed letters to reach caseworkers is eight working days from initial receipt and 10 working days for citizenship applications which are routed via accounts branch for the extraction of fees. Directly addressed items reach caseworkers the same day. At the Liverpool nationality office letters are opened and passed to caseworkers within 24 hours.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of applicants for naturalisation, registration or immigration die before a decision is made on their case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not available.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long it takes for 100 letters to be opened at Lunar house and the nationality department at Liverpool.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On average it takes each of the 20 staff in the Lunar house post room engaged on this work five minutes to open, date, stamp, check contents, identify any omissions, remove any valuables, prepare acknowledgement and route one item to its next destination. No information is available for correspondence opening averages in the Liverpool nationality office.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of naturalisation, registration or immigration can be dealt with concurrently within the same office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not possible to provide any such estimate.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of letters received at Lunar house, Croydon, and the nationality department at Liverpool on the first day of each month for *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following is the information:

Letters received and opened in IND post room, Lunar house

	1988	*1989*	*1990*
January	[1]1,716	1,394	1,496
February	[1]1,846	1,577	1,846
March	[1]1,964	1,647	1,532
April	1,357	1,783	1,489
May	1,198	1,688	1,549
June	1,586	1,395	1,577
July	1,326	1,310	1,528
August	1,662	1,661	—
September	1,372	1,711	—
October	1,957	1,999	—
November	2,099	2,057	—
December	1,398	1,464	—

[1] These figures do not include an estimated 14,044 applications received in the first quarter of 1988 which, because of the then backlog were not counted on a daily basis.

Notes:

The table does not include letters addressed to individuals, rooms or groups which currently average 1,400 per day. These are not opened in the post room but redirected on receipt to the addressee.

The information requested is not available in respect of the Liverpool nationality office.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the percentage of all cases where the applicant for naturalisation, immigration or registration is between the ages of one and five years, and every interval of five years through 80 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The only readily available information relates to applicants for citizenship whose dates of birth are recorded on the nationality division computer. The number of applicants for citizenship in each age band, expressed as a percentage of the number of outstanding citizenship applications is as follows:

Age band Years	*percentage*
1 to 5	2·3
6 to 10	3·9
11 to 15	4·9
16 to 20	6·2
21 to 25	8·0
26 to 30	14·2
31 to 35	17·1
36 to 40	14·2
41 to 45	10·0
46 to 50	6·1
51 to 55	4·5
56 to 60	3·3
61 to 65	2·4
66 to 70	1·5
71 to 75	0·6
76 to 80	0·3

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outstanding immigration applications there are at Lunar house; what time savings in dealing with applications from *(a)* students, *(b)* family members in the United Kingdom applying for variation of stay, *(c)* settlement entry clearance applications referred from overseas posts and *(d)* asylum-seekers have been achieved by the 1988 changes in procedures and practice; and what are the average times applicants in each category might expect to wait before a decision.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of March 1990, there were about 28,000 cases in the immigration caseworking groups, including eastern European cases, and referred entry clearance applications, the majority of which were under consideration or the subject of further inquiries and about 16,300 cases in the refugee unit.

A number of changes in procedure and practice have been introduced over the last two years in order to reduce the level of outstanding applications and reduce the time taken to process them. Information on administrative time savings as a result of these changes is not available in the form requested.

The estimated average length of time between the receipt of an application and the decision, for cases decided in caseworking groups and the public inquiry offices, in the first quarter of 1990 was two and a half months for students and nine and a half months for refugee status. Information on average waiting times for family members in the United Kingdom for variation of leave and for settlement entry clearance applications referred from overseas posts is not available.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from hon. Members during each quarter of 1989 and the first quarter of 1990 to delay the removal of passengers refused entry at British ports of entry; and, for each period, how many representations resulted in (i) the delay of the passenger's removal for up to a week, (ii) the delay of the passenger's removal for more than a week and (iii) reversal of the immigration officer's decision.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 12 March at column *16*.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* single entry and *(b)* multiple entry visit visas were (i) received, (ii) granted, (iii) refused initially and (iv) granted at appeal at each post in the Indian sub-continent, Ghana, Nigeria, Turkey and Jamaica in each quarter of 1989 and the first

quarter of 1990; and what was the delay between application and interview for those whose applications were felt to need a second or long interview at each of the above posts in (1) June 1989, (2) January 1990 and (3) June 1990 or the nearest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on applications in Jamaica for a visit entry clearance, and separate information on applications in the other countries for single entry and multiple entry visit visas, are not available centrally. The other information requested is given in the tables.

Table 1—persons applying for a visit visa to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications			
	Newly received[1]	*Granted*	*Of which: Granted on appeal*	*Refused initially*
Dhaka				
1989				
1st quarter	2,130	1,590	[4]—	420
2nd quarter	3,230	2,490	[4]—	610
3rd quarter	3,460	2,720	[4]—	650
4th quarter	2,500	1,660	[4]—	700
Year	11,330	8,450	[4]—	2,390
1990				
1st quarter	2,260	1,500	[4]—	620
New Delhi				
1989				
1st quarter	8,160	6,700	30	1,040
2nd quarter	17,010	14,770	50	1,620
3rd quarter	12,780	9,450	50	1,580
4th quarter	7,660	6,130	30	1,100
Year	45,620	36,960	150	5,350
1990				
1st quarter	8,980	6,990	40	1,420
Bombay				
1989				
1st quarter	7,290	6,850	10	460
2nd quarter	18,050	17,070	10	830
3rd quarter	10,030	8,970	20	660
4th quarter	5,660	4,970	20	520
Year	41,030	37,860	50	2,470
1990				
1st quarter	7,990	7,420	20	800
Calcutta				
1989				
1st quarter	1,110	1,090	[5]—	20
2nd quarter	3,360	3,290	[5]—	40
3rd quarter	2,470	2,420	[4]—	50
4th quarter	850	820	[4]—	30
Year	7,780	7,620	[5]—	140
1990				
1st quarter	1,160	1,110	[5]—	30
Madras				
1989				
1st quarter	1,830	1,780	[4]—	30
2nd quarter	4,100	4,080	[4]—	30
3rd quarter	2,860	2,830	[5]—	40
4th quarter	1,320	1,270	[4]—	40
Year	10,120	9, 960	[5]—	140
1990				
1st quarter	1,930	1,900	[5]—	40
Islamabad				
1989				
1st quarter	6,130	4,700	10	1,240
2nd quarter	11,630	10,360	40	1,770
3rd quarter	11,700	9,180	60	2,190
4th quarter	6,970	4,730	60	1,660
Year	36,420	28,970	170	6,860
1990				
1st quarter	7,770	5,100	70	1,440
Karachi				
1989				
1st quarter	4,200	3,570	[5]—	480
2nd quarter	9,680	8,710	[5]—	700
3rd quarter	7,840	6,870	[4]—	790
4th quarter	4,810	3,970	10	660
Year	26,530	23,120	10	2,630
1990				
1st quarter	4,510	3,690	10	680
Accra				
1989				
1st quarter	2,390	1,930	[5]—	270
2nd quarter	3,760	3,150	[5]—	460
3rd quarter	4,390	3,960	10	340
4th quarter	2,850	2,230	[5]—	290
Year	13,380	11,270	10	1,370
1990				
1st quarter	2,790	2,190	10	600
Lagos				
1989				
1st quarter	9,190	6,240	[4]—	1,410
2nd quarter	15,980	10,930	[4]—	2,180
3rd quarter	18,290	12,090	[5]—	2,070
4th quarter	10,760	7,200	[4]—	1,640
Year	54,220	36,460	[5]—	7,290
1990				
1st quarter	10,380	7,190	[5]—	1,910
Kaduna				
1989				
1st quarter	1,070	880	[4]—	140
2nd quarter	2,060	1,760	[5]—	210
3rd quarter	2,070	1,650	[4]—	250
4th quarter	1,640	1,350	[4]—	220
Year	6,840	5,360	[5]—	830
1990				
1st quarter	1,650	1,360	[4]—	310
Ankara				
1989				
3rd quarter[2]	3,080	2,820	[4]—	230
4th quarter	2,450	2,150	[4]—	250
Year	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—

	Applications			
	Newly received[1]	Granted	Of which: Granted on appeal	Refused initially
1990				
1st quarter	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—
ISTANBUL				
1989				
3rd quarter[2]	7,710	7,470	[4]—	70
4th quarter	[3]6,000	[3]5,800	[3]—	70
Year	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—
1990				
1st quarter	[3]5,200	[3]5,000	[4]—	60

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[2] Including period 23 to 30 June 1989; corresponding data are not available prior to 23 June 1989, when the visa requirement was introduced.
[3] Estimated.
[4] Nil.
[5] Five or fewer.
[6] Not available centrally.

Table 2: Waiting time for persons applying for a visit visa who required a lengthy interview

Number of days

Post	Waiting time for person interviewed at end of period		
	June 1989	January 1990	May 1990
Dhaka	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—
New Delhi	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—
Bombay	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—
Calcutta	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—
Madras	[6]— or 1	1	[6]—
Islamabad	7	10	10
Karachi	[6]—	[6]—	[6]—
Accra	[7]—	35[1]	4[2]
Lagos	1	1[1]	[7]—
Kaduna	[6]—	[6]1—	[6]3—
Ankara	9[4]	10	1[5]
Istanbul	9[4]	16	2

[1] At end December 1989
[2] At end June 1990
[3] At end March 1990
[4] At end July 1989
[5] At end February 1990
[6]— same day
[7]— not available centrally

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outstanding applications there were at Lunar house and the nationality department at Liverpool in each month of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his earlier question on 25 June at column *36*. The nationality figures in that reply include applications outstanding at Liverpool.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of *(a)* Jamaica, *(b)* Turkey, *(c)* Morocco, *(d)* the United States of America, *(e)* Australia, *(f)* Malaysia, *(g)* Hong Kong, *(h)* Guyana, *(i)* Trinidad, *(j)* Colombia, *(k)* Algeria, *(l)* Barbados and *(m)* Tunisia were (i) granted and (ii) refused permission to enter the United Kingdom at ports of entry, in each quarter since January 1989 to the nearest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is given in the table:

Total passenger admissions and those refused leave to enter and removed by selected nationalities

Numbers

	First Quarter	
	Admissions	Refused and removed
1989		
Jamaica	6,230	236
Turkey	17,000	618
Morocco	3,520	253
United States of America	442,000	261
Australia	72,400	35
Malaysia	12,400	93
Hong Kong (BDTCs and BN(O)s)	14,500	33
Guyana	1,080	11
Trinidad and Tobago	3,260	18
Colombia	3,320	116
Algeria	4,120	391
Barbados	1,490	6
Tunisia	1,870	50

Total passenger admissions and those refused leave to enter and removed by selected nationalities

Numbers

	Second Quarter	
	Admissions	Refused and removed
1989		
Jamaica	8,310	195
Turkey	16,900	1,082
Morocco	4,160	305
United States of America	787,000	280
Australia	129,000	40
Malaysia	16,800	261
Hong Kong (BDTCs and BN(O)s)	14,600	45
Guyana	1,460	9
Trinidad and Tobago	4,200	16
Colombia	5,490	196
Algeria	4,560	543
Barbados	2,260	7
Tunisia	1,980	42

Total passenger admissions and those refused leave to enter and removed by selected nationalities

Number

	Third Quarter	
	Admissions	Refused and removed
1989		
Jamaica	11,700	202
Turkey	20,800	286
Morocco	9,610	1,051
United States of America	877,000	337
Australia	154,000	38
Malaysia	25,800	141
Hong Kong (BDTCs and BN(O)s)	28,200	49
Guyana	2,360	10
Trinidad and Tobago	6,410	24
Colombia	6,460	194
Algeria	8,380	1,198
Barbados	4,120	12
Tunisia	2,550	58

Total passenger admissions and those refused leave to enter and removed by selected nationalities

Numbers

	Fourth quarter	
	Admissions	*Refused and removed*
1989		
Jamaica	5,920	170
Turkey	15,600	122
Morocco	5,100	466
United States of America	569,000	270
Australia	95,600	33
Malaysia	17,200	123
Hong Kong (BDTCs and BN(O)s)	12,600	51
Guyana	1,330	14
Trinidad and Tobago	3,670	18
Colombia	3,710	133
Algeria	4,570	961
Barbados	1,640	6
Tunisia	2,170	60

Total passenger admissions and those refused leave to enter and removed by selected nationalities

Numbers

	Total	
	Admissions	*Refused and removed*
1989		
Jamaica	32,200	803
Turkey	70,300	2,108
Morocco	22,400	2,075
United States of America	2,670,000	1,148
Australia	451,000	146
Malaysia	72,200	618
Hong Kong (BDTCs and BN(O)s)	69,900	178
Guyana	6,230	44
Trinidad and Tobago	17,500	76
Colombia	19,000	639
Algeria	21,600	3,093
Barbados	9,510	31
Tunisia	8,570	210

	First Quarter	
	Admissions	*Refused and removed*
1990		
Jamaica	5,530	160
Turkey	16,800	82
Morocco	4,550	353
United States of America	506,000	313
Australia	80,000	45
Malaysia	13,600	107
Hong Kong (BDTCs and BN(O)s)	15,000	40
Guyana	1,080	15
Trinidad and Tobago	3,320	32
Colombia	3,300	130
Algeria	4,880	748
Barbados	1,300	6
Tunisia	2,030	81

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were received into prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* 1989, by individual prison establishment; what was the average daily population of persons so detained in each of those years; what was the average length of time spent in detention by persons so detained in each of those years; and whether he will give a breakdown by nationality of persons so detained for each of those years.

Mr. Mellor: Information about detainees received into prison service establishments in England and Wales under the Immigration Act 1971 in 1988 is given by establishment and nationality in the tables. Similar information for 1989 is not yet available. The average period of detention completed by such persons in 1989 is provisionally estimated as nearly five weeks. The average population was 157 in 1989, including persons originally received for a criminal offence. The average population and the average length of detention of detainees in prison service establishments in 1988 were published in tables 1.1 and 6.6 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales"—Cm 825—a copy of which is in the Library.

Receptions of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 into prison service establishments in England and Wales in 1988: by establishment

Establishment	[1] *Number*
Remand centres	
Ashford	1
Brockhill	2
Hull	2
Latchmere House	917
Low Newton	1
Manchester	1
Pucklechurch	3
Risley	25
Winchester	1
Local prisons	
Bedford	8
Birmingham	33
Bristol	15
Brixton	16
Canterbury	28
Cardiff	4
Dorchester	4
Durham	21
Exeter	1
Gloucester	4
Holloway	19
Hull	18
Leeds	16
Leicester	56
Lewes	3
Lincoln	2
New Hall	1
Norwich	3
Oxford	4
Pentonville	31
Reading	4
Shrewsbury	4
Swansea	2
Winchester	9
All prison service establishments	1,259

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Receptions of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales in 1988: by nationality

Nationality	*Number*[1]
Nigeria	268
Ghana	142
India	116
Turkey	111
Pakistan	61
Bangladesh	50
Sri Lanka	45
Algeria	35
Morocco	35
Iran	27

Nationality	Number[1]
Jamaica	27
Iraq	17
Somalia	176
Lebanon	15
Cyprus	14
Malaysia	13
Uganda	12
Hong Kong	11
Colombia	10
Portugal	10
France	9
Sierra Leone	9
Brazil	8
Egypt	8
Yugoslavia	8
United States of America	7
Libya	6
China	5
Poland	5
Seychelles	5
Other nationalities[2]	114
Not recorded	40
All nationalities	1,259

[1]The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost

[2]Where fewer than five were recorded

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were detained under Immigration Act powers for a period of more than two months on completion of a custodial sentence during *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989 and *(c)* the first quarter of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The figures, excluding deportation cases who served a custodial sentence of seven days or less for whom the information is not readily available, are as follows:

	Persons
1988	11
1989	16
[1]1990	2

[1] First quarter.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were recommended for deportation with no custodial sentence during 1989 and the first quarter of 1990; and in how many such cases the courts directed release *(a)* subject to conditions and *(b)* without conditions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During 1989, a total of 86 persons were recommended for deportation by the courts with no custodial sentence and a total of 13 persons during the first quarter of 1990. The other information requested is no longer collected centrally and is not readily available.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons detained under Immigration Act powers applied to his Department to be allowed to depart voluntarily under the supervised departure provisions of the immigration rules in each quarter since January 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The readily available information on the numbers of persons removed under the supervised departure procedures for 1989 is published in table 14 of the statistical bulletin issue 8/90 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Fourth Quarter and Year 1989" and more recently in table 18 of the Home Office Command Paper "Control of Immigration Statistics United Kingdom 1989"—Cm. 1124—copies of both of which are in the Library. The available information for 1990 is given in the table. Most of these persons would have been detained prior to departure. A number would have been subject to restrictions as an alternative to detention but such cases could be separately identified only at disproportionate cost.

Number of persons removed under the supervised departure procedures by category of case in the first quarter of 1990

Period	Breach of conditions of leave to enter or remain (Section 3(5)a)	Following court recommendation (Section 3(6))	Total number of persons
1990[1]	309	3	312

[1] First quarter.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were (i) the total numbers detained and (ii) the average occupancy in *(a)* Harmondsworth detention centre, *(b)* the Harmondsworth annex, *(c)* Queen's building, *(d)* the Beehive, Gatwick, and *(e)* Her Majesty's prison, Haslar, for each month from January 1989 to the nearest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is as follows:

Total numbers of persons newly detained at each location during the month shown

Month	Harmondsworth detention centre	Queen's building	Beehive	Haslar
January 1989	252	219	255	—
February 1989	214	210	229	—
March 1989	215	235	137	—
April 1989	191	225	280	—
May 1989	234	244	308	—
June 1989	180	185	223	—
July 1989	174	202	195	117
August 1989	261	220	258	72
September 1989	351	229	241	78
October 1989	434	196	264	78
November 1989	485	205	196	81
December 1989	428	204	236	95
January 1990	420	175	224	68
February 1990	272	178	131	86
March 1990	492	225	211	77

Month	Harmondsworth detention centre	Queen's building	Beehive	Haslar
April 1990	359	150	135	56
May 1990	358	155	97	78

Notes:
(i) Some persons may have been detained at more than one location within the same month.
(ii) Harmondsworth detention centre figures relate to both buildings DA and annex JA.
(iii) HMP Haslar was used for immigration detention purposes from 28 June 1989.

Average occupancy figures

	Harmondsworth building DA	Harmondsworth JA Annex	Queen's building	Gatwick Beehive	Haslar
January 1989	63	29	15	15	—
February 1989	63	30	15	14	—
March 1989	60	30	15	14	—
April 1989	64	29	15	14	—
May 1989	64	30	14	15	—
June 1989	65	30	15	16	—
July 1989	65	30	15	14	75
August 1989	63	30	14	13	87
September 1989	64	29	15	14	90
October 1989	55	29	14	13	71
November 1989	51	28	14	12	72
December 1989	54	28	13	14	81
January 1990	50	26	13	13	63
February 1990	55	26	13	9	76
March 1990	48	25	14	12	79
April 1990	55	25	12	9	82
May 1990	57	25	10	11	87

Note: HMP Haslar was used for immigration detention purposes from 28 June 1989.

Late Night Trading

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to legitimise the existing pattern of late night trading.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 23 May at columns *178-79*.

Injuries (Police Custody)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people by ethnic origin have *(a)* died and *(b)* been injured while detained in police custody over the past 12 months and the past 24 months, or the nearest equivalent periods for which figures are available; and what were the causes of these deaths and injuries, broken down by the ethnic origin of the victims.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information about persons who have died in police custody, including the cause of death, is published in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. No record is kept of the person's ethnic origin. Information about injuries is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Political Asylum

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will provide a breakdown by nationality of the numbers of passengers seeking political asylum who were detained under Immigration Act powers in 1989 in *(a)* prison department establishments and *(b)* immigration detention accommodation;

(2) how many passengers seeking political asylum in *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989 and *(c)* 1990 up to the nearest available date were granted temporary admission.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance in order to seek asylum in the United Kingdom were *(a)* received and *(b)* granted, by country, during 1989 and the first quarter of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on applications for asylum in the United Kingdom made abroad is given in the table:

Applications for asylum in the United Kingdom received by British posts abroad and referred to the Home Office for decision[1], and grants of refugee status, by nationality (provisional estimates[2])

Number of persons

Nationality	Applications received 1989	Applications received First quarter 1990	Grants of asylum[3] 1989	Grants of asylum[3] First quarter 1990
Afghanistan	—	•	—	—
Angola	5	—	—	—
China	•	•	•	•
Czechoslovakia	—	—	5	—
Ethiopia	15	•	5	5
Ghana	5	—	•	•
India	15	•	—	—
Iran	10	5	10	—
Iraq	15	—	10	—
Lebanon	5	—	—	—
Libya	•	—	—	—
Malawi	•	—	—	—
Malaysia	—	•	—	—
Romania	•	—	—	—
Somalia	75	5	50	10
South Africa	•	—	•	—
Sri Lanka	115	15	•	—
Sudan	•	—	•	—
Turkey	225	—	30	5
Uganda	110	•	—	•

Nationality	Applications received 1989	Applications received First quarter 1990	Grants of asylum[3] 1989	Grants of asylum[3] First quarter 1990
Zaire	15	*	5	—
Zimbabwe	*	—	—	—
Nationality uncertain	*	*	5	*
Total	615	35	135	25

[1] In addition a further 65 applications in 1989, and 20 in the first quarter of 1990, largely by nationals of Afghanistan were made to the British High Commission in New Delhi, and are being processed locally. No grants of asylum were made during this time.

[2] Figures rounded to the nearest 5, with "*" = 1 or 2.

[3] Grants in the time periods shown do not necessarily relate to applications made in those periods.

Police (Damages Claims)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims for damages against the police have been lodged in the past 12 months or the last complete period of 12 months for which figures are available; and if he will give in the most convenient form *(a)* the ethnic origin of the claimants, *(b)* the average level of damages claimed and *(c)* the reasons for the claims.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Poland

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what steps he is taking to encourage joint ventures by British companies in Poland;

(2) what steps he is taking to encourage the establishment of commercial and business know-how funds in Poland.

Mrs. Chalker: With the agreement of the Polish authorities our highest priorities for the know-how fund are areas directly related to the fostering of a market driven economy—banking and financial services, energy, industrial regeneration, management, accountancy and the teaching of English. A substantial programme of work is now being implemented. In addition, we are introducing schemes under the know-how fund to support pre-investment feasibility studies and the training of potential east European joint venture partners. A number of proposals under these schemes relating to Poland have been received and are being considered.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manhole Covers

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the total volume of manhole covers imported from India in 1989; and what is that amount as a percentage of the United Kingdom foundries' production for the same period;

(2) what was the tonnage of manhole covers imported from India in December 1989; and what information he has on the percentage that were defective.

Mr. Redwood: Manhole covers are not separately identified within the United Kingdom customs tariff but fall within a general category "cast articles of non-malleable cast-iron for sewage, water, etc, systems" which also covers a number of other items such as cast iron pipes. A breakdown of the detailed products within the category would involve disproportionate costs.

Imports from India for the category as a whole were 6,149 metric tonnes in 1989.

United Kingdom production data for manhole covers are also not separately available from official statistics, but the industry has estimated that current production amounts to about 80,000 tonnes per annum. No information is available on the proportion of manhole covers that were defective.

Brewing

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will request a report from the Director General of Fair Trading on the implementation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on brewing.

Mr. Redwood: When announcing decisions on the MMC report, we made it clear that the Director General of Fair Trading—DGFT—will be assessing the effectiveness of the measures once the Supply of Beer Orders have had time to take full effect. Under the Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order, brewers have until 1 November 1992 to complete the process of releasing premises from ties, although certain measures took effect on 1 May 1990. The DGFT is ready to receive any complaints or evidence of anti-competitive practices. If he thinks at any stage that further steps are necessary I will consider what action is appropriate following advice from him. In the meantime the Department and the Office of Fair Trading are maintaining cose contact on developments.

Structural Adjustments Initiative

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what impact the agreement between Japan and the United States of America at the structural adjustments initiative talks will have upon the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: Both Japan and the United States have made it clear that any trade benefits which result from the structural impediments initiative will be available multilaterally. The United Kingdom attaches particular importance to the continued movement from exports led to domestic demand-led growth in Japan and to the development of an environment within Japan which enables foreign companies more easily to acquire and develop businesses there.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals exist to harmonise the Securities and Investments Board and its Group of Seven equivalents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. For legal and historical reasons, national regulatory regimes are very diverse. However, globalisation of financial markets is leading to a growing international awareness of the importance of increased co-operation between national regulators and enforcement agencies and of the need for mechanisms to ensure

that regulatory disparities do not hinder growth of cross-border trade. The Government, through the participation in the work of the International Organisation of Securities Commission and through direct contacts with other countries' governments and regulators, are seeking opportunities for moves towards arrangements for the mutual recognition of comparable regulatory regimes. The European Community is following a similar approach in the proposed investment services directive which will create the single European market in investment services.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the Group of Seven organisations and the powers which are comparable to the five United Kingdom self-regulatory organisations responsible to the Securities and Investments Boards.

Mr. Redwood: I have extensive information on the regimes and powers of the securities regulatory authorities of the Group of Seven countries both through regular, frequent bilateral contact between my Department and these authorities and through the valuable work of international organisations such as IOSCO—the International Organisation for Securities Commissions.

Calder Valley Trade and Industry Exhibition

Mr. Donald Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to Calder Valley trade and industry to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 16 July until 20 July.

Textile Mill Closures

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many mill closures have been reported in the textile and clothing industry in the past 12 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Industry sources indicate that there were 45 mill closures in the 12 months to May 1990.

Regional Policies

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to introduce new regional policies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to introduce new regional policies. The Government remain committed to an effective regional policy and will continue to make the necessary resources available.

Office of Fair Trading

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the investigations currently being conducted by the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Redwood: It is not practicable to do so. The Director General of Fair Trading's Office conducts a considerable number of inquiries under the competition, consumer, companies and financial services legislation for which he is responsible. It is in the nature of such inquiries that much of this work must be carried out on a confidential basis.

Arms Conversion

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to set up an arms conversion agency.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have nothing to add to the replies I have given to the hon. Member's earlier questions on this subject.

Financial Services

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry with whom the duty lies to vet financial products which are on offer as to whether they constitute investments under the terms of the Financial Services Act or the Banking Act.

Mr. Redwood: It is the responsibility of the person proposing to offer a financial product to assess whether that product falls within the scope of either the Financial Services Act or the Banking Act, or both, and to obtain any necessary authorisations before offering it. In the case of the Financial Services Act, the primary responsibility for investigating and, if appropriate, taking action against those offering a financial product without the requisite authorisation lies with the Securities and Investments Board. In respect of the Banking Act, the responsibility lies with the Bank of England.

Companies Act 1989

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further plans he has to implement the provisions of the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: I signed an order yesterday which commences certain provisions of the Act. Section 130—company seals—section 138—directors' loans—and section 211(2) and (3)—building societies—will commence on 31 July 1990. Section 129—membership of holding company—section 144—definition of subsidiary—and section 207—order-making power for transfer of securities—will come into force on 1 November 1990. The order provides for certain transitional and saving provisions for sections 138, 144 and 211(2) and (3). I have placed a copy of the order in the Library.

Import and Export Licences

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many licences he has granted under the Import, Export and Customs Powers (Defence) Act 1939 in each year since 1979.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* Under the powers conferred upon him by the Import, Export and Customs Powers (Defence) Act, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has granted import and export licences as follows:

	Number
Import licences	
1985	144,951
1986	186,869

	Number
1987	191,532
1988	214,522
1989	200,746
1990[1]	79,693
Export licences	
1987	97,809
1988	89,800
1989	72,527
1990[2]	20,969

[1] To end of June.
[2] To end of May.

Complete figures for import and export licences issued prior to these dates are not readily available, and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

From time to time my Department also issues open general licences for importers and exporters, which preclude the need to obtain individual licences for certain goods.

Import Restrictions

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether there are any restrictions on the import of turpentine and oil of camphor.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* There are no quantitative restrictions on imports to the United Kingdom of turpentine or oil of camphor. Under the common customs tariff of the Communities, import duties ranging from 3·2 to 7·1 per cent. would be payable on these products although in the case of certain types of turpentine duties have been partially or totally suspended.

ECGD Insurance Service Group

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the full analysis of the costs of operating the insurance service group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department for the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* ECGD's published annual trading accounts include an analysis of the costs of operating ECGD as a whole but do not separately identify the costs of operating the insurance services group. Appropriate information will be made available to potential investors when final decisions have been taken about the proposed method of sale of the insurance services group.

MV Derbyshire

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what indemnification was provided against litigation arising out of the loss of MV Derbyshire; when the indemnity was agreed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* Under the terms of an indemnity given at the time of the privatisation of Swan Hunter Shipbuilders in January 1986, British Shipbuilders assumed responsibility for all claims made against Swan Hunter in relation to all vessels delivered prior to the sale of the yard. I do not intend to make a statement at this time.

Uruguay Round

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the meetings of the Uruguay round at which the United Kingdom has been represented and the names of the United Kingdom representatives on each occasion.

Mr. Redwood: The United Kingdom participates in the GATT Uruguay round as a member of the European Community, and is represented at meetings by the European Commission. United Kingdom officials also attend all formal meetings as observers.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the United Kingdom's policy in respect of eliminating farming subsidies via the Uruguay round; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

All parties to the GATT round negotiation have agreed the long-term objective. It is to provide

"substantial progressive reductions in agricultural support and protection sustained over an agreed period of time, resulting in correcting and preventing restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets".

The United Kingdom attaches great importance to the success of the round as a whole, of which agriculture is a key element; and we are working hard with our EC partners and others to achieve this.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. and Mrs. Konin

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Russians about their failure to grant an exit visa to Mr. and Mrs. Leo Konin of Moscow.

Mr. Waldegrave: We can certainly raise the case of Mr. and Mrs. Leo Konin with the Soviet authorities, but in order to make our representations most effective we shall need further details.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government are taking to *(a)* encourage educational, economic, social and cultural links with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, *(b)* enable the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to open a mission in the United Kingdom and *(c)* end the international isolation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We do not recognise North Korea as a state and consequently have no official dealings with any authorities in North Korea. But we impose no restrictions on educational, trade and other informal links. We welcome the resumption of contacts between South and North Korea on 3 July.

El Salvador

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he envisages any role for Her Majesty's Government in the election process in El Salvador later this year.

Mr. Sainsbury: The nature of the arrangements for the elections due in El Salvador in March 1991 is under discussion in talks between the Government of El Salvador and representatives of the FMLN. It should become clearer, in the light of the outcome of these talks, what role the international community might play.

Malawi

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reply he has sent to the letter to him from the Rev. John Harvey about Mr. Orton Chirwa and Mrs. Vera Chirwa, held incommunicado in a Malawi prison.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will be sending the hon. Member a copy of my reply.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for entry clearance as woking holidaymakers have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused in (i) India, (ii) Bangladesh, (iii) Australia and (iv) Canada, during 1989 and 1990 to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is as follows:

	Received	*Withdrawn*	*Granted*	*Refused*
(i) India 1989	3	1	0	2
January to June 1990	1	0	0	1
(ii) Bangladesh	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
(iii) Australia 1989	9,504	147	9,349	8
January to June 1990	7,293	124	7,166	3
(iv) Canada 1989	1,904	17	1,886	1
January to June 1990	1,202	12	1,182	2

[1] Accurate figures are not available: the numbers are believed to be minimal.

Legal Aid

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what details are made available by consulate staff to United Kingdom citizens seeking legal aid in foreign countries;

(2) approximately how many United Kingdom citizens visiting United Kingdom consulates in foreign countries have been advised on the availability of legal aid.

Mr. Sainsbury: Consular officers can advise British nationals who inquire whether legal aid is available and how to apply. No record is kept of the number of such inquiries received.

Contras (Demobilisation)

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received on the demobilisation of the Contras; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Demobilisation of the Contras was completed on 29 June, by which time 19,369 men had been demobilised in Nicaragua. A further 2,607 have been demobilised in Honduras. Some 17,000 weapons have been collected and destroyed. The prospects for peace and stability in Nicaragua have been greatly enhanced by this successful operation, and I congratulate all concerned with it, in particular the United Nations force responsible—ONUCA.

Voting Statistics

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his reply of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *384*, if he will list in one table and in descending order the percentage of the population entitled to vote who voted for the main governing party in each NATO and Warsaw pact country.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:*

	Per cent.
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO)	
Federal Republic of Germany (1987)	
CDU/CSU	37·00
Portugal (1987)	
Social Democrats	35·94
Greece (1990)	
New Democracy party	35·90
Turkey (1987)	
Motherland Party (ANAP)	33·30
Canada (1988)	
Progressive Conservative Party	32·25
United Kingdom (1987)	
Conservative Party	31·50
Italy (1987)	
Christian Democrats	29·00
Netherlands (1989)	
Christian Democratic Alliance	28·26
(Labour Party	25·50
Spain (1989)	
Socialist Party	27·45
United States (1988)	
President Bush as Republican presidential candidate	26·80
Belgium (1987)	
Socialist Party	26·60
Christian Democrats)	23·90
France (1988)	
Socialist Party	24·15
Norway (1989)	
Conservative Party	18·30
Iceland (1987)	
Progressive Party	16·80

	Per cent.
Denmark (1988)	
Conservative People's Party	16·50
Luxembourg[1]	
WARSAW PACT	
Romania	
National Salvation Front	54·00
Czechoslovakia	
Czech governing party—Civic Forum	49·00
Slovak governing party—Public Against Violence	32·00
Bulgaria	
Bulgarian Socialist Party	41·00
Poland	
Solidarity (Senate elections)	39·00
German Democratic Republic	
Christian Democratic Union	38·00
Hungary	
Democratic Forum (first round)	15·00

[1]No comparable figure for Luxembourg is available, since each voter may cast several votes.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Guillotine Motions

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the occasions on which the Government have introduced an allocation of time order in the sessions (a) 1988-89 and (b) 1989-90.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government have introduced the following allocation of time orders since the beginning of the 1988-89 Session:

1988-89	
23 January 1989	Prevention of Terrorism Bill
6 February 1989	Water Bill
13 February 1989	Official Secrets Bill
3 May 1989	Self-Governing Schools etc (Scotland) Bill
8 May 1989	Dock Work Bill
17 July 1989	Football Spectators Bill *[Lords]*
26 October 1989	Companies Bill *[Lords]* and Children Bill *[Lords]*
8 November 1989	Local Government and Housing Bill and Employment Bill
1989-90	
14 March 1990	National Health Service and Community Care Bill
28 March 1990	Social Security Bill
2 April 1990	Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill *[Lords]*
4 April 1990	Education (Student Loans) Bill

EMPLOYMENT

Written Answers

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make it his policy that, henceforth, written answers from his Department will be published as before.

Mr. Eggar: Recent changes to the way that written parliamentary questions are answered by Ministers in this Department have been in the context of the establishment of the Employment Service as an executive agency and of training and enterprise councils. The arrangements for responding to inquiries from hon. Members were described in the booklets that were sent in April to right hon. and hon. Members entitled "The Employment Service: The Handling of MP's Inquiries and Parliamentary Questions" and "Guidelines on the handling of representations by members of parliament about the activities of Training and Enterprise Councils". I refer the hon. Lady to the answer on 21 May, *Official Report*, columns 145-52.

Local Offices

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people registered unemployed fortnightly and quarterly, at the part-time benefit signing office in Ferryhill, County Durham, during its last month of operation;

(2) what arrangements will be made to cover the transport costs of claimants affected by the closure of the part-time benefit signing office in Ferryhill, County Durham;

(3) what are the latest figures for the number of people who register unemployed, by individual office and by region, on a fortnightly and quarterly basis, at the part-time unemployment benefit offices now in operation;

(4) how many people registered unemployed fortnightly and quarterly at the part-time unemployment offices closed between April 1985 and April 1990, for each office and by region;

(5) what was the estimated annual savings incurred by the closure of part-time unemployment benefit offices between April 1985 and April 1990, for each office and by region.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Gentleman.

Women

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of women work in the United Kingdom; and what are the comparable figures in European countries.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest comparable figures are given in the table. At that time 57 per cent. of women of working age—14-64—in the United Kingdom were in employment; only Denmark had a higher percentage.

	Per cent.
United Kingdom	57
Belgium	38
Denmark	70
Germany	49
Greece	36
Spain	27
France	49
Ireland	32
Italy	35
Luxembourg	40
Holland	43
Portugal	50

Source: Eurostat labour force survey, spring 1988.

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of self-employed people are women; and what was the percentage in 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: In December 1989, the latest date for which estimates are available, self-employed women represented 24 per cent. of the total self-employed in the United Kingdom, compared with 19 per cent. in June 1979.

Working Hours

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what restrictions exist on the length of time an employee may work before he or she is legally entitled to rest.

Mr. Nicholls: In general, these are matters for agreement between employers and their employees or their representatives, but all employers have a general duty under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees. This means they cannot normally require people to work excessive hours or unsuitable shift patterns likely to lead to ill health or accidents caused by fatigue. Work schedules should also allow for adequate rest periods. There are also particular restrictions on the periods that may be worked without a rest by heavy vehicle drivers, aircrews and workers covered by the Shops Act 1950.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which bodies are being consulted on his consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities".

Mr. Eggar: I look forward to receiving comments from all interested parties on the consultative document. Copies have been sent to a wide range of organisations and individuals; including the all-party disablement group, the Select Committee on Employment, the National Advisory Council on Employment of Disabled People, committees for the employment of disabled people, organisations of and for people with disabilities, providers of employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities, the CBI, the TUC, local authorities and professional bodies with an interest in the employment and training of people with disabilities. Copies of the document are available to anyone who wishes to comment.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many parliamentary questions, since 1 April he has answered and, of that number, how many he *(a)* arranged a reply from the Employment Service agency's chief executive direct to the hon. Member concerned, *(b)* offered to write direct to the hon. Member himself, *(c)* referred the hon. Member to a document in the Library and *(d)* declined to answer because of disproportionate cost; and what were the comparable figures for the same period in 1988-89.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested in the period between 1 April and 6 July is set out in the table.

	1989	*1990*
Questions answered	1,041	958
(a) reply from the Employment Service chief executive	[1]n/a	57
(b) wrote direct to the hon. Member	9	2
(c) referred hon. Member to a document in the Library	10	7
(d) declined to answer because of disproportionate cost	20	28

[1] The Employment Service did not become an executive agency until 2 April 1990.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when individual local education authorities were provided with their allocated budget for TVEI extension for 1991-92; and if he will publish them.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Education authorities have not yet been given their budgets for TVEI extension for 1991-92.

WALES

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount paid to farmers under the environmentally sensitive area scheme in each of the designated areas in the year to 31 March; how much was reimbursed by the European Economic Community; and when he expects to be able to assess any savings made under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. David Hunt: Participants in the ESA schemes in the Cambrian mountains and the Lleyn peninsula received £478,000 and £228,000 respectively in 1989-90. The payments attract 25 per cent. reimbursement from EC Funds—FEOGA. The economic studies which will provide information on any change in support costs under the CAP are not yet complete.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the emoluments of *(a)* chairmen and women, *(b)* vice-chairmen and women, *(c)* board members and *(d)* chief executives of non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The emoluments of *(a)* chairmen and women, *(b)* vice-chairmen and women and *(c)* board members are shown in "Public Bodies 1989", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The emoluments of chief executives (or equivalents) of the executive non-departmental public bodies in Wales are as follows:

	£
Agricultural Wages Committees	n/a
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	46,745
Curriculum Council for Wales	[1]—
Development Board for Rural Wales	43,350
Housing for Wales	43,350
Land Authority for Wales	43,350
National Library of Wales	[2]—
National Museum of Wales	[2]—
Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales	[1]—

	£
Sports Council for Wales	[1]—
Wales Tourist Board	43,350
Welsh Development Agency	57,990
Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting	[3]—

[1] Equivalent to grade 5 on Civil Service Scale (a) of 30,001 to 33,991.
[2] Equivalent to grade 4 on Civil Service scale (b) of 36,818 to 28,254.
[3] A and C scale D range 31,057 to 35,351.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those chairmen and women of non-departmental public bodies in Wales who are at the same time vice-chairmen or women of other such bodies in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Mr. J. D. Allen CBE is chairman of Housing for Wales and deputy chairman of the Land Authority for Wales.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he next expects to convene a meeting with the chairmen and women of the non-departmental public bodies in Wales;

(2) when he next expects to convene a meeting of the non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I meet the chairmen of the executive non-departmental public bodies for which I am responsible individually as and when necessary and not collectively.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to exclude chairmen and women and vice-chairmen and women of one non-departmental public body in Wales from being chosen as chairmen or women or vice-chairmen or women of any other such bodies.

Mr. David Hunt: No.

Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many are on waiting lists for accommodation in each district authority area in Wales; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Grist: The information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the average percentage rise in house prices, by district authority area in Wales, annually in the last 10 years and *(b)* the current average house price in each district authority.

Mr. Grist: Average house prices are available only for Wales as a whole and relate to building society borrowers only. The average selling price of dwellings in Wales in the first quarter of 1990 was £44,324. The annual percentage rises in average price are given in the table[1].

Percentage increase in average house price over previous year

	Percentage
1980	13·5
1981	4·1
1982	−2·4
1983	14·6
1984	5·0
1985	5·7
1986	9·4
1987	8·6
1988	15·3
1989	25·5

[1] *Source:* Department of Environment-Building Societies Association, sample survey of mortgages.

Health Authority Funding

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will take to improve the financial basis of Gwynedd area health authority.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 4 July 1990, at columns *578-79*.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit *(a)* Clwyd, *(b)* Gwent, *(c)* Mid-Glamorgan, *(d)* West Glamorgan, *(e)* Powys, *(f)* Gwynedd, *(g)* South Glamorgan, *(h)* Dyfed and *(i)* South Pembrokeshire area health authorities to discuss problems associated with underfunding.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend hopes to visit each of the district health authorities in Wales over the coming months and will expect to hear, at first hand, how the authorities are managing the record levels of resource provision in real terms which have been made available to them under this Government.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will institute a reassessment of the funding of health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Health authorities in Wales have received a revenue cash increase averaging 7·8 per cent. over last year —1989-90. This increase together with the resources which authorities are expected to unlock by cash improvement programmes and income generation schemes totalling a further 1·3 per cent. should be sufficient to meet anticipated inflation and provide for further service developments. Provision for the next year will be considered in the course of this year's public expenditure survey. However the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 requires changes in the way health services are to be provided and funded in future. This has necessitated a review of the resource allocation methodology to enable health authorities to be funded as procurers of services rather than, as at present, as providers of services. At the same time the method of allocating capital is being reviewed to take account of the new arrangements. Consultation on the proposals for change will take place over the next six months. The new arrangements will be phased in from next year for revenue and from 1992-93 for capital.

Health Authorities

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many health authorities he has visited in Wales.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has not visited any health authorities in Wales to date, but hopes to visit all of them over the coming months. He is today meeting health authority and FPC chairmen.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local education authorities he has met in Wales since his appointment as Secretary of State.

Sir Wyn Roberts: To date I have met a number of chairmen in the course of my visits to schools and my regular meetings with the Wales Advisory Board for Local Authority Higher Education.

Teacher Unions

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which teacher unions he has met since becoming Secretary of State.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have not met with the teacher unions since May. However a meeting has been arranged with representatives of the NAS-UWT (Wales) on 7 September.

Reading

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken since 1979, and what initiatives he intends to take, to improve reading ability in the schools of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1979 the Department has supported a number of surveys and research into reading ability. Since 1983 all reports by Her Majesty's Inspectorate have been published which include, for individual schools, an assessment of reading. One of the aims of the national curriculum is to improve reading standards. The programmes of study for both English and Welsh will lead to attainment targets in reading.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales from which bodies he receives advice on the teaching of reading in the schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Our main source of advice is Her Majesty's Inspectorate but we also receive reports on reading from research projects specifically funded by the Welsh Office.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how prevalent in schools in Wales is the look-say technique of the teaching of reading; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The look and say technique is used in many schools but most infants' teachers are eclectic in their teaching of reading and use the approach which best meets the individual child's needs. It is unusual to find schools exclusively committed to one method of teaching children to read.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to assess the level of reading ability in schools in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Assessment is an integral part of the national curriculum and the progamme of study for both Welsh and English will lead to an assessment of a pupil's reading ability. Additionally, HM inspectorate will continue to monitor and assess pupils' attainments in reading throughout primary schooling as part of their normal inspection programme.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent assessment he has made of the standard of reading ability in *(a)* infant schools and *(b)* primary schools in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In recent years, about 40 Her Majesty's inspectorate reports on individual schools have been published annually and there have also been a number of schools sampled in surveys.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by what means he has measured reading ability in the schools of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my replies to him early today.

Parent Teacher Associations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet the Parent Teachers Association Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no present plans to do so.

HM Inspectorate of Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met Her Majesty's inspectorate in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: HM inspectorate is part of the Welsh Office and my right hon. Friend meets and is advised by officials as and when required.

Earnings

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish average gross weekly earnings for *(a)* full-time adult men, *(b)* full-time adult women and *(c)* all adults in Powys for (i) 1987, (ii) 1988 and (iii) 1989.

Mr. David Hunt: The average gross weekly earnings of full-time males in Powys in 1988 was £191·20. No separate data is available for males and females in the other years requested due to the small sample sizes for Powys used in the new earnings survey. The average gross weekly earnings of all adults in full-time employment in Powys in 1988 and 1989 were £182·20 and £206·20 respectively: figures for 1987 are not available.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish average taxable weekly earnings for full-time adult *(a)* women and *(b)* men in Powys for (1) 1987, (2) 1988 and (3) 1989.

Mr. David Hunt: Estimates of taxable income at county level are not presently available.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish average *(a)* gross weekly earnings for full-time adult men working in manual occupations and *(b)* disposable weekly earnings for adult men, in Powys for (1) 1987, (2) 1988 and (3) 1989.

Mr. David Hunt: Reliable estimates or average gross weekly earnings for full-time adult men working in manual occupations in Powys are not available from the new earnings survey.

In 1988 the average disposable weekly earnings for adult men in full-time employment in Powys was £160·50, calculated on the basis set out in table 48 of "Welsh Economic Trends", No. 11, 1987. There are no reliable figures available using this definition for 1987 or 1989. Estimates for all full-time men are not available.

Water Quality

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the reasons for the decrease between 1980 and 1988 in the frequency of sampling carried out to determine the quality of potable water in Wales as shown in table 2.04 of the environmental digest for Wales No. 4 1988-89.

Mr. Grist: This was a matter for the respective water authorities. The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations prescribe the sampling regime now to be followed by water companies to monitor the quality of water supplied for domestic purposes.

Paper Recycling

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what quantity of paper was reclaimed in Wales in total for each of the years from 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Grist: Information on waste paper reclamation is not collected centrally. The British Waste Paper Association produces the following statistics, on a United Kingdom basis only. Waste paper collection is not measured directly, but as a function of United Kingdom mill use, imports and exports.

United Kingdom statistics

All figures in 1,000's tonnes

Year	*Paper and board*[1]			*Waste paper and board*			*Apparent United Kingdom consumption paper and board*	*Apparent United Kingdom waste collected*[2]	*Apparent percentage of consumption collected as waste paper*	*Proportion of waste used in United Kingdom production*[3] *Percentage*
	United Kingdom production	*Imports*	*Exports*	*United Kingdom mill use*	*Imports*	*Exports*				
1983	3,298	4,285	424	1,827	27	193	7,159	1,993	27·8	55·4
1984	3,591	4,528	533	2,003	85	256	7,586	2,174	28·7	55·8
1985	3,681	4,604	574	2,067	92	196	7,711	2,171	28·2	56·2
1986	3,941	4,757	630	2,147	40	248	8,068	2,355	29·2	54·5
1987	4,183	5,283	732	2,310	55	348	8,734	2,603	29·8	55·2
1988	4,295	5,788	797	2,414	60	423	9,285	2,777	29·9	56·2
1989	4,476	6,010	905	2,578	80	479	9,581	2,977	31·1	57·6

[1] Excluding building board.
[2] Ignores changes in stocks.
[3] Ignores the yield factor (wastage during reprocessing).

Bathing Water

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the causes of the reduction in sampling of non-EC identified beaches in South Glamorgan as set out in table 2.11 of the environmental digest for Wales No. 4 1988-89.

Mr. Grist: This was a matter for the Welsh water authority and is now a matter for the National Rivers Authority.

Inflation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of inflation in those costs falling on *(a)* district councils and *(b)* county councils in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 9 July 1990, at column *59*.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of inflation in the current financial year in respect of costs falling on the national health service in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I have made no such estimate. I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend's answer of 9 July 1990. Health authorities are advised each year by the Welsh Office of the general inflation forecast made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement. It is for individual health authorities to assess the impact of pay and price changes on their own programmes, and to budget accordingly.

No figures for cost inflation falling on health authorities in Wales are produced by the Welsh Office.

National Health Service Reform

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether there are any documents, publications or advice notes in relation to *(a)* reforms of the national health service and *(b)* community care which arise from work commissioned or assisted by his Department which are not contained in the list referred to in his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *298*.

Mr. Grist: No. The updated list will be comprehensive.

Welsh Health Planning Forum

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his response to the Welsh health planning forum's proposals for a strategic intent and direction for the national health service in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Following widespread commendation of the planning forum's proposed strategic intent and direction for the National Health Service in Wales, I was pleased to inform district health authority and family practitioner committee chairmen today of my endorsement of the planning forum's ideas.

I am anxious to maintain the momentum generated by the forum and have asked the chairmen to develop by 31 December 1991 local strategies for health covering the

period to the year 2002, and to submit these to me for endorsement, after full consultation with local interests, including users.

Copies of my statement to the chairmen have been placed in the Library.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list any new responsibilities which will be exercised by district health authorities in Wales in addition to those previously exercised *(a)* prior to the passing of the national health service and Community Care Act and *(b)* prior to the full implementation of the Government's plan for reform of the national health service.

Mr. Grist: Under our programme of reforms, DHAs will be responsible for securing quality health services for their resident populations, rather than, as before, providing a service within a given geographical area.

In addition, when the relevant provisions of the Act come into force, authorities will be responsible for determining the extent to which accommodation and services are made available for private patients.

ENERGY

Waste Reprocessing

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how often British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. has exercised its option to return wastes under their contracts for reprocessing spent fuels from overseas utilities in Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland; and if he will itemise such returns since 1976 to date.

Mr. Baldry: Since 1976, the overseas reprocessing contracts of British Nuclear Fuels plc have contained options for the return of wastes arising. The Government intend that such options should be exercised and that wastes should be returned. Before such wastes can be returned they have to be put into a form in which they can be safely transported and stored. I understand that the vitrification plant for treating high-level waste will be operational later this year and that the encapsulation plant for intermediate-level waste should be operational by 1992, when the thermal oxide reprocessing plant begins commercial reprocessing.

JET Project, Culham

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement concerning the recent release of CFC-113 into the atmosphere at the JET project at Culham.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what steps he is taking to ensure further accidents do not take place at Culham;

(2) if he will order a comprehensive check on safety procedures at Culham, following the emission of 2 tonnes of Freon-113 at the JET project;

(3) why a public announcement on the emission of Freon-113 at Culham was not made immediately.

Mr. Baldry: I understand that the JET joint undertaking of Euratom recently switched from water to Freon 113 for cooling the magnetic field coils in their fusion experiment because it is non-toxic, non-flammable and does not produce short-circuits on electrical equipment. In commissioning the new system on 4 June a pipe came loose and $1m^3$ of the liquid was released in the torus hall, some of which was recovered. The incident was reported to HM principal inspector of factories at Oxford as required by the regulations for the reporting of occupational occurrences. JET aim to work to the highest standards and are taking precautions to avoid any recurrence.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether he will place in the Library a copy of the letter on the risks attached to privatising nuclear power generation sent by Kleinwort Benson to his Department in August 1988;

(2) what advice his Department received in August 1988 from Kleinwort Benson concerning the sale of nuclear power stations and financial guarantees.

Mr. Baldry: I have nothing to add to the very full evidence, both written and oral, given by my Department and Klienwort Benson to the Select Committee on Energy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library copies of the 11 papers listed in the Energy Committee report, "The Cost of Nuclear Power," volume II, page 27, sent by his Department to the Committee.

Mr. Baldry: No. The papers are confidential.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made an assessment of the possible economies in respect of the storage of advanced gas-cooled reactor fuel in dry conditions, as referred to in the Energy Committee report, "The Cost of Nuclear Power", Volume II, page 77; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Disposal of spent fuel is a matter for the owners who will take into account safety, economic and technical considerations. The possible economies referred to by the hon. Member were mentioned in evidence submitted by the South of Scotland electricity board.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the average price per unit of electricity from the advanced gas-cooled reactor stations in England and Wales in April 1990.

Mr. Baldry: The price of electricity for the nuclear power stations is determined by Nuclear Electric's contracts with the public electricity suppliers. The terms of these contracts are a commercial matter for Nuclear Electric plc.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what initiatives he intends to introduce to increase the use of low energy electric light bulbs *(a)* in his Department *(b)* in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In the case of the Department of Energy headquarters, 1 Palace street, I have ensured that the developer installed low-energy light bulbs wherever it

was economic to do so. In the wider context of the United Kingdom, I have received a consultant's report on the efficiency of domestic electrical appliances, including lights; the report is now being prepared for publication.

I am now considering the report with a view to deciding how best the increased use of low energy light bulbs can be encouraged. I have also had discussions with the manufacturers of the bulbs.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to publish the report on the energy efficiency of electrical appliances commissioned by his Department in 1989.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I expect to publish the report before the autumn.

Non-fossil Fuel Levy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on what calculations and information he bases his statement that the non-fossil fuel levy will decrease between now and 1998.

Mr. Baldry: The rate of the levy depends predominantly on the difference between the market price for electricity and the cost of electricity under the terms of the nuclear contracts which contain incentives for Nuclear Electric to improve efficiency. This difference is expected to get smaller over the period of the contracts. The rate of the fossil fuel levy is therefore expected to decline significantly during the eight-year period of the nuclear contracts.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Department of Education Staff

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals there are to relocate staff from the offices of the Department of Education for Northern Ireland at Rathgael to Londonderry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: It is intended that the teachers' administration and superannuation branches of the Department of Education, involving some 95 posts, will move from Rathgael to Londonderry. The extent to which staff will transfer with the posts has not yet been determined.

Terrorism

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Royal Ulster Constabulary officers were killed or injured, for each year since 1969, as a result of a terrorist incident.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Royal Ulster Constabulary deaths*	*Royal Ulster Constabulary injuries*
1969	1	711
1970	2	191
1971	11	315
1972	17	485
1973	13	291
1974	15	235
1975	11	263
1976	23	303
1977	14	183
1978	10	302
1979	14	165
1980	9	194
1981	21	332
1982	12	99
1983	18	142
1984	9	267
1985	23	415
1986	12	622
1987	16	246
1988	6	218
1989	9	163
1990	[1] 4	[2] 96

[1] To date.
[2] As at 30 April.

Inner City Trust, Londonderry

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any public investigations are under way into the allegations made about the inner city trust, Londonderry in a recent "Spotlight" programme.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* There are no investigations under way in regard to any allegations made in the programme.

Fair Employment

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will request the Fair Employment Commission to carry out an investigation into the Londonderry inner city trust.

Mr. Needham: The Fair Employment Commission is a statutory body which is entirely independent of Government. As such, the commission determines its own investigation policy without any participation by the Government.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show for each year since it was set up the sums paid to the North West Centre for Learning and Development; which body or bodies provided such monies and the amounts; for what purposes they were provided and used; and if the Fair Employment Agency or its successor has carried out or is considering carrying out any investigation into this body.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* The Department of Economic Development under the Action for Community Employment (ACE) programme paid the following sums of money to the North West Centre for Learning and Development for the purpose of providing temporary employment for long-term unemployed adults. The work carried out by the centre, under the ACE programme, includes environmental work, community development activity and research associated with a genealogical centre.

Financial year	*ACE financial assistance (£)*
1983-84	49,888
1984-85	65,596
1985-86	202,161

Financial year	ACE financial assistance (£)
1986-87	1,036,182
1987-88	984,974
1988-89	812,698
1989-90	690,429

The North West Centre for Learning and Development has not been investigated by the Fair Employment Agency or its successor body the Fair Employment Commission. As an independent body the Fair Employment Commission determines its own investigation policy and the Department plays no part in this.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show how many trainees have been taken on by the Inner City Trust, Londonderry since its inception; and how many of these were *(a)* Protestants, *(b)* Roman Catholics and *(c)* others in each year and in total, or as much of such information as is currently available to him.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* The Inner City Trust does not have any trainees. However, since August 1988 it has sponsored an ACE project providing temporary employment places as follows:—

Year	Average number of places
1988	131
1989	131
1990	135

The religious affiliations of the employees are not known.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show, from its inception, the sums paid from public funds and by whom to the Inner City Trust, Londonderry, the purposes for which those sums were given and used, or as much of such information as is currently available to him.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* The information is as follows:

Source of assistance/ Financial year	DOE (NI) £	DED £	LEDU £	ERDF £	ESF £
1983-84	3,500	—	—	—	—
1986-87	50,00	—	—	—	—
1987-88	53,050	—	—	327,689	85,786
1988-89	12,500	233,437	—	327,689	40,147
1989-90	82,500	596,453	44,100	—	—
Totals	201,550	829,890	44,100	655,378	125,933

Department of the Environment (DOE(NI))
Funds paid towards regeneration work under the Urban Development Grant and the Social Need Order.

Department of Economic Development (DED)
These funds have been paid under the Action for Community Employment (ACE) programme for the purpose of providing temporary employment for long-term unemployed adults. The work carried out by the Trust under the ACE programme commenced in 1988 and is related to the redevelopment of a large area of the city including the building of a craft village, heritage library and offices for local community groups.

Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU)
Funds paid towards the construction of a craft village as part of LEDU's contribution to the Making Londonderry Work Initiative.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
Funds paid in respect of the creation of a craft village within Londonderry City walls.

European Social Funds (ESF)
Funds paid in respect of vocational training provided.

Foyle Co-op

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been paid from public funds to the Foyle Co-op; and for what purposes.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* A review of available records reveals that no moneys have been paid to the Foyle Co-op from public funds.

HEALTH

Data Systems

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list, for each regional health authority, the number of *(a)* coding clerks, *(b)* data entry clerks, *(c)* other medical records staff, *(d)* information staff, *(e)* computer programmers and systems analysts, *(f)* statisticians, *(g)* operations research staff and *(h)* health economists employed by the hospital and community health services;

(2) if he will list, for each family practitioner committee in England and Wales, the total number of *(a)* coding clerks, *(b)* data entry clerks, *(c)* other medical records staff, *(d)* information staff, *(e)* computer programmers, *(e)* statisticians and systems analysts, *(g)* operations research staff and *(h)* health economists employed in the family practitioner services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The precise information requested is not available centrally. The numbers of NHS administrative and clerical staff shown as working in computing, medical records, statistics and information, and operational research in each regional health authority at September 1988 are given in the table. These figures will include the staff detailed in the question with the exception of health economists; those for computing staff include additional categories. 1988 is the latest date for which information to this level of detail is available.

Similar information for each family practitioner committee is not collected centrally. Comparisons between regions need to be interpreted with caution. Health authorities will have regard to a number of different factors in setting staffing levels, including the size of the area, population, throughput of patients and current and future levels of service provision.

NHS administrative and clerical staff in post by regional health authorities at 30 September 1988
Whole-time equivalents[1]

Region	*Computing*	*Medical Records*	*Statistics and information*	*Operational Research*
Northern	108	853	38	3
Yorkshire	110	1,109	66	3
Trent	99	1,552	62	13
East Anglian	66	575	32	5
North West Thames	80	981	52	2
North East Thames	138	1,243	61	17
South East Thames	136	1,075	73	4
South West Thames	90	914	43	—
Wessex	71	1,098	74	2
Oxford	96	674	68	2
South Western	154	842	74	3
West Midlands	230	1,628	147	12
Mersey	79	949	47	7
North Western	163	1,635	67	1
England Total	2,119	15,451	955	75

Source:
Department of Health (SM13) annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest one whole-time equivalent.
Note:
Includes staff at the Dental Estimate Board, Prescription Pricing Authority, London Post-Graduate Special Health Authorities, Family Practitioner Committees and other Statutory Authorities (eg Public Health Laboratory service and the Health Education Authority).

Hospital Beds

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average number of beds in use in national health service hospitals in January and February; and what was the average number of medical nursing and auxiliary staff employed to care for the patients using them.

Mr. Dorrell: Data is not available yet for January and February. The latest centrally-available figures are as follows:

	Beds
Average daily available beds in NHS hospitals in England during April 1988-March 1989	282,937

Source: KH03

NHS hospital staff at 30 September 1988

	Whole time equivalent[1]
Medical and dental (includes locums)[2]	40,600
Nursing and midwifery staff[3]	344,800
Auxiliary staff[4]	79,800

[1] All figures are rounded to the nearest hundred whole-time equivalent.
[2] The figure is for all hospital medical and dental staff.
[3] Includes agency staff. Excludes nurses and midwives working in out-patients or accident and emergency departments.
[4] Defined as professional and technical staff.
Note: For medical and dental, and professional and technical staff it is not possible to separate the services they provide to in-patients from those for others, eg, out-patients.
Source: DH annual census of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.

Smoking (Children)

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the MORI social research unit's report to the health education authority on smoking by children between the ages of nine and 15 years.

Mr. Dorrell: We welcome the report which was undertaken as part of the Health Education Authority and Department of Health's joint teenage smoking programme. It should prove valuable both in managing the programme and in planning its future direction. The report confirms the evidence that smoking among schoolchildren has fallen since 1984. However, the figures remain disturbingly high, and the aim of the teenage smoking programme, to which the Government have committed over £2 million a year, is to achieve further significant reductions.

Cervical Cancer

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action the Government are taking to reduce deaths from cervical cancer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The cervical screening programme forms an important part of our strategy to promote women's health. The improvements that have been introduced over recent years—we were the first country in the EC to introduce nationwide computerised call and recall systems—should further increase the effectiveness of the programme. Five-yearly cervical screening can reduce deaths among women screened by approximately 80 per cent. By March 1993, we expect all women aged 20 to 64 years to have been brought into the scope of the programme and to have received their first invitation for a cervical smear.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects new salary and regrading arrangements to be made for speech therapists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Any changes arising from the forthcoming review of pay rates and the 1988 grade restructuring agreement will be effective from 1 October 1990.

Maternity Services

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much increased spending on maternity services has taken place in the last 11 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Between 1977-78 and 1988-89 total expenditure on National Health Service maternity services—community and hospital—increased from £235 million to £736 million—an increase in real terms of 27·1 per cent.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the changes made to maternity services in the last 10 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There has been a concerted programme of action aimed at reducing maternal, perinatal and infant mortality, and developing a partnership between health service professionals and mothers and their families in the delivery of a more personal standard of maternity care. There has also been a major expansion in neonatal intensive care.

As a result mortality rates have been reduced to the lowest levels so far achieved, it is general practice for a partner to remain with the mother during delivery and schemes are being introduced for early discharge from hospital into the care of a community midwife. Since 1980-81, real-term expenditure on the maternity services has increased by 16 per cent., the number of midwives by 17 per cent., and the number of nursing and midwifery staff employed in special and neonatal intensive care by 136 per cent.

Chiropody

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to provide statutory protection to the new title of its profession adopted by the Society of Chiropodists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has not been notified by the Society of Chiropodists that it has adopted a new title for its profession.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage increase there has been in the total establishment of speech therapists since 1979; how many posts are currently filled and how many vacancies exist; and how many speech therapists have left the profession in the past 11 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the establishment and the number of speech therapists leaving the profession for the periods requested is not collected centrally. At 30 September 1979, there were 1,510 speech therapists in post; by 30 September 1989, this number had risen to 2,830, an increase of over 87 per cent. At 31 March 1989 there were 178 funded posts vacant for over three months.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the local authorities which use their discretionary powers to supplement health authority provision of speech therapy.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available centrally.

General Practitioners

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements have been made to pay general practitioners under the new contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All general practitioners were paid promptly at the end of the first quarter of 1990-91. Doctors in contract with 75 of the 90 family practitioner committees were paid in full at the end of June either by computer, manual methods or by a combination of the two. The remaining 15 family practitioner committees made an advance payment based on the previous quarter's earnings. All family practitioner committees used either the new quarterly payments software issued earlier this year or made local arrangements based on assessment of entitlement. Family practitioner committees have discretion to make advance payments, so there is no reason why any general practitioner should be in financial difficulties due to the new arrangements. Family practitioner committees are dealing promptly with any queries from general practitioners who believe they have been underpaid.

Statements from the British Medical Association on this subject are seriously misleading. It is nonsense for the British Medical Association to claim that the Government forced through the changes without proper consultation with the profession. Detailed discussions with the British Medical Association's general medical services committee—GMSC—took place over a period of 18 months involving over 100 hours of discussion including meetings with Ministers. Every single detailed change to the general practitioners' terms of service and their statement of fees and allowances was sent to the general medical services committee for its comments and the general medical services committee was given every opportunity to respond.

Midwives

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what salary is presently paid, and will be offered in the next pay round to *(a)* a senior nurse sixth grade and *(b)* clinical midwives on grade 1; and what are the reasons for the difference;

(2) what factors account for the delay in making an offer of a new pay and grading structure for midwifery managers;

(3) when he will make an offer of a new pay and grading structure for midwifery managers; and when he expects to reach agreement with the staff side.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government take decisions on pay levels for midwives in the light of recommendations from the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives and Health Visitors and the Professions Allied to Medicine. Pay structures are a matter for negotiation in the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council.

The basic pay for a nurse or midwife on grade I from 1 April 1990 is £16,990 to £19,240—from 1 January 1991 £17,305 to £19,600. The existing senior nurse/midwife structure has been under review by the negotiating council, which reached agreement last month on a new structure, to come into effect from 1 January 1991. The review body is expected shortly to make recommendations on the pay of staff in the senior nurse 6 grade with effect from 1 April 1990, and on the pay levels to be attached to the new structure from 1 January 1991.

Heart Valves

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedures are in place to co-ordinate warnings to *(a)* cardiac specialists, *(b)* district general hospitals, *(c)* general practitioners and *(d)* patients fitted with suspect valves in cases where a fault is identified in a specific make of valve.

Mr. Dorrell: Hospitals and manufacturers of such devices are required to report incidents involving defective or potentially defective devices to the Department's national defect reporting centre for investigation by appropriate technical experts. Where a risk to patients or staff is identified, appropriate advice is issued and other action taken if required. The basis of circulation of such advice is considered in each particular case, on its merits.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what controls there are over the range of heart valves which may be purchased by the National Health Service.

Mr. Dorrell: This is a matter for the health authority concerned. The Department advises authorities to purchase from manufacturers registered under its manufacturer registration scheme or equivalent scheme of manufacturing quality assurance.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many companies supply artificial heart valves to the National Health Service; and in which countries these companies are based.

Mr. Dorrell: Currently nine companies supply heart valves to the United Kingdom National Health Service. Their manufacturing sites are based in the USA, Switzerland, Puerto Rico, Canada, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will request the Medicines Commission urgently to establish a licensing system for artificial heart valves and other specialised devices used for medical purposes;

(2) if the Medicines Commission has considered the need to license and monitor the use of artificial heart valves.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Use of heart valves in the United Kingdom is monitored since 1986 by the national heart valve registry at Hammersmith hospital. The Medicines Commission has expressed concern about certain products, including critical medical devices such as heart valves, but accepts that adequate provision for the necessary controls should be pursued through the current European Commission initiatives for the harmonisation of regulation of these devices.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if any heart valves which have been refused licences in the United States of America have been used by the national health service.

Mr. Dorrell: We are aware of two United States manufactured heart valves used in the National Health Service where marketing approval in the United States of America was withheld, pending receipt of further clinical data.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in the last year for which figures are available how many yellow cards were received reporting failures of artificial heart valves.

Mr. Dorrell: Medical devices such as heart valves are not included in the "yellow card" reporting system. However, the Department's national defect reporting centre for medical device incidents has received four reports of mechanical failure of heart valves in the last 12 months.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many British heart patients died because of a faulty artificial heart valve in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: We are aware of 15 deaths in the United Kingdom in the last five years due to mechanical failure of implanted valves. All were implanted prior to the setting up of the United Kingdom heart valve registry in January 1986.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the European Economic community has put forward any proposals to control the use of artificial heart valves.

Mr. Dorrell: An EC working document is in preparation which is intended to lead to a directive to harmonise the regulation of all non-powered medical devices, including heart valves.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health approximately how many artificial heart valves are fitted annually; and what is the estimated percentage that are successful.

Mr. Dorrell: About 5,000 artificial heart valves are implanted annually in the United Kingdom, 94 per cent. of these patients survive surgery and leave hospital.

Exhaust Fumes

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies are being carried out by his Department to assess the effects on human health of inhalation of exhaust fumes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No studies are being carried out by the Department.

The concentrations of pollutants in the United Kingdom associated with traffic sources are, in most circumstances, below those assessed by the World Health Organisation and other advisory groups to have detectable effects on health. The effects of airborne emissions of pollutants at levels currently experienced cannot be isolated from many other factors unrelated to air contaminants which may contribute to health problems.

GP Contracts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there are any outstanding payments under the new general practice service contracts not completed as due from 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All Family practitioner Committees made payments to the GPs on the due date. Most FPCs made payments calculated in detail; the remainder made estimated payments only, to be adjusted shortly when the detailed calculations have been completed.

Health Authority Accounts

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to publish the 1989-90 financial accounts special cost forms of individual health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The annual accounts of health authorities are regarded as documents within the public domain which are normally laid before authorities' members meeting in public session. The Department consolidates submitted annual accounts into an England summary which is presented to the National Audit Office by 30 November each year. It is the responsibility of the National Audit Office to publish the summarised accounts, following their audit, in an annual series of House of Commons papers.

Financial returns of health authorities which provide information on the costs of health authorities' services, are submitted to the Department which, after processing them, compiles salient data into national tables in an annual series of booklets. The publication covering the returns for 1989-90 is planned for early in the new year.

Publications

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much public money has been spent in each of the last five years on distributing *(a)* the *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, *(b)* the *Prescribers Journal*, *(c) Health Trends*, *(d)* the *British National Formulary*, *(e)* the *Adverse Drug Reaction Bulletin* and *(f)* prescribing analyses and costs data, to doctors in the NHS.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The cost of printing and distributing the publications to professionals and other bodies throughout the National Health Service (in England) in each of the years requested was:

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
a. Drugs and Therapeutic Bulletin and Adverse Drug reaction Bulletin	581,300	728,500	452,000	660,600	723,500
b. Prescribers Journal	—	—	122,900	129,900	127,100
c. Health Trends	—	—	105,400	116,200	106,500
d. British National Formulary	736,400	835,300	924,400	987,500	1,054,900
e. PACT Data	—	—	—	833,700	901,000

Footnotes

1. The Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin and Adverse Drug Reaction Bulletin are funded jointly. Records are not held of disaggregated costs. Figures given are for printing and distribution costs invoiced in each of the years.
2. Details of costs for Prescriber's Journal and Health Trends are not available for 1985-86 and 1986-87 as they cannot be disaggregated from other Departmental printing and publishing costs. The costs provided for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are estimated as final costs are not yet available. Editions of both publications due for issue in February 1990 have been postponed to June/July 1990. Postage costs were paid in advance in 1989-90 but printing costs will be incurred in 1990-91.
3. The PACT system came into operation in August 1988—hence there are no costs attributable to PACT data in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88. The figures given are for the full cost of production and distribution including staff costs and systems support, maintenance and operation.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much public money is likely to be spent in each of the next five years on *(a)* employing independent medical advisers within the NHS, *(b)* the cost of running the medicines resource centre and the distribution of its monthly bulletin, *(c)* the provision of PACT data, *(d)* the distribution of the *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, *(e)* the *Prescribers Journal* *(f) Health Trends*, *(g)* the *British National Formulary* *(h)* the *Adverse Drug Reaction Bulletin* and *(i)* the NHS management executive guide to self-audit and research, abridged and unabridged versions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The information requested is not yet available for the next five years. The estimated costs in England for 1990-91 are supplied in the table. We expect costs of the same order for the following four years.

		1990-91 £
(a)	Independent Medical Advisers (including support staff and training)	5,000,000
(b)	Medicines Resource Centre (including distribution of monthly bulletins)	250,000
(c)	PACT Data[1]	993,000
(d)	Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin[2] and Adverse Drug Reaction Bulletin[2]	770,000
(e)	Prescribers' Journal	140,000
(f)	Health Trends	115,000
(g)	British National Formulary	1,194,000
(h)	The Analysis of Prescribing in General Practice A Guide to Audit and Research (abridged and unabridged)[3]	42,000

[1] The figure given for the cost of PACT Data is for the full cost of production and distribution including staff costs and systems support, maintenance and operation.

[2] The Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin and Adverse Drug Reaction Bulletin are invoiced jointly—it is not possible to disaggregate the costs. Funding of the Adverse Drug Reaction Bulletin ceases after the June 1990 issue.

[3] The cost of the Analysis of Prescribing in General Practice was incurred over two financial years. This was a one-off exercise to issue the guide to all practices in England. We do not anticipate there being any additional costs after 1990-91.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Funeral Grant

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much he estimates it would cost his Department to provide a statutory payment of £600 to all pensioners and dependants of pensioners as a funeral grant.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The cost of supplying a statutory payment of £600 as a funeral grant to all people over state pension age is around £300 million per year.

Benefit Values

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the value of supplementary benefits/income support received each year since 1979 by a unemployed husband aged 30 years, wife aged 29 years, and children aged five and 11 years, excluding benefit in respect of housing costs, assuming they were in good health and did not require any special diet, did not need extra baths and did not wear out their clothing unusually quickly, did not require extra laundry facilities, and had accommodation of average size and condition for such a family, assuming they were not in receipt of any other social security benefits other than unemployment benefit; and if he will give the figures both at current prices and at constant 1990 prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* The information requested is shown in the tables, with two separate measures of the real value of the benefit. In table A the benefit rates at each uprating date are revalued to April 1990. In table B the real value of benefit has been averaged over the whole period during which the relevant benefit rates applied.

Table A

Uprating Date	*Actual Rates*	*Actual Rates in 1990 Prices*[1]
12 November 1979	43·65	82·86
24 November 1980	52·80	86·92
23 November 1981	57·55	84·61
22 November 1982	63·60	88·00
21 November 1983	66·35	87·84
26 November 1984	69·50	88·61
25 November 1985	73·05	88·80
28 July 1986	73·90	88·55
6 April 1987	75·35	87·57
11 April 1988	84·45	94·58
10 April 1989	90·40	96·13
9 April 1990	95·55	95·55

[1] Constant April 1990 prices at dates shown.

[2] The figures reflect the fact that the RPI is the appropriate index until 1983 and thereafter the RPI less housing costs is appropriate (from November 1983 onwards).

Table B

Period	*Actual rates* £	*Actual rates in 1990 prices*[1] £
November 1978 to October 1979	37·10	77·12
November 1979 to October 1980	43·65	76·61
November 1980 to October 1981	52·80	82·40
November 1981 to October 1982	57·55	81·85
November 1982 to October 1983	63·60	86·43
November 1983 to October 1984	66·35	86·27
November 1984 to October 1985	69·50	86·31
November 1985 to June 1986	73·05	88·13
July 1986 to March 1987	73·90	87·45
April 1987 to March 1988	75·35	86·54
April 1988 to March 1989	84·45	92·70
April 1989 to March 1990	90·40	94·08

[1] Average of constant April 1990 prices in the periods shown.

Note:

The figures reflect that the retail prices index is the appropriate index until 1983 and thereafter retail prices index less housing costs is appropriate (from November 1983 onwards).

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the level of the supplementary benefit/income support for each year since 1979 scale rates and for *(a)* a single person aged 20 years and *(b)* a non-pensioner couple aged over 25 years both at current prices and at 1990 constant prices; and what was the percentage change each year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* As the question does not specify the exact circumstances, household status, or length of time spent on benefit for either client group, the tables provide information to cover each possible circumstance.

The information requested is shown in the tables with two separate measures of the real value of the benefit. In table A the benefit rates at each uprating date are revalued to April 1990. In table B the real value of benefit has been averaged over the whole period during which the relevant benefit rates applied. In each case the percentage change since the previous year is shown.

Table A

Scale Rate	*Actual rates single householder aged 20*[1]	*Actual rates in April 1990 prices*	*Percentage change*	*Actual rates single non-householder aged 20*[1]	*Actual rates in April 1990 prices*	*Percentage change*	*Actual rates couple aged over 25*[1]	*Actual rates in April 1990 prices*	*Percentage change*
12 November 1979									
Basic	18·30	34·74	—	14·65	27·81	—	29·70	56·38	—
Long Term	23·70	44·99	—	18·95	35·97	—	37·65	71·47	—
24 November 1980									
Basic	21·30	35·06	0·9	17·05	28·07	0·9	34·60	56·96	1·0
Long Term	27·15	44·69	−0·7	21·70	35·72	−0·7	43·45	71·53	0·1
22 November 1981									
Basic	23·25	34·18	−2·5	18·60	27·35	−2·6	37·75	55·50	−2·6
Long Term	29·60	43·52	−2·6	23·65	34·77	−2·7	47·35	69·62	−2·7
22 November 1982									
Basic	25·70	35·56	4·0	20·55	28·43	4·0	41·70	57·70	4·0
Long Term	32·70	45·25	4·0	26·15	36·18	4·1	52·30	72·37	4·0
21 November 1983									
Basic	26·80	35·48	0·2	21·45	28·40	−0·1	43·50	57·59	−0·2
Long Term	34·10	45·14	−0·2	27·25	36·08	−0·3	54·55	72·22	−0·2

Scale Rate	Actual rates single householder aged 20[1]	Actual rates in April 1990 prices	Percentage change	Actual rates single non-householder aged 20[1]	Actual rates in April 1990 prices	Percentage change	Actual rates couple aged over 25[1]	Actual rates in April 1990 prices	Percentage change
26 November 1984									
Basic	28·05	35·76	0·8	22·45	28·62	0·8	45·55	58·07	0·8
Long Term	35·70	45·51	0·8	28·55	36·40	0·9	57·10	72·80	0·8
25 November 1985									
Basic	29·50	35·86	0·3	23·60	28·69	0·2	47·85	58·17	0·2
Long Term	37·50	45·58	0·2	30·00	36·47	0·2	60·00	72·94	0·2
28 July 1986									
Basic	29·80	35·71	−0·4	23·85	28·58	−0·4	48·40	57·99	−0·3
Long Term	37·90	45·41	−0·4	30·35	36·37	−0·3	60·65	72·67	−0·4
6 April 1987									
Basic	30·40	35·33	−1·1	24·35	28·30	−1·0	49·35	57·35	−1·1
Long Term	38·65	44·92	−1·1	30·95	35·97	−1·1	61·85	71·88	−1·1
11 April 1988									
—	26·05	29·18	—[3]	26·05	29·18	—[3]	51·45	57·62	—[3]
10 April 1989									
—	27·40	29·14	−0·1	27·40	29·14	−0·1	54·80	58·28	1·2
9 April 1990									
—	28·80	28·80	−1·2	28·80	28·80	−1·2	57·60	57·60	−1·2

Notes:

[1] Actual scale rate appropriate to each group, excluding any housing costs and with no additional requirements.

[2] Constant April 1990 prices at the dates shown.

[3] As the introduction of Income Support ended the distinctions between householders/non-householders and the basic and long term rates of benefit it is not possible to provide relevant year on year comparisons between 1987 and 1988.

[4] The figures reflect the fact that the RPI is the appropriate index until 1983 and thereafter the RPI less housing costs is appropriate (from November 1983 onwards).

Table B

Scale Rate	Actual rates single householder aged 20[1]	Actual rates in April 1990 prices [2]	Percentage change	Actual rates Single non-householder aged 20[1]	Actual rates in April 1990 prices [2]	Percentage change	Actual rates Couple aged over 25[1]	Actual rates in April 1990 prices[2]	Percentage change
November 1978—October 1979									
Basic	15·55	32·32	—	12·45	25·88	—	25·25	52·48	—
Long term	19·90	41·36	—	15·95	33·15	—	31·55	65·58	—
November 1979—October 1980									
Basic	18·30	32·12	−0·6	14·65	25·71	−0·7	29·70	52·13	−0·7
Long Term	23·70	41·60	0·6	18·95	33·26	0·3	37·65	66·08	0·8
November 1980—October 1981									
Basic	21·30	33·24	3·5	17·05	26·61	3·5	34·60	54·00	3·6
Long Term	27·15	42·37	1·9	21·70	33·86	1·8	43·45	67·81	2·6
November 1981—October 1982									
Basic	23·25	33·07	−0·5	18·60	26·46	−0·6	37·75	53·69	−0·6
Long Term	29·60	42·10	−0·6	23·65	33·64	−0·7	47·35	67·35	−0·7
November 1982—October 1983									
Basic	25·70	34·93	5·6	20·55	27·93	5·6	41·70	56·67	5·6
Long Term	32·70	44·44	5·6	26·15	35·54	5·7	52·30	71·08	5·5
November 1983—October 1984									
Basic	26·80	34·85	−0·2	21·45	27·89	−0·1	43·50	56·56	−0·2
Long Term	34·10	44·34	−0·2	27·25	35·43	−0·3	54·55	70·93	−0·2
November 1984—October 1985									
Basic	28·05	34·83	−0·1	22·45	27·88	−0·1	45·55	56·57	0·1
Long Term	35·70	44·33	−0·1	28·55	35·45	0·1	57·10	70·91	−0·1
November 1985—June 1986									
Basic	29·50	35·59	2·2	23·60	28·47	2·1	47·85	57·73	2·1
Long Term	37·50	45·24	2·1	30·00	36·19	2·1	60·00	72·38	2·1
July 1986—March 1987									
Basic	29·80	35·26	−0·9	23·85	28·22	−0·9	48·40	57·27	−0·8
Long Term	37·90	44·85	−0·9	30·35	35·91	−0·8	60·65	71·77	−0·8

Scale Rate	Actual rates single householder aged 20[1]	Actual rates in April 1990 prices[2]	Percentage change	Actual rates Single non-householder aged 20[1]	Actual rates in April 1990 prices[2]	Percentage change	Actual rates Couple aged over 25[1]	Actual rates in April 1990 prices[2]	Percentage change
April 1987—March 1988									
Basic	30·40	34·91	−1·0	24·35	27·97	−0·9	49·35	56·68	−1·0
Long Term	38·65	44·39	−1·0	30·95	35·55	−1·0	61·85	71·03	−1·0
April 1988—March 1989									
—	26·05	28·59	[3]—	26·05	28·59	[3]—	51·45	56·48	[3]—
April 1989—March 1990									
—	27·40	28·52	−0·2	27·40	28·52	−0·2	54·80	57·03	−1·0

Notes:

1. Actual scale rate appropriate to each group, excluding any housing costs and with no additional requirements.
2. Average of constant April 1990 prices in the periods shown.
3. As the introduction of Income Support ended the distinctions between householders/non householders and basic or long term rates of benefit it is not possible to provide relevant year on year comparisons between 1987 and 1988.
4. The figures reflect the fact that the RPI is the appropriate index until 1983 and thereafter the RPI less housing costs is appropriate (from November 1983 onwards).

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security pursuant to his answer of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *559*, if he will set out the real terms value of supplementary benefit income support for *(a)* a young person aged 20 years who is unemployed and: (i) a householder and (ii) a non-householder and *(b)* a married couple aged over 25 years where the husband is unemployed, the wife not working, and with children aged five and 10 years, each year since 1979, on an index basis taking 1979 as 100.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is shown in the tables, with two separate measures of the real value of benefit. Table A gives the benefit rates at each uprating date in real terms indexed to November 1979 = 100. Table B gives the real value of benefit averaged over the whole period during which the relevant benefit rates applied, indexed to 100 for the average for the period November 1978 to October 1979.

Table A.

	Single householder aged 20 unemployed		Single non-householder aged 20 unemployed		Married couple unemployed with two children 5 and 10	
	(1) £	(2)	(1) £	(2)	(1) £	(2)
12 November 1979	18·30	100·0	16·35	100·0	42·20	100·0
24 November 1980	21·30	100·9	19·20	101·8	49·20	101·1
23 November 1981	23·25	98·4	21·15	100·2	53·55	98·3
22 November 1982	25·70	102·4	23·65	105·4	59·20	102·3
21 November 1983	26·80	102·1	24·55	104·7	61·80	102·1
26 November 1984	28·05	102·9	25·75	105·8	64·75	103·0
25 November 1985	29·50	103·2	27·50	107·7	68·05	103·3
28 July 1986	29·80	102·8	23·85	92·1	68·80	102·9
6 April 1987	30·40	101·7	24·35	91·2	70·15	101·8
11 April 1988	26·05	84·0	26·05	94·0	79·10	110·6
10 April 1989	27·40	83·9	27·40	93·9	84·80	112·6
9 April 1990	28·80	82·9	28·80	92·8	89·65	111·9

Notes:

[1] Column (1) shows actual benefit rates excluding housing costs, which were paid through supplementary benefit until 1982-83 then met via housing benefit, and any additional requirements for example extra heating, laundry, special diets.

[2] Column (2) shows value of column (1) in real terms, on and index basis taking 12 November 1979 = 100.

[3] The figures reflect the fact that the RPI is the appropriate index until 1982-83 and thereafter the RPI less housing costs is appropriate (from November 1983 onwards).

Table B

	Single householder aged 20 unemployed		Single non-householder aged 20 unemployed		Married couple unemployed with two children aged 5 and 10	
	(1) £	(2)	(1) £	(2)	(1) £	(2)
November 1978 to October 1979	15·55	100·0	13·90	100·0	35·85	100·0
November 1979 to October 1980	18·30	99·4	16·35	99·3	42·20	99·4
November 1980 to October 1981	21·30	102·8	19·20	103·7	49·20	103·0
November 1981 to October 1982	23·25	102·3	21·15	104·1	53·55	102·2
November 1982 to October 1983	25·70	108·1	23·65	111·2	59·20	108·0
November 1983 to October 1984	26·80	107·8	24·55	110·5	61·80	107·8
November 1984 to October 1985	28·05	107·8	25·75	110·7	64·75	107·9
November 1985 to June 1986	29·50	110·1	27·50	114·8	68·05	110·2
July 1986 to March 1987	29·80	109·1	23·85	97·7	68·80	109·3
April 1987 to March 1988	30·40	108·0	24·35	96·8	70·15	108·1

	Single householder aged 20 unemployed		Single non-householder aged 20 unemployed		Married couple unemployed with two children aged 5 and 10	
April 1988 to March 1989	26·05	88·5	26·05	99·0	79·10	116·5
April 1989 to March 1990	27·40	88·2	27·40	98·7	84·80	118·4

Notes:

[1] Column (1) shows actual benefit rates for the periods shown excluding housing costs, which were paid through supplementary benefit until 1982-83 then met via housing benefit, and any additional requirements for example extra heating, laundry, special diets.

[2] Column (2) shows the average real value of column (1) between the dates shown, on an index basis taking the period November 1978 to October 1979 = 100.

[3] The figures reflect the fact that the RPI is the appropriate index until 1983 and thereafter the RPI less housing costs is appropriate (from November 1983 onwards).

SCOTLAND

Capercaillie

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sum he intends to spend on research on the capercaillie.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Most of the responses to my consultation letter of 23 March on whether to introduce a statutory ban on shooting capercaillie have commented on the need for research. I shall announce my views on the consultation soon.

Low Pay Unit

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Scottish low pay unit on overtime, and the pay of Scotland's adult work force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: During the past year my right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations from the Scottish low pay unit. Since 1979 earnings at all levels have increased significantly in real terms with the lower paid sharing in the prosperity created by a vigorous free enterprise economy.

Road Accidents

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of children under 14 years of age who were killed or injured as pedestrians involved in road accidents during the last 12 months in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest information available centrally is for 1989 for children aged 14 years and under. The provisional figures are:—

Fatal	*Per cent.*	*Serious*	*Per cent.*	*Slight*	*Per cent.*	*Total*
26	(−26)	728	(−2)	1,570	(+6)	2,324

These figures would appear to show an improvement over the previous years for fatal and serious injuries, but a small increase in the number of slight injuries involved in road accidents. However, I would stress that these figures are provisional, final figures will be published later in the year in "Road Accidents Scotland 1989".

GPs' Budgets

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* those practices in Grampian and Tayside regions who are taking part in the shadow fundholding project for general practitioners.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Forfar

Dr. G. Peterkin and Partners
Dr. A. F. Catto and Partners
Dr. S. M. Birse and Partner

Grampian

Dr. G. H. McIntosh and Partners
Dr. A. F. Maclean and Partners
Dr. J. M. Taylor and Partners
Dr. G. A. Taylor and Partners
Dr. R. J. Stewart and Partners and Dr. D. J. Murray and Partners

Historic Buildings

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of Scotland's historic buildings are being eroded as a result of acid rain; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* There is no accurate information available upon which to determine how many of Scotland's historic buildings are being eroded as a result of acid rain. The issues involved are complex and further detailed research is required to clarify and assess all the factors involved.

Officials of the Scottish Development Department participated in the Department of the Environment's building effects review group on acid deposition which reported in 1989. A current national materials exposure programme arising from the group's recommendations includes five sites in Scotland. There will be continued co-operation in future research programmes with a view to answering many of the outstanding questions which were raised following the publication of the group's first report.

Skye Bridge

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the impact of the changes in design to the proposed bridge to Skye upon *(a)* the likely construction costs involved, *(b)* the proposed timetable for the submission of plans and *(c)* the level of toll charge to be levied; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* In my announcement on 3 July I said that the welcome reduction of 6 m in the required navigational clearance for a bridge to Skye removed the need for either major embankments or a viaduct over Eilean Ban or Eilean Dubh, which previously caused concern regarding visual impact.

The exact changes in construction costs have not been assessed; but it is expected that they will be reduced. The timetable is unlikely to be affected. The levels of toll charges will form part of each tenderer's bid and the exact

amounts are therefore unknown as yet; however, the toll charges will be no greater than current ferry fares in real terms and must allow for existing concessions to users.

Mental Welfare Commission

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the qualifications and reasons for appointment of Mrs. Iris Isbister to the Mental Welfare Commission; and if he will review the appointment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* I am well satisfied that Mr. Isbister is well qualified on grounds of her experience and her interest in the field to be a member of the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland. Prior to becoming chairman of Forth Valley health board she was an active member of a number of organisations involved with mental health, including the Stirling Association for Mental Health.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Local Management)

9. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of local management in schools.

33. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to ensure the smooth implementation of local management of schools.

45. **Mrs. Heal:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to ensure the smooth implementation of local management of schools.

67. **Mr. Cabom:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to ensure the smooth implementation of local management of schools.

68. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current implementation of local management of schools.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent responses he has had to local management of schools; whether he has any further proposals relating to local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Eighty-seven local education authorities introduced local management schemes in April 1990. Most headteachers and governors welcome the prospect of greater autonomy in the running of their schools. I have recently announced an increase in the programme of education support grants to help implement this important reform. Supported expenditure will increase from £36 million to £61 million in 1991-92.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of Kirklees council's total schools' budget has been passed on to individual schools with the introduction of local management schemes; and what was the comparable figure for Government targets and guidelines.

Mrs. Rumbold: The budget statement provided by Kirklees local education authority under section 42 of the Education Reform Act, indicates that 65 per cent. of the general schools budget—GSB—is being passed down to individual schools. The discretionary exceptions, subject to the Government's limit of 10 per cent. of the GSB, account for 9·2 per cent. of the GSB. The discretionary exceptions not subject to any Government limit account for 14 per cent. of the GSB.

37. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of local management in schools in Northumberland county council.

Mrs. Rumbold: Northumberland local education authority's scheme for local management of schools was approved on 15 March 1990 for introduction on 1 April 1990. The LEA appears to be making a most satisfactory start to local management. The Government are supporting the introduction of LMS in Northumberland through £402,400 of specific grant in this financial year alone.

Grant-maintained Schools

15. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications for grant-maintained status he has received; and how many he has approved.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have obtained grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett).

Rural Schools

16. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the impact of the national curriculum on small schools in rural areas.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Evidence from Her Majesty's inspectorate shows that most schools are making satisfactory or good progress with introducing the national curriculum. HMI has reported no overall difference in standards of implementation between small schools and others.

Student Loans

17. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any recent representations regarding the implementation of the student loans scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my earlier reply to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

34. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on progress towards the introduction of student loans.

47. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress being made on setting up the Students Loans Company Ltd.

Mr. Jackson: The Student Loans Company is making good progress, completing its computer systems and recruiting clerical staff needed for the autumn. It is also holding constructive discussions with the higher education institutions about the certification of students' eligibility. This bodes well for the introduction of the scheme this autumn.

Teachers' Duties

18. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is planning any changes in the timing of the implementation of the national curriculum as it relates to teachers' duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Speech Therapists

19. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from special schools in Norfolk about the availability of speech therapists.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has received no representations on the subject from special schools in Norfolk.

Sixth-form Students

20. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the needs for a broader curriculum for sixth-form students.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has this under active consideration. Advanced supplementary examinations supply one means of adding breadth to advanced-level studies. Wider availability in schools of vocational courses would also deliver greater breadth. In addition, my right hon. Friend expects shortly to receive from the School Examinations and Assessment Council advice on the scope for embodying in the programmes of all advanced-level students a range of core skills needed for adult working life.

Secondary Education, Sheffield

21. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning budgetary provision for secondary education in Sheffield; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has received only three such representations since 1 April, when Sheffield's local management of schools scheme was introduced.

Further Education

22. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to increase the number of 16-year-olds entering full-time further education.

32. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to increase the number of 16-year-olds entering full-time further education.

52. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to increase the number of 16-year-olds entering full-time further education.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to the hon. Members for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) and for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) on 12 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *169*.

51. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement regarding education and training for 16 to 19-year-olds.

54. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement regarding education and training for 16 to 19-year-olds.

57. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement regarding education and training for 16 to 19-year-olds.

Mr. Jackson: The Government believe that many more young people should be participating in education and training, both full time and part time. Participation in full-time post-compulsory education has increased very substantially in recent years.

The Government are doing much to encourage the development of education and training beyond 16. We are committed to maintaining the standards of A-levels and advanced supplementary examinations, and to improving their effectiveness in meeting both the needs of students and the requirements of higher education and employment. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications has been established to put in place a coherent framework of relevant vocational qualifications. Steps are being taken more generally to make the range of courses and qualifications available to this age group more attractive, notably by the development of core skills which all young people and adults will need in future in all walks of life.

Training credits for 16 and 17-year-olds who have left full-time education are to be piloted from next year. They will make clear to young people their entitlement to training. They have the potential to increase significantly the number of young people in jobs who receive worthwhile education and training.

Community Charge Capping

23. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has made an assessment of the effects of charge capping upon the delivery of the education service.

46. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has made an assessment of the effects of charge capping upon the delivery of the education service.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has considered all the representations made to him by the capped authorities, including those about service delivery, together with all other information he considers relevant, and he is satisfied that the final caps he is proposing will permit them to maintain their services at a reasonable level.

Businesses

24. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps the Government are taking to encourage business men to take greater interest in education and to value good education more highly.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The business community is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of

education in helping to meet the challenges of the 1990s, both nationally and internationally. The constructive involvement of the business community at all levels in education continues to be a major plank of this Government's policies. We have made statutory provision to encourage this in the governing of institutions, and have encouraged training to make this effective. We have also taken a range of other initiatives, both alone and in conjunction with other Departments and outside organisations to promote continuing links between education and industry, building on the substantial progress of the last decade.

Pre-school Education

25. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to increase the number of pre-school education places.

44. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to increase the number of pre-school education places.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike).

59. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding pre-school education; and if he will make a statement.

64. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding pre-school education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes).

Teacher Vacancies

26. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current level of teacher vacancies in London; and if he will make a statement.

35. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current level of teacher vacancies throughout London; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 12 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *168*. My right hon. Friend hopes to publish later this month the data for teacher vacancies as at January 1990.

University Education

27. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average cost of university education over the three years of graduates in *(a)* social sciences, *(b)* languages and *(c)* physical sciences.

Mr. Jackson: Expenditure is not disaggregated in the form requested. However, an indication of the costs of teaching in the relevant subjects met annually from block grant and tuition fees is given by the University Funding Council's current "guide prices", as follows:

	£
Economics, Sociology, etc.	2,700
Politics, Law, etc.	2,200
Applied Social Work	3,400
Languages	2,900
Physical Sciences	4,600

Adult Vocational Training

28. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funding has been made available for 1990-91 to support adult vocational training initiatives.

Mr. Jackson: In 1990-91, a total of £16 million is available to support adult vocational training initiatives from funds made available by my right hon. Friend.

Language Teaching

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on recent progress in promoting the teaching of Spanish, German and Russian in maintained schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: The national curriculum includes a modern foreign language as a foundation subject to be studied by all pupils aged 11 to 16 in maintained secondary schools. German, Russian and Spanish are among the languages which may qualify as the foreign language foundation subject. Within this framework, we are encouraging schools to offer a greater diversity of languages such as German, Spanish and Russian and we have made provision within the specific grant programme for 1991-92 for local education authorities to bid for funds for the diversification of first foreign languages.

Universities

30. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has recently had any meetings with the chairman of the University Funding Council to discuss funding and management of universities.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the Universities Funding Council from time to time in the course of normal business.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

31. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the pupil-teacher ratio in England and Wales; and what information he has on the figure for Japan.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The readily available information for the United Kingdom, upon which international comparisons are usually made, and Japan, is as follows:

Pupil/teacher ratios by level, 1985-86

	Japan	*UK*[1]
Up to 1st level (nursery and primary)	22·4[2]	22·0[3]
2nd level (secondary and further education)	19·1	14·2[3,4]

[1] The overall ratio for public sector schools in England decreased from 18·9 in 1978-89 to 17·0 in 1987-88. The corresponding ratios for

Wales are 19·3 and 18·6. Government policy has been to allow teacher numbers to fall at a slower rate than pupil numbers.
[2] Partly estimated.
[3] Public sector.
[4] The UK figure for secondary schools only is 15·7.

Schools, Bradford

36. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next intends to visit Bradford to look at maintained schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I hope to take up the hon. Member's invitation to visit Bradford during the next academic year.

National Curriculum

38. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on implementation of the national curriculum.

60. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made on the introduction of the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is welcome evidence from Her Majesty's inspectorate that many schools have made a satisfactory start in implementing the national curriculum. My right hon. Friend is taking steps to ensure that the introduction of the new requirements is manageable for teachers.

City Technology Colleges

39. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the city technology college programme.

Mrs. Rumbold: The city technology college programme continues to make excellent progress. Three colleges are up and running, a further eight are due to open in September 1990 and 1991, and my right hon. Friend is currently consulting on proposals for a further three.

41. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total amount of government expenditure on the city technology college programme to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Up to the end of the 1989-90 financial year, a total of £46 million has been incurred on the CTC programme, covering project start-up costs, capital and recurrent funding.

Teachers (Overseas Advertising)

40. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to issue guidelines to local education authorities regarding overseas advertising for teaching staff; and if he will make a statement.

49. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to issue guidelines to local education authorities regarding overseas advertising for teaching staff; and if he will make a statement.

66. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to issue guidelines to local education authorities regarding overseas advertising for teaching staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that my hon. Friend the Minister of State gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie).

Pupil Testing

42. **Mr. Carr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has to report following the pilot projects standard assessment tests at seven years.

53. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implementation of his current proposals to introduce testing of children at seven years of age.

62. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has to report following the pilot projects for standard assessment tests at seven years.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his plans for the introduction of testing of children at seven years of age.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to the replies that I gave to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) on 20 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *558* and on 26 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *133*.

Fairfield High School

43. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make an official visit to Fairfield high school in Herefordshire to examine the pyramid arrangements with local primary schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to visit Hereford and Worcester. I myself paid an official visist there in November last year, and was glad to have the opportunity to see some excellent practices in the schools I visited.

Under-fives

48. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to report to Parliament the findings of the committee examining education for the under-fives; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I expect to submit the report of the committee to my right hon. Friend shortly.

School-leaving Age

50. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give further consideration to bringing forward legislation to bring the statutory school-leaving age into line with other European countries.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No. The Government believe that young people should be allowed a real choice at age 16 of the various forms of education and training on offer, or of

commencing employment. There has never been so high a proportion of young people in the 16 to 19 age group engaged in education or training.

Education, Gloucestershire

55. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next expects to meet the director of education of Gloucestershire county council to discuss education in Gloucestershire.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet him.

Secondary Schools, Staffordshire

56. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil at secondary schools in Staffordshire in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure in 1978-79, at constant prices.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In actual cash Staffordshire spent £530 per secondary pupil in 1978-79 and £1,610 per secondary pupil in 1988-89. At 1988-89 prices those figures are £1,165 and £1,610 respectively.

School Building and Improvements

58. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total sum requested by local authorities for new school building and improvements last year; and what was the total sum allocated.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The total of LEA plans for education capital expenditure in 1989-90 was £1·03 billion. The capital allocation was £352 million. The total of LEA plans for 1990-91 was over £1·3 billion. Under the new system of local government capital finance, my right hon. Friend has announced the availability of annual capital guidelines for education of £485 million.

Grammar Schools

61. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the future of grammar school education in England.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for local education authorities to decide whether to bring forward proposals to change the pattern of organisation of their schools, including the establishment or discontinuance of grammar schools. My right hon. Friend considers all such proposals on their merits, having regard to the wishes of local parents.

Teacher Recruitment, Essex

63. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about teacher recruitment in Essex.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Essex is receiving £60,000 education support grant this year to help with a programme of measures to improve teacher recruitment. These include the appointment of a recruitment team, local refresher courses for those returning to teaching, counselling facilities, work shadowing, keeping in touch schemes, local advertising campaigns and the provision of four creches for teachers' children.

In addition the local education authority and the county council's housing department are negotiating with a housing association to provide low-cost accommodation for teachers; the LEA plans to recruit 25 licensed teachers and is co-operating with Thames polytechnic and other LEAs on a scheme to recruit teachers from the Netherlands.

Special Needs Education, Hampshire

64. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the funding of special needs education in Hampshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from schools in Hampshire concerning the funding arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in the authority's scheme for the local management of schools. He has approved these arrangements for the first year of the scheme's operation only. Officers in the authority are working with schools to determine funding arrangements which reflect more clearly and objectively the needs of Hampshire's schools and their pupils.

Deaf and Blind Children

65. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last reviewed the educational provisions for deaf and blind children.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department wrote to all local education authorities in England on 18 May 1990, asking for their views on the education of deaf-blind children and what provision they made at present for such education. This survey follows up the policy statement on the education of deaf-blind children which the Department published in March 1989.

Foreign Languages

69. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he proposes to take steps to encourage the study of foreign languages.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are concerned to increase the number of pupils continuing to study a modern foreign language until age 16 and beyond. That is why the national curriculum includes a modern foreign language as a foundation subject to be studied by all pupils aged 11 to 16 in maintained secondary schools. The national curriculum working group for modern foreign languages is due to submit its final report by the end of this month, to enable attainment targets and programmes of study for modern foreign languages to be implemented in schools from autumn 1992.

Teacher Supply

70. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations from teachers in the northern and midland regions regarding the level of teacher supply.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No regional breakdown of statistics of correspondence received is available. My right hon. Friend has certainly received correspondence from the northern and midland regions—as from elsewhere.

Global Environmental Programmes

71. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the science budget for 1990-91 is being committed specifically for research into global environmental programmes.

Mr. Jackson: In the 1990-91 financial year, it is estimated that some 5 per cent. of the science budget of £897 million will be spent on research into global environmental programmes.

School Finance

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities have published notices in accordance with section 42 of the Education Reform Act 1988; and if he will list for each local education authority what proportion of the general schools budget is devolved to schools or indicate when such information is expected to be available.

Mrs. Rumbold: Of the 87 local education authorities required to prepare budget statements for 1990-91 under section 42 of the Education Reform Act, 53 have submitted statements to date. Officials are in contact with the remaining LEAs to ensure that the statements are made available as soon as possible. A table containing as much of the information requested as is available will be published before the end of the month.

Universities (Expenditure)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the Association of University Teachers to discuss the level of spending on the universities.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend met the AUT in November 1989. He has received that association's recent substantial statement on this subject but has not met it to discuss its points further.

Women (Higher Education)

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the proportion of women in higher education *(a)* today and *(b)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Jackson: In 1988-89, a total of 44 per cent. of all home full-time and part-time students in higher education in Great Britain were women. The comparable figure for the academic year 1979-80 was 37 per cent.

Chemistry Students

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to encourage and enable the Universities Funding Council to increase the number of polymer chemists leaving higher education.

Mr. Jackson: No. It is for institutions, in consultation with the Universities Funding Council, to determine levels of provision in the light of perceived demand.

Management Information Systems

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, when his Department will publish the report on management information systems for colleges of further education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The project team commissioned by the Department, together with the Training Agency and the Welsh Office, to conduct a quality assurance study of computerised management information systems in further education, presented its findings in March this year. It was decided that the greatest value would be obtained from the study if a report was produced which set the team's findings within a wider national context and drew attention to related developments. This report is currently being written and should be ready for publication in early autumn.

Special Schools

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to amend the regulations made under section 12 of the Education Act 1981 relating to the approval of special schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department has today issued for consultation draft amending regulations and a related draft circular which will update requirements for the approval of special schools. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Physical Education

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to set up a working group to recommend attainment targets and programmes of study for physical education within the national curriculum for England and Wales.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have decided to establish a working group for physical education. The group will advise on the attainment targets and programmes of study for physical education to be included within the national curriculum in England and Wales.

The terms of reference and details of membership for the working group will be published tomorrow; copies will be placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Terrorism

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what initiatives have been and are being taken by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to combat terrorism.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of their regular consultations on matters affecting their security, the NATO allies occasionally discuss terrorism, but practical co-operation against terrorism is developed in other international bodies.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of British Service personnel killed or injured in Northern Ireland, for each year since 1969, as a result of a terrorist incident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of armed forces personnel killed, wounded or injured as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland for each year from 1969 to 1990 is as follows:

Armed forces casualties

	Killed	*Wounded/ injured*
1969	0	54
1970	0	620
1971	48	390
1972	129	578
1973	66	548
1974	35	483
1975	20	167
1976	29	264
1977	29	187
1978	21	135
1979	48	153
1980	17	77
1981	23	140
1982	28	98
1983	15	88
1984	19	86
1985	6	33
1986	12	55
1987	11	104
1988	33	229
1989	13	190
[1]1990	7	98
Total	609	4,777

[1] As at 4 July.

These figures include Regular Army, UDR (part-time and permanent cadre), RM, RN and RAF personnel. They do not include the TA or reserve forces, which have no security role in Northern Ireland.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of British service personnel, killed or injured in terrorist attacks, since August 1989; where these incidents took place; and what was the nature of each incident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Between 1 August 1989 and 5 July 1990 29 service personnel were killed in terrorist bombing or shooting attacks; 13 in Great Britain, two in West Germany, and 14 in Northern Ireland.

Over the same period 66 service personnel were wounded or injured in terrorist shooting and bombing attacks; 26 in Great Britain, two in West Germany, and 38 in Northern Ireland[1].

Details of the terrorist bombing and shooting attacks that caused these deaths and injuries are as follows:

Date, casualties, location and nature of incident

1 September 1989
Two soldiers were seriously injured when they were shot outside York barracks, Munster, West Germany.

16 September 1989
One regular soldier was shot and killed at RUC Coalisland, Northern Ireland.

22 September 1989
Eleven regular soldiers were killed and 22 injured when a bomb exploded at the Royal Marines school of music in Deal, Kent, England.

7 October 1989
One regular soldier was seriously injured when a hijacked van exploded in the Waterside, Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

26 October 1989
Three regular soldiers were injured, not seriously, when they came under close-range mortar fire at Crossmaglen, Northern Ireland.

26 October 1989
One RAF airman was shot and killed at Wildenrath, West Germany.

17 November 1989
One part-time UDR soldier was fatally wounded when he was ambushed and shot by gunmen as he left his place of duty in Armagh, Northern Ireland, to go home.

18 November 1989
Three regular soldiers were killed and one very seriously injured near Mayobridge, South Down, Northern Ireland, when their vehicle was blown up by a bomb buried by the side of the road.

18 November 1989
One regular soldier was very seriously injured when an under-car booby trap (UCBT) exploded under his vehicle at the Army married quarters in Colchester, Essex, England.

27 November 1989
Two regular soldiers were injured, not seriously, when a bomb in Merrion Park, West Belfast, was detonated as their military patrol passed by it.

28 November 1989
One regular soldier was injured, not seriously, as he took cover from, and was hit by, a hoax device thrown over the wall at RUC Springfield road, Belfast.

1 December 1989
One off-duty part-time UDR soldier was injured, not seriously, when he was shot by a gunman in the legs and buttocks near Londonderry.

11 December 1989
Three regular soldiers were injured, not seriously, when a public house in Londonderry was bombed and masonry fell onto their vehicle.

13 December 1989
Two regular soldiers were killed, one seriously injured, and one not seriously injured during a multiple weapon attack upon the permanent vehicle checkpoint (PVCP) at Derryard, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland.

3 January 1990
One off-duty part-time UDR soldier was very seriously injured in Co. Londonderry, Northern Ireland, when a UCBT exploded under his vehicle.

3 January 1990
Two regular soldiers were injured, not seriously, when a device placed in a water tank in the front garden of a house in west Belfast exploded as a military patrol passed by.

9 January 1990
One off-duty part-time UDR soldier was shot and killed by two armed men who entered the shoe shop he worked in at Castlederg, Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland.

10 January 1990
Two regular soldiers were injured, not seriously, when an explosive device in an empty house in west Belfast detonated as a military patrol passed by.

10 January 1990
One regular soldier was injured, not seriously, when two explosive devices were thrown at the rear vehicle of a military patrol vehicle on Springfield road, west Belfast.

20 January 1990
One full-time UDR soldier was very seriously injured in Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland, when a UCBT exploded under his car after it had been driven 200m.

28 January 1990
One regular soldier was injured, not seriously, when a bomb detonated on the city wall at Londonderry during a parade to commemorate Bloody Sunday.

11 February 1990
Three regular soldiers were injured, not seriously, when the helicopter they were in was forced to make an emergency landing in Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland because of gunfire damage.

15 February 1990
One off-duty part-time UDR soldier was injured, not seriously, when two men shot him whilst he was driving a tractor on his farm in East Tyrone, Northern Ireland.

17 February 1990
One regular soldier was injured, not seriously, when a device exploded as the military vehicle he was in passed a house in Dunmurry, Northern Ireland.

8 March 1990
One off-duty part-time UDR soldier was shot and killed whilst driving a lorry for his employer at Castlecaulfield, Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland.

16 March 1990
One regular soldier was injured, not seriously, when a shot was fired at a military patrol in Crossmaglen, Northern Ireland.

24 March 1990
Two regular soldiers and one UDR soldier were injured, not seriously, when a van exploded outside the RUC station at Ballymena.

9 April 1990
Four UDR soldiers were killed when an explosive device in a culvert under a road near Downpatrick, Co. Down, Northern Ireland, detonated as their military vehicle passed over it.

28 April 1990
One regular soldier was injured, not seriously, when a military patrol he was in was engaged by automatic gunfire near Drumhill, South Armagh, Northern Ireland.

28 April 1990
One UDR soldier and one regular soldier were both injured, not seriously, when two mortar bombs were fired at the PVCP at Strabane, Northern Ireland, and one exploded.

5 May 1990
One regular soldier was killed when a military patrol was engaged by automatic gunfire near Cullyhana, South Armagh, Northern Ireland.

16 May 1990
One regular soldier was killed and one seriously injured when a UCBT under an Army van exploded near the Army careers information office at Wembley, London.

21 May 1990
One regular soldier was injured, not seriously, when an explosive device was thrown at a mobile patrol in west Belfast and detonated.

1 June 1990
One regular soldier was killed and two injured when they were shot whilst waiting for a train at Lichfield, Staffordshire, England.

2 June 1990
One regular soldier was shot and killed outside his married quarters at Dortmund-Gartenstadt, West Germany.

10 June 1990
One off-duty part-time UDR soldier was seriously injured when a UCBT exploded under his vehicle at Lisnaskea, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland.

28 June 1990
One regular soldier was seriously injured when a military patrol was engaged by automatic gunfire in the main street of Pomeroy, Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland.

2 July 1990
One regular soldier was injured not seriously, when the RUC station at Grosvenor road, Belfast came under attack from grenades and gunfire.

[1] A further 117 service men were injured in Northern Ireland between 1 August 1989 and 5 July 1990 as a result of the security situation there.

Options for Change

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he is giving in his current exercise, options for change, to the job implications in the defence industry for *(a)* Coventry and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Alan Clark: The implications of options for change for the balance of expenditure on defence equipment, and hence the defence industry, are being studied but it is too early to say what their impact will be.

Radiation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of the monitoring of radiation levels now being conducted by the Royal Navy in the St. Bride's area of Newport, West; and when he expects to publish the results.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Readings of natural background radiation are routinely taken in areas where nuclear submarines are cleared to berth. In this instance, the berth concerned was Cardiff. Readings are not intended for publication; however, the marine environmental surveys of nuclear submarine berths produced by the defence radiological protection service are published.

Land Ownership and Use

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Ashfield, *Official Report*, 6 March, column 719, what was the total acreage used by his Department in 1989; and what are the comparable figures for *(a)* ownership and *(b)* use by his Department in (i) 1960, (ii) 1970 and (iii) 1980.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The relevant figures are shown in the table:

Year	*Land and Foreshore in MOD Ownership (Freehold and Leasehold) (acres)*	*Land and Foreshore over which MOD has long term rights (acres)*
1989	596,265	249,699
1980	618,477	76,785
1972	658,756	56,331
1970	630,096	53,406
1960	782,819	79,000

The figures for 1960 and 1970 exclude the Procurement Executive estimate. Title in property held by the former Minister of Aviation Supply was transferred to the Secretary of State for Defence on 1 May 1971; figures for 1972 have been included in the table to reflect these changes.

The increase in land held under rights in 1989 is due to the renewal of two leases which granted long-term rights over areas where previous arrangements were on a short-term basis and did not qualify for inclusion in the statistics. Records of land used under rights for periods of less than three years are not held centrally.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which types of aircraft's noise levels produced by NATO allied air forces which are common users of the United Kingdom's low-flying system, will be included in the forthcoming noise survey to be conducted by his Department.

Mr. Neubert [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 July 1990, c. *643*]: The noise measurement trial conducted at the Royal Aerospace West Freugh range last month covered the following common users of the United Kingdom low-flying system: F-111, Hawk, Harrier GR5, Jaguar and Tornado.

ENVIRONMENT

Corvids

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to alter the law relating to the use of live decoys in traps for the purpose of taking corvids; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have no plans to make any changes to existing legislation on this matter.

Radiation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he became aware for the first time that inspectors from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution were conducting a radiological survey of Rainham marshes.

Mr. Trippier: Following publicity over claims that higher than normal background levels of radiation were present at Rainham marshes officials from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution first visited the area on 3 April.

Water Meters

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will require the fitting of water meters to be carried out free of charge to householders, where the decision to fit has been taken by a water supplier; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Charging for water services is a matter for each water company and like any other business they must cover their costs. Where water companies require water meters to be installed in new properties as a condition of supply, the cost of installation is borne by the developer. Water companies that opt for widespread matering of existing domestic properties will meet the initial costs of installation. They will be able to recover these costs through charges to customers as a whole by applying to the Director General of Water Services for an interim adjustment of their limit on charges increases. The director general will ensure that charges are fair and reasonable and do not show undue preference to, or undue discrimination against, any class of customer. Compulsory metering will be one of the issues dealt with in a consultation paper on methods of charging for water services that the director general will be issuing later this year.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources are available in the current year to the National Rivers Authority for managing and protecting the water environment.

Mr. Trippier: I am pleased to announce that, subject to any necessary parliamentary approval, an extra £11 million will be made available to the National Rivers Authority this financial year, if required. This is additional to the £93 million grant in aid already agreed. This decision will enable the authority to continue its planned capital restructuring programme and to carry out the full range of its pollution control and other functions, in line with the Government's commitment to maintaining the quality of the water environment.

Recycling

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total indentifiable expenditure on research into recycling by his Department in each year since 1979; and what proportion was expended in each year into the investigation of the capabilities of new technology.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory [*holding answer 4 July 1990*]: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Waste

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make public the conclusions of the consultation on his Department's draft code of practice for waste holders under the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Trippier [*holding answer 9 July 1990*]: I hope to make an announcement about the outcome of our consultations on the draft code of practice for the duty of care before the summer recess.

North Sea Pollution

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on whether the proposals for reducing pollution in the North sea include a sufficient reduction in heavy metal deposits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* I receive regular representations on the marine environment but these have not focused in particular on reduction of pollution by heavy metals. The second North sea conference agreed on a precautionary basis a target of 50 per cent. reductions 1985-95 in inputs via rivers and estuaries for the most dangerous substances, and the recent third conference in the Hague raised this target to 70 per cent. for four substances including mercury, cadmium and lead. The United Kingdom has since 1985 already achieved reductions of 31 per cent. and 22 per cent. discharges to the North sea of mercury and cadmium and these initiatives will help to achieve measurable improvements in North sea water quality.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many compulsory purchase orders have been confirmed by his Department, broken down by local authority, in each of the last three financial years;

(2) how many applications for compulsory purchase orders he has received from local authorities in England and Wales, broken down by local authority, in each of the last three financial years;

(3) how many compulsory purchase orders in each of the last three financial years were subject to public local inquiry from local authorities in England and Wales, broken down by local authority.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* Comprehensive data in the form requested are not available except at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for compulsory purchase orders he received in each of the last three financial years were in respect of *(a)* unfit housing which was occupied, *(b)* empty private sector properties and *(c)* poor management of privately rented property.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* The main compulsory purchase powers for unfit housing are contained in part IX of the Housing Act 1985 and the main powers for other housing in parts II and VIII. The numbers of orders received for confirmation in the last three financial years were:

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Part IX	151	112	93
Parts II, VIII	187	187	111

Orders are considered on their merits and statistics on the occupancy and management of properties are not kept.

Local Government Finance

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any plans to seek to amend the Local Government Finance Act 1988 with respect to the standard community charge, in addition to the proposed changes for holiday caravans; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he intends to change the law of joint and several liability under the Local Government Finance Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* My right hon. Friend hopes to make a statement shortly about the community charge.

CFCs

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the impact upon the environment of the leak of chlorofluorocarbons from Harwell atomic research centre.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* I understand that about 1 cu m of CFC113 was released when a new cooling system was being commissioned at the JET laboratory at Culham, some of which was subsequently recovered. I regret any avoidable release of ozone-depleting chemicals, but the quantity involved is not significant compared with current levels of CFC consumption.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 11 July 1990

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Leasehold Reform

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to introduce leasehold reform legislation to give tenants rights of commonhold.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 18 June 1990 at column *389*.

ENVIRONMENT

Mundic Aggregates

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the 28 June edition of the "Construction Journal" article concerning Mundic aggregates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I understand that the hon. Member is referring to the journal "New Builder", which my Department receives regularly.

The article suggests that unsatisfactory aggregates for concrete made from mine waste, are still in use in the west country. The effect of "Mundic" in aggregates impairs durability of concrete used in construction. As such the matter is of concern to the Government as well as to householders and others affected by the problem. The Government have overall responsibility for the health and safety aspects of new construction under building regulations as well as those interests arising out of their purchasing role.

The mechanism of "Mundic" in aggregates is little understood and, as the article makes clear, there is confusion within the construction industry. The first priority is to obtain a better understanding of the factors that indicate a risk of the effect and work on this is being carried out by the Building Research Establishment within the Department's research programme on aggregates. We shall then examine the extent to which the existing British standard (BS 882(1983): Aggregates from natural sources for concrete) may need amendment to be able to function as an effective check on unsuitable aggregates.

The results of this research are being made available to the responsible BSI technical committee. However, a European standard for aggregates that, in due course, will take the place of the British standard is currently under development within CEN—the European Standards Organisation. United Kingdom interests within CEN are represented by BSI. The Department will support action by BSI to ensure that the European standards and the accompanying methods of testing provide the United Kingdom construction industry with an effective means of ensuring that the Mundic problem does not recur.

Otters

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made an assessment of the threat to the otter population posed by the practice of mink hunting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have made no assessment of the threat to otter populations posed by mink hunting. However, the Nature Conservancy Council advises me that voluntary guidelines are already in place to discourage mink hunting in areas where otters may be found.

Air Conditioning

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to improve the efficiency of the air conditioning in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Chope: Only a limited area of the Palace has air conditioning or mechanical ventilation. Although there is no immediate need to carry out any major work, the replacement and upgrading of some plant and controls is included in the forward maintenance programme.

Housebuilding

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what proportion the level of housebuilding completions in 1989 differs from the figure for 10 years earlier.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Figures for housebuilding completions in England for 1989 appear in table 2 of my Department's press release issued on 5 July 1990, and for 1979, in table 6.1(a) of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988". Copies are in the Library.

AEA Technology

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to assess the potential of AEA Technology, Dounreay to be included in the European Environment Agency's proposed monitoring network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The regulation establishing the European Environment Agency has not yet come into force, but some preparatory work has been set in hand in my Department on the compilation of a list of United Kingdom institutions which could contribute to the work of the agency. AEA Technology, Dounreay has provided details of its capabilities which have been noted in this respect.

Arts (Planning Policy)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to issue planning policy guidance on the arts for consultation with local authorities.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has not yet decided whether or when to issue for public consultation draft guidance on planning policy in relation to the arts, but we have recently received from the Arts Council its proposals for such guidance. We will consider the council's draft carefully in the context of reviewing planning policy guidance note 1 (PPG1—general policy and principles).

Archaeological Areas

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has now completed his consideration of English Heritage's advice on the effectiveness of part II of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 concerning archaeological areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have considered English Heritage's advice on the operation and effectiveness of areas of archaeological importance (AAIs) in the light of the likely impact of the Department's planning policy guidance note (PPG) on archaeology and planning. We are currently considering the 200 or so responses to the draft guidance note and expect to publish final guidance within the next few months. English Heritage has advised me that no further areas of archaeological importance should be designated at present but that it would be premature to take decisions on the future use of the existing statutory provisions until the impact of the Department's forthcoming planning policy guidance note on archaeology and planning has been assessed.

The provisions of part II of the 1979 Act are broadly intended to help prevent important archaeological sites being damaged or destroyed without there first being an opportunity for archaeological investigation and recording. By contrast the draft planning policy guidance note places archaeology more firmly in the planning process with its message to developers and local planning authorities to consider the possible existence of archaeological remains on site before submitting planning applications and the desirability of preserving them. This guidance will apply across the country whereas areas of archaeological importance must be limited to specified areas.

In the circumstances I have concluded, in agreement with English Heritage advice, that it would be sensible to allow time for the impact of the planning policy guidance note to be assessed before considering further the role of areas of archaeological importance. I therefore intend to review the position with regard to areas of archaeological importance 12 months after publication of the planning policy guidance note by which time we can begin to form a judgment on the effectiveness of the forthcoming planning policy guidance note.

Satellite TV Antennas

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue a consultation paper on planning controls over satellite television antennas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales have today issued a consultation paper on permitted development rights for satellite television antennas.

The Government are fully committed both to protecting the environment and to facilitating the growth of telecommunications. There have been major changes since the present planning regime for satellite television dishes was introduced in the mid-1980s. We need to provide better safeguards for the visual environment, respond to the growth in satellite broadcasting, and take advantage of the development of smaller antennas. The consultation paper sets out a range of options. Any extension of permitted development rights—which remove the need to apply for specific planning permission—should in our view be balanced by additional controls over unnecessarily obtrusive installations, particularly in sensitive areas.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would have been the total level of local government spending in the current year had local government spending plans not been subject to capping.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* The caps which, if the House approves, my right hon. Friend intends to set for the designated authorities will result in the £35·8 billion total of all local authorities' budgets being reduced by £217 million.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from those local authorities that have been community charge-capped over the reduction and disruption of services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* My right hon. Friend received many representations about the effect of charge capping on services, including those from the designated authorities which put forward alternative maxima. My right hon. Friend carefully considered all the information which he considered relevant, before taking his decisions on final caps which are at present before the House in the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) (No. 2) Order 1990 and the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) (No. 3) Order 1990.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered increasing the upper spending limit for local authorities for each adult in their area when assessing their poll tax before applying the charge capping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* My right hon. Friend considered carefully all the relevant information before him before taking his decisions on designation of authorities for community charge capping for 1990-91; he is satisfied that the principles he adopted for designation were appropriate.

JET Project, Culham

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will conduct an inquiry into the recent release of CFC-113 at the Culham JET laboratory.

Mr. Chris Patten: No: I understand that a representative of the Health and Safety Executive has already visited the plant and is satisfied that improvements have now been made to the system which failed. CFC-113 is not itself a toxic substance and this release has not imperilled achievement of our obligations under the Montreal protocol. Nevertheless avoidable releases of ozone-depleting chemicals are regrettable.

RECHAR

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account was taken of the funds to be made available under the European Community

RECHAR initiative when standard spending assessments for local authorities for the current financial year were drawn up.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* No account was taken.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will take steps to ensure that the required contribution from Wakefield district council under the European Community RECHAR scheme does not count against its current approved capital programme;

(2) what steps have been taken by his Department to ensure that money made available through the European Community RECHAR initiative is additional to local authorities, over and above their approved level of borrowing.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* The Government take anticipated European Community receipts into account at the national level when setting the level of public expenditure programmes, so that these programmes are higher than they would otherwise be.

Thereafter, capital allocations are made to individual authorities on the basis of overall assessments of their needs to spend. No explicit account is taken of whether expenditure may be financed in part through grant from the European Community. A limited exception has been made in the case of expenditure on the "other services" block. In the current financial year, the Government have held back credit approvals of £25 million to be distributed in respect of ERDF grant claims for expenditure on that block.

PCBs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what tonnage of polychlorinate bi-phenyls was imported into Newport by sea in the past three years.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* I have been asked to reply.

The information sought is available only since the introduction of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988.

Records of shipments under the regulations show that 479 tonnes of polychlorinate bi-phenyl contaminated materials were imported via Newport for disposal in the year 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990.

TRANSPORT

A11

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work on the A11 Red Lodge bypass to start; and what arrangements are being made about the timing of a new A45/A11 connector road.

Mr. Atkins: Selected contractors are currently preparing bids for the construction of the A11 Red Lodge bypass. Work is expected to commence in early autumn this year. My Department has no proposals to construct a new link road between the A45 and A11.

Draft proposals have also been published which would provide a second carriageway for the A11 between Red Lodge and the A45. Further progress on this scheme depends on the outcome of statutory procedures.

Fuel Tankers (Safety)

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment the railway inspectorate has made of the safety of parked railway fuel tankers at Port Talbot station.

Mr. Freeman: The primary responsibility for railway safety rests with the operator. British Rail has already taken a number of steps to reduce leakages from fuel tank wagons at Port Talbot station. There were eight such incidents in 1989 but only one so far in 1990.

The railway inspectorate will be reviewing the situation to make sure that all reasonably practicable safety measures are being taken.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many incidents have occurred with parked railway fuel tankers in south Wales in the last two years; and on how many occasions passengers have had to be disembarked from main line trains because of concern with safety.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from British Rail that there have been 14 incidents of seepage or leakage from railway fuel tank wagons in south Wales since January 1988. No passengers have been disembarked from trains as a direct result, but it is usual for the fire service to be called and the passage of other trains stopped whilst any leakage is investigated and rectified.

A1 (Upgrading)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of traffic flows on the A1 north of Newcastle following upgrading to motorway standard of the A1 between London and Newcastle.

Mr. Atkins: Estimates of increased traffic flows resulting from a new motorway link from London to Newcastle have not been assessed specifically. However, the study commissioned by the Scottish Development Department, "Routes South of Edinburgh", indicated that the completion of a motorway link between London and Tyneside would not lead to any significant transfer of traffic to the route north of Newcastle.

The joint A1 steering group will of course monitor the traffic flows on the route between Newcastle and Edinburgh.

Roads

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of his road construction programme for 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins: Following publication of the report "Trunk Roads, England" in February, the latest information for the current financial year is as follows:

10 contracts have been let (value £101 million).

11 contracts have been advertised in the Official Journal (value £114 million).

18 further contracts are expected to be let, subject to satisfactory completion of statutory processes (estimated value £260 million).

59 schemes are currently under construction (value £1,384 million).

A list of these schemes will be placed in the Library and sent to contractors.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the new roads which have been built in each

of the last five years in *(a)* areas of outstanding natural beauty, *(b)* sites of special scientific interest and *(c)* national parks.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* The information for trunk roads is as follows. Information about local authority roads is not available.

Date	*Areas of outstanding natural beauty*	*Sites of special scientific interest*
1985-86	M25 Leatherhead—Reigate M3 Popham—Bar End M25 Swanley—Sevenoaks	M3 Popham—Bar End
1986-87	A34 East Ilsley—Chilton	A483 Oswestry BP
1987-88	A39 Bideford BP A303 Furze Hedge A2 Barham Crossroads	A36 Heytesbury BP
1988-89	A35 Bridport A35 Dorchester A303 Ilminster BP A417 Birdlip BP A34 Whitway Diversion	A650 Airedale I A65 Settle/Giggleswick BP A361 North Devon Link Road
1989-90		A36 Steeple Langford BP All Thetford BP A46 Coventry Eastern BP[1]

[1] Designated after work on site started.

The Okehampton bypass completed in 1988-89 is the only scheme to pass through national park land in recent years.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners were transferred from *(a)* England and Wales to Northern Ireland and *(b)* Northern Ireland to England and Wales in 1989; and under what section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfers were carried out;

(2) how many prisoners in British gaols who give as their domicile Northern Ireland have been returned to Northern Ireland to serve the whole or part of their sentences in 1989; and how many of these prisoners were serving sentences for terrorist-type offences.

Mr. Mellor: In 1989, 15 prisoners were transferred from England and Wales to Northern Ireland under section 26 of the Criminal Justice Act 1961, one of whom was convicted of terrorist-type offences. One other prisoner was transferred under section 27. All were either domiciled in, or had close family links with, Northern Ireland. In the same year, four prisoners were transferred fom Northern Ireland to England and Wales under section 26, two under section 27 and one under section 28 of the Act.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in British gaols give as their place of domicile (i) the Republic of Ireland and (ii) Northern Ireland; and how many of these prisoners are serving sentences for terrorist-type offences as on 31 December 1989.

Mr. Mellor: The information which is readily available centrally relates to prisoners' place of birth and to those terrorist-type prisoners who are held in category A. On 31 December 1989, 561 sentenced inmates of prison establishments in England and Wales were recorded as born in the Republic of Ireland and 378 in Northern Ireland. Of those, 13 born in the Republic of Ireland and 21 born in Northern Ireland had been convicted of terrorist-type offences and were held in category A.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners giving as their domicile either the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland have been permitted to return home to the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland on parole for humanitarian reasons in 1989.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available.

Civil Unrest, Northern Ireland

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of deaths and injuries which have occurred in Great Britain and mainland western Europe in 1989 which are regarded as being connected with present civil unrest in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Waddington: The information is given in the table.

Deaths and injuries in Great Britain and Western Europe in 1989 attributable to Northern Irish terrorism

Date of incident and location	*Deaths*	*Injuries*
20 February 1989 Clive Barracks, Tern Hill, Shropshire	—	1
19 June 1989 Quebec Barracks, Osnabruck, West Germany	—	1
2 July 1989 Hanover, West Germany	1	5
1 September 1989 York Barracks, Munster, West Germany	0	2
7 September 1989 Dortmund, West Germany	1	0
22 September 1989 Royal Marines School of Music, Deal, Kent	11	21
20 October 1989 Wildenrath, West Germany	2	0

Date of incident and location	Deaths	Injuries
18 November 1989		
Married quarters, nr. Goojerat Barracks, Colchester	0	2
Total	15	32

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average number of days spent on remand by those remanded in custody for terrorist-type offences in 1989, with regard to cases now completed in England and Wales and the number of bail applications refused;

(2) how many persons were remanded in custody before trial for terrorist-type offences in 1989.

Mr. Mellor: The only relevant information which is readily available relates to prisoners who are now in prison custody in category A and does not cover prisoners who have been released or downgraded.

Three such prisoners were first received in custody in 1989. The case of one of them has now been completed. This prisoner spent a total of 479 days on remand, and, according to our records, no applications for bail were made.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in England and Wales were charged with terrorist-type offences relating to Northern Ireland in 1989; how many of those charged were released on bail; and what was the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail relating to such charges in Britain in 1989.

Mr. John Patten: The criminal statistics do not distinguish between terrorist-related and other offences. However, information about the number of people charged with criminal offences following detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act is published quarterly for Great Britain in statistical bulletins which are placed in the Library. The latest issue, 15/90, gives in table 1 the number charged in 1989 after detention in connection with Northern Ireland terrorism. Of the 12 people who were so charged in England and Wales in 1989, eight were charged with relatively minor offences; six of these were dealt with at court on the same day or the next day, and two were released on bail. Of the four who were remanded in custody, one person who had been charged in February 1989 was brought to trial in April 1990, and a second, who had been charged in October 1989, was released in January 1990 after the Director of Public Prosecutions decided to offer no evidence against him. The two others, who were charged in December 1989, are currently in custody awaiting trial.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average period of custodial remand for female custodial remand prisoners in England and Wales in 1989.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) on 3 May, at column *658*.

Marches

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the number of marches that have been banned in England and Wales in relation to Northern Ireland, since 1986, detailing what the marches were, who applied for permission to hold them and the grounds on which they were refused.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The only public processions relating to events in Northern Ireland which are known to have been prevented as a result of an order made under section 13 of the Public Order Act 1986 are a procession organised by the Manchester branch of the Apprentice Boys of Derry to take place on 21 November 1987 and a procession organised by Manchester Martyrs' Memorial Committee to take place the following day.

Section 13 of the Public Order Act 1986 provides that if a chief officer of police has reason to believe that his powers to impose conditions on public processions are not sufficient to prevent the holding of a procession from resulting in serious public disorder, he may apply to the district council for an order prohibiting all processions, or specified classes of processions, for a period not exceeding three months.

The district council may make such an order with the consent of the Home Secretary.

Firearms

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to require a photograph of the bearer to appear on a certificate of registration as a firearms dealer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. It would not be possible to do so as many firearms dealers are companies.

Visa Fees

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the income from visa fees for each of the offices in the United Kingdom from 1980 to the present for each year inclusive.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the total income received from fees for visas issued in the United Kingdom for the financial years 1981-82 to 1984-85 inclusive and by office for the financial years 1985-86 to 1989-90 inclusive.

Visa fees

(£)

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
National Total	186,925	287,815	388,378	556,135	—	—	—	—	—
London	—	—	—	—	737,639	915,407	1,121,027	1,318,245	1,437,983
Liverpool	—	—	—	—	76,411	105,099	127,338	112,446	89,100
Peterborough	—	—	—	—	44,236	57,856	78,713	95,618	123,220
Newport	—	—	—	—	38,784	49,466	57,022	56,682	62,900

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	29,601	33,905	39,588	[1]39,000	[1]65,400
Belfast	—	—	—	—	971	1,856	2,493	3,080	2,816
Lunar House	—	—	—	—	n.a.	27,000	65,000	77,000	99,000

[1] Estimated.

Remand System

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet in a position to announce the Government's decisions on private sector involvement in the remand system.

Mr. Waddington: In his statement to the House on 1 March 1989, at columns 277-78, my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary indicated that, in the light of the comments received on the Green Paper "Private Sector Involvement in the Remand System"—July 1988, Cm. 434—and of the report to the Home Office on the practicality of such involvement from the management consultants Deloitte, Haskins and Sells, the Government wished to take further their consideration of the possibility of contracting out to the private sector the design, construction and operation of new remand centres, the escorting of prisoners to and from court and their guarding whilst at court. Final decisions depended, however, on the outcome of further research into the likely cost-effectiveness of contracting out in these areas.

In the light of the results of this further research, I have decided to go ahead with preparations to reorganise arrangements for court escorts, custody and security services and to invite competitive tenders for the provision of these services. I am confident that the resulting rationalisation of the existing complex and overlapping arrangements will lead to a substantial improvement in the cost-effectiveness with which these services are provided. An important objective of the new arrangements will be to enable the police and prison services to concentrate their efforts on work which makes more effective use of the skills and training of their officers.

I am today issuing to interested parties a discussion document setting out the Government's proposals in greater detail, and describing the legislative framework which the Government propose should support the reorganisation of these services. A copy has been placed in the Library. Further copies can be obtained from Room 1103, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AT. Any comments should be submitted to the same address by 7 September 1990.

The further evidence which has been obtained on the cost-effectiveness of privately operated remand centres indicates that the private sector could, if invited to operate remand centres, reasonably be expected to provide a good standard of service and value for money for the taxpayer. But the opportunities for involving the private sector in the running of remand centres will be considerably more limited than appeared likely at the time of the publication of the Green Paper and my right hon. Friend's statement on 1 March 1989.

In the context of a general reduction in the prison population recently, the remand population in custody, including those held in police cells, has fallen from an average of 11,400 in 1988 to an average of 10,500 in 1989, and at the end of May this year stood at about 9,800. The proposals set out in the White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public"—February 1990, Cm. 965—should lead to a further significant reduction in the numbers in custody. Taken with the success of the prison building programme, the result of these developments is that the likely need for additional remand places provided by the private sector is now very limited.

The opportunity to mount a trial of competitive tendering for the operation of a remand centre still arises, however, in respect of the new remand centre currently under development at Everthorpe, Humberside. This establishment is due to be completed in 1992. Subject to the passage of the necessary enabling legislation, I have decided that a trial should be mounted in which competitive tenders would be invited from the private sector for the operation of this remand centre. If one or more satisfactory tenders were received from the private sector which offered better value for money than the prison service could offer, a contract would be awarded for private sector management of the establishment. The arrangements for letting and supervising any such contract would in the main follow the recommendations of the report from Deloitte, Haskins and Sells. The staff would be prisoner custody officers, with duties and protections similar to those which it is proposed staff engaged in court escorts and custody should have, and which are described in the discussion document.

I believe that the introduction of this element of competition into the management of the prison system will make a valuable contribution to the prison service's continuing and successful efforts to raise standards and improve efficiency.

Maguire Family

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he will take in the cases of the Maguire family and their co-defendants.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and I have now received Sir John May's interim report on these cases. In the light of the report, I have decided to refer the cases of Mr. and Mrs. Maguire, their sons, Vincent and Patrick, Mr. William Smyth and Mr. Patrick O'Neill to the Court of Appeal under the provisions of section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968.

I will seek the views of the Court of Appeal under section 17(1)(b) of the 1968 Act on the question of whether it is possible to refer to the court under section 17(1)(a) the case of a person who is now dead. If the court's view is that such action is legally possible, I will refer the case of Mr. Patrick "Guiseppe" Conlon also under the provisions of section 17(1)(a). If the court's view is that such action is not possible, I will consider what further steps to take in the light of its advice.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and I are arranging for Sir John May's interim report to be published tomorrow at 3 pm in response to an order of the House for a return. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Prisoners' Pay

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the results of the review of prisoners' pay.

Mr. Mellor: Consideration of the review of inmates' earnings by the prisons board has identified the need for some further work to be done. The outcome will be announced as soon as conclusions are reached.

Police Officers

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy on having an officer class in the police forces;

(2) what consideration he is giving to the introduction of an officer class in the police forces.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We need to look actively for opportunities to recruit talented people from all sources while recognising that senior police officers need to start their careers by gaining experience as constables.

Immigration

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on a common immigration policy at European Community level.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: EC Heads of Government agreed at the European Council in Strasbourg in December 1989 that an inventory of member states' immigration position should be prepared, with a view to further discussion at ministerial level. I would not wish to prejudge the outcome of this discussion, but we have made it clear that we regard immigration policy as a national matter.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by how much crime figures have increased since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1979 and up to the end of March 1990, recorded crime has increased by 58 per cent. However, there is evidence from the British crime survey that the real increase in crime has been less than that recorded by the police: between 1981 and 1987, survey crimes increased by 30 per cent. compared with 41 per cent. for comparable crimes recorded by the police. Results of the 1988 British crime survey are published in Home Office research study 111. Recorded crime figures for 1979 are published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1988"—Cm. 847—and for the 12 months to March 1990 in Home Office statistical bulletin 19/90. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Territorial Seas

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the territorial sea round the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands is to be extended to 12 miles.

Mr. Waddington: The Isle of Man has asked that such an extension be made. Agreement in principle has been reached on the terms and conditions for the transfer of rights relating to petroleum beneath the sea bed. Agreement has also been reached for compensation to be paid to the Crown Estate for its interests in the extended territorial sea. Rights for coal will not be transferred at this time, but may be subject to negotiation at a later date. In exercising jurisdiction over fisheries, the established rights of all fishermen will be safeguarded and any measures will be subject to approval by Fisheries Ministers. On the basis of these negotiations, it is proposed that the territorial sea wil be extended. Discussions are continuing with Jersey and Guernsey.

HEALTH

Benefit Provision

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to investigate ways in which the families of individuals who are seriously ill can be given better financial security.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

On 10 January we laid before Parliament "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" which details our major proposals arising from our review of the balance and structure of social security benefits for long-term sick and disabled people and their carers. With effect from October 1990 we propose to remove the six-month qualifying period for attendance allowance for people who are terminally ill. Carers of people who are terminally ill will automatically be eligible to claim invalid care allowance. Also effective from October 1990 a carer's premium, initially at a rate of £10 a week, will be introduced into income support and housing benefit for those receiving invalid care allowance. This will help 30,000 carers.

Complementary Medicine

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of complementary medicine; what aspects of impending EEC legislation were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State met representatives of the complementary therapies on 29 November 1989. At the meeting they expressed fears that their professions might be adversely affected by EC legislation.

There are three current EC directives in this area—two on higher education diplomas one of a general nature, containing nothing specific to individual professions; they will not affect alternative practitioners' right to practise in the United Kingdom. The purpose of the other directive, on homeopathic medicinal products, is to achieve a single market whilst safeguarding public health. Our considerations will take account of United Kingdom interests and traditions.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what money Her Majesty's Government have allocated specifically for public health education for the avoidance of contracting HIV and AIDS in each year since such an allocation was first made; whether any major new campaign is proposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The table sets out total allocations made to regional health authorities, local

authorities and to the voluntary sector as a contribution towards the development of HIV and AIDS-related services, including educational and other initiatives to help further prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS. The table also shows spending by the Department of Health and the Health Education Authority (HEA) on AIDS public education work between 1985-86 and 1987-88, and allocations to the HEA for the development of the national AIDS public education campaign from October 1987 and in subsequent years. These amounts include the running costs of the national AIDS helpline and related telephone information and advice services. Not shown in the table are the amounts spent by other Government Departments on HIV prevention work within their own spheres of interest.

(£ million)

Year	*Regional Health authorities*	*Local authorities*	*Voluntary sector*	*Department of Health*	*Health Education authority*
1985-86	—	—	0·10	0·52	—
1986-87	—	—	0·16	7·60	—
1987-88	25·1	—	1·30	6·74	4·47
1988-89	61·7	—	1·09	—	10·00
1989-90	122·8	7·0	1·60	—	12·00
1990-91	127·5	9·8	1·80	—	10·00

So far as general Government strategies for HIV prevention are concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 15 June at columns *372-73*.

Graham Gaskin

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will direct Liverpool city council to allow Graham Gaskin access to his file.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no power under which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State can order a local authority to release confidential records of this kind.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health following the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights on the Graham Gaskin case, what steps the Government have taken to implement the ruling; whether an independent procedure has yet been established to consider the release of Graham Gaskin's file; and what legislation is being considered arising out of the case.

Mr. Dorrell: The implications of the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights for the arrangements governing access to personal records are being carefully reviewed. Decisions on the need to modify those arrangements will be taken on completion of the review, at which stage I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ascertain whether the Graham Gaskin file is complete and request that a copy be deposited with his office for safe keeping.

Mr. Dorrell: The file relating to Mr. Graham Gaskin is, quite properly, held by Liverpool city council. We have no wish to assume its responsibility for its safe keeping, nor does my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State have power to require the council to supply a copy.

Child Migrants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) further to his answer of 15 January, *Official Report*, column *81*, how many further inquiries he has received on the Child Migrant Trust; and what steps he is taking to encourage such inquiries;

(2) how many child migrants has the Department helped since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Two further inquiries relating to the Child Migrant Trust's grant application have been received since 15 January.

Responsibility for the welfare of former child migrants rests with the countries to which they have emigrated.

Neuroblastoma

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to the statement by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health in the Adjournment Debate on neuroblastoma on 30 March, *Official Report*, column 870, if he will now state the number of children diagnosed with the disease and the number of deaths from it in each of the years since 1980; if there is any progress he can report in regard to research on screening the disease; and if there is any further action he is taking arising from the debate.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that the Medical Research Council is considering the need for research on screening for neuroblastoma. I wrote to the right hon. Member on 27 June offering to discuss this topic further with him and parents' representatives. The statistical information requested is as follows:

Year	*Neuroblastoma diagnosed at age 0-14 (England)*	*Neuroblastoma deaths at age 0-14 (England)*
1980	56	42
1981	69	37
1982	63	33
1983	60	26
1984	67	38
1985	[1]63	30
1986	[1]67	42
1987	[1]79	34
1988	[1]88	56
1989	—	45

[1] Provisional.

Hospital Watch Schemes

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his Department is doing to encourage the extension of hospital watch schemes.

Mr. Dorrell: It is the responsibility of health authorities to determine security arrangements but we welcome local initiatives such as hospital watch schemes.

Health Authorities

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his reasons for seeking to prohibit full-time trade union officials from sitting on health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* The new Membership and Procedure Regulations disqualify from non-executive membership of a regional or district health authority a person who holds any paid employment or office with a trade union which represents the interests of members who are employed by a health service body. This is one of a number of grounds for disqualification from health authority membership which aim to avoid any conflict of interest on the part of health authority members. It is for the same reason that directors of NHS trusts; members of other regional and district health authorities; members of the family health services authorities (FHSAs) (except for the FHSA chairman member of RHAs) and GPs who are practice fund holders are disqualified from membership by the regulations.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many written parliamentary questions he has answered; and how many of these were in reply to hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies in each of the last two parliamentary Sessions and the current Session to the latest convenient date indicating in a table *(a)* how many were answered by each Northern Ireland Office Minister, *(b)* how many were answered on the date requested and *(c)* in how many cases a holding reply was first given.

Mr. Cope: In the 1988-89 and 1989-90 (to 9 July 1990) Sessions 1,162 and 1,079 written parliamentary questions were answered. Of those 766 and 781 respectively were in reply to hon. Members for Northern Ireland. Similar information for the 1987-88 Session is not available.

Answered by	*Parliamentary Session*	
	1988-89	*[1]1989-90*
Mr. Brooke	7	53
Mr. King	44	—
Mr. Cope	99	327
Mr. Stewart	212	—
Mr. Bottomley	37	287
Mr. Needham	450	295
Dr. Mawhinney	118	117
Mr. Viggers	195	—
Total	1,162	1,079
Answered on time (priority and ordinary)	811	628
Answered on time (priority only)	218	188
Holding replies	351	451

[1] To 9 July

1991 Census

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the information from the 1991 census in Northern Ireland will make it possible to aggregate population and employment statistics on a constituency basis.

Mr. Needham: As for past censuses, the 1991 census in Northern Ireland will have the capacity to aggregate population and employment statistics on the basis of local government districts and wards. Since the boundaries of these do not correspond to constituency boundaries it will not be possible to produce exact statistics for the latter. Instead, where required, they will be provided on an estimated basis, making appropriate adjustment for boundary differences.

Unemployment

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the latest available figures which indicate unemployment in each parliamentary constituency and in each electoral ward in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information available is as follows:

Numbers of unemployed claimants by parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland at 10 May 1990

Parliamentary constituency	*Total number of unemployed claimants*
Belfast East	3,994
Belfast North	6,588
Belfast South	4,465
Belfast West	9,222
East Antrim	4,576
East Londonderry	6,986
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	6,363
Foyle	9,835
Lagan Valley	4,604
Mid-Ulster	6,893
Newry and Armagh	6,889
North Antrim	5,027
North Down	3,400
South Antrim	3,927
South Down	5,117
Strangford	3,258
Upper Bann	4,920
Total	96,064

Note: Figures for parliamentary constituencies are estimated from ward data.

Since there are 566 electoral wards in Northern Ireland I will write to the hon. Member, giving unemployment figures for each electoral ward, and place copies of the information in the House of Commons Library.

Housing

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's activities in the last financial year and what figures in respect of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are available to indicate *(a)* the dwelling stocks, *(b)* the collectable rent which should have been received from tenants, *(c)* expenditure on repairs and maintenance of stock, *(d)* expenditure on new buildings, *(e)* expenditure on rehabilitation of stock, *(f)* expenditure

on salaries and administration, *(g)* expenditure on grants to the private sector, *(h)* expenditure incurred on interest charges and *(i)* grant received from the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The total cost of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's activities in the last financial year (1989-90) was £476,310,000.

The detailed information sought is as follows:

(a) Total housing stock at 31 March 1990 was 169,971
(b) Rent collectable £169,414,000
(c) Expenditure on repairs and maintenance £70,139,000
(d) Expenditure on new building £51,280,000
(e) Expenditure on rehabilitation of stock £76,606,000
(f) Expenditure on salaries and administration £46,256,000
(g) Expenditure on grants to the private sector £36,185,000
(h) Expenditure incurred on interest charges £170,000,000
(i) Housing grant from DOE (NI) £157,373,000

Most of the information concerns the executive's revenue expenditure which is financed partly by rental income and partly by a grant (housing grant) from the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland to meet the difference between rental income and approved revenue expenditure.

The executive's capital expenditure includes new build and rehabilitation of existing stock which is financed by borrowing mainly from the Government and by capital receipts from the sale of dwellings, land and mortgage redemptions.

Firearms

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its reserve, currently hold private firearms certificates.

Mr. Cope: The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has informed me that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Emergency Provisions

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to publish the report on Lord Colville's review of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1978 and 1987.

Mr. Brooke: It has been published today (Cm. 1115). I am most grateful to Lord Colville for his comprehensive and detailed report, which deserves to be widely read. The Government will consider carefully his recommendations and in due course bring forward proposals for new legislation. In the meantime, the Government would welcome the views both of hon. Members and of the public at large on the matters addressed in the review.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* Staff are provided with clear instructions on the registering and classification of documents and on the transmission and storage of classified documents.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Monetary Union

88. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has discussed with his European Community counterparts the compatibility of European monetary union with the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Lilley: In discussions with his ECOFIN colleagues my right hon. Friend has stressed the need for all economic and monetary arrangements in the Community to respect the principle of subsidiarity.

89. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the current progress of discussions regarding the achievement of economic and monetary union in the European Community.

Mr. Lilley: Economic and monetary union was last discussed at the European Council in Dublin on 25-26 June. It was agreed that more convergence of member states' economic performance and wider use of the ecu were needed during stage 1; and that the intergovernmental conference to decide on further stages should open on 13 December. ECOFIN and the Foreign Affairs Council and their committees will now continue their preparatory work.

Inflation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the rate of inflation for the period April 1990 to April 1991.

Mr. Ryder: It is not the practice to publish month-by-month forecasts for inflation. The FSBR forecast that all-items RPI inflation would be 5 per cent. in 1991Q2.

Football Clubs

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he holds on arrears of three months or more on *(a)* pay as you earn and *(b)* value added tax payments by professional football clubs.

Mr. Lilley: Information held by the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise about individual

football clubs is, of course, confidential and may not be disclosed. A global figure of arrears over three months old for all professional football clubs could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

Independent Taxation

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the benefits of independent taxation for married women.

Mr. Lilley: Independent taxation, which took effect on 6 April 1990, offers all married women the opportunity to enjoy independence and privacy in their own tax affairs.

Every married woman is now entitled to a personal allowance and basic rate band in her own right, which she can set against her own income of any kind. This includes any income which she may have from savings or investments, and any state retirement pension which she may receive by virtue of her husband's national insurance contributions. The allowance is given at higher, age-related levels if she is aged 65 or over, subject to her own income limit.

Almost 3 million wives (just under half of all wives on whose income tax is charged) will have less tax charged on their income, because they will have their own personal allowance and their income will no longer be taxed as if it belonged to their husband. These changes remove the tax penalty on marriage because the tax payable on a married woman's income will now never exceed—as it could previously—the tax payable by a single woman on the same income.

Sterling-Deutschmark Link

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what dates the pound sterling has been linked by Her Majesty's Government informally to the deutschmark at given rates of exchange since June 1983; what were the exchange rates on each given date; how long each arrangement was maintained; and if he will list the changes in the United Kingdom interest rates during each period of each informal link.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* Tables 13.1 and 13.8 of the Central Statistical Office's monthly publication "Financial Statistics" give information on sterling's exchange rate against other major currencies and United Kingdom short-term interest rates, respectively.

Government Shareholdings

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer of 11 December, *Official Report*, column *463*, on *(a)* the golden shares and *(b)* other shares currently owned by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Lilley *[pursuant to his reply, 10 July 1990, c. 112-13]:* I regret that Southern Water was accidentally omitted from the list of companies in which the Government hold a special share.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Hampshire

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what are the statutory duties of *(a)* Hampshire county council and *(b)* his Department and its regional offices in relation to the development of commercial and industrial links with the lower Normandy area of the EEC;

(2) what are the statutory duties of *(a)* Hampshire county council and *(b)* his Department for the provision of services to assist the location of industry and commerce in Hampshire.

Mr. Ridley: The Hampshire county council has no statutory duties to develop commercial and industrial links with lower Normandy or to provide services to assist the location of industry and commerce in Hampshire.

My Department has a number of powers (but no statutory duties) to achieve these ends, but is making limited use of them at present.

GATT

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration has been given to the environmental implications of the European Community and the United States' proposals on trade-related investment measures and trade in intellectual property rights in the current general agreement on tariffs and trade round.

Mr. Redwood: The Government believe that agreements such as those sought by the European Community and the United States in the current GATT Uruguay round negotiations to liberalise trade in the fields of investment and intellectual property will helpfully complement wider international efforts to tackle global and regional environmental problems. For example, by providing greater incentives and security for innovators, a GATT agreement leading to improved international protection of intellectual property would help facilitate the investment and technology flows needed to meet environmental challenges.

Chambers of Commerce

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many chambers of commerce have received assistance from his Department in the last 12 months.

Mr. Redwood: Thirty-seven chambers have received funding in respect of their position as local host organisations under the enterprise and education initiative. Seventeen chambers have received funding to assist with the appointment of export development advisers. Six chambers have received funding for various activities from inner-city task forces. Three chambers have received funding as part of the Department's support for the South-West Export Federation initiative.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the matters which are under discussion between himself and chambers of commerce; when he next plans to meet their representatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is intending to meet Mr. Miles Middleton, president of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce (ABCC), later this month to discuss the ABCC's five-year development plan.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of chambers of commerce; and what was discussed.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of chambers of commerce at a dinner organised by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce on 19 December 1989. A general discussion of the role of chambers of commerce took place.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in which Group of Seven countries it is compulsory for local businesses to be members of the chamber of commerce in order to trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: It is compulsory for local businesses to be members of the chamber of commerce in order to trade in France, Italy and West Germany.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what functions are currently contracted out by his Department to chambers of commerce; and what proposals he has to extend this cover.

Mr. Redwood: The Association of British Chambers of Commerce (ABCC) has, since 1966, acted as the Department's agent in the administration of the certificates of origin scheme. Since January 1989 the export marketing research scheme has been operated by the ABCC on behalf of the Department on a three-year contract. In May 1990 the ABCC assumed responsibility for issuing international import certificates. Officials are currently holding discussions with the ABCC regarding the possibility of transferring the issue of certificates of experience to chambers of commerce.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the Government have done to protect the title and definitive status of chambers of commerce and industry.

Mr. Redwood: The titles "Chamber of Commerce", "Chamber of Industry" and "Chamber of Trade" are specified in the schedule to Statutory Instrument 1981 No. 1685 ("The Company and Business Names Regulations 1981").

This schedule specifies words and expressions for whose registration as, or as part of, a company's corporate name or whose use as, or as part of, a business name the Secretary of State's approval is required.

Insider Trading

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cases of alleged insider trading were investigated by his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Redwood: The power to appoint inspectors to investigate possible insider trading is contained in section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986 which came into force in November 1986. The Secretary of State has made the following number of appointments for each year since then:

1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	[1] *1990*
3	10	12	16	1

[1] to date

These statistics are published at page 152 of the Trade and Industry Committee third report on company investigations.

British Telecom

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any proposals to relinquish his golden share in British Telecom.

Mr. Forth: The articles of association of British Telecommunications plc require that the special share in the company may be held only by Her Majesty's Government. It could not therefore be sold.

Share Transfers

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Scretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to facilitate the introduction of electronic recording and transfer of shares.

Mr. Redwood: Section 207 of the Companies Act 1989 gives me power to make regulations to enable title to securities to be evidenced and transferred without a written instrument. The international stock exchange (ISE) has published proposals for the introduction of TAURUS, its scheme for recording and transferring shares electronically in October 1991, and I am therefore considering the form of the regulations which I should make.

I welcome developments that improve the international competitiveness of the United Kingdom as a financial centre. However, the introduction of electronic share transfers will also affect the way in which companies can meet their obligations, and change the manner in which investors hold shares. Striking the right balance between the interests of investors, companies and market participants may not be easy and I would like to hear the comments of a wide range of interested parties before reaching decisions on how to proceed.

I am today publishing a consultative paper which describes the proposed legal framework for TAURUS, and seeks views on how different rights and obligations should be handled by statutory provisions or by the appropriate regulatory bodies. Comments are invited by 14 September. I am arranging for a copy of the paper to be placed in the Library of the House.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to take any steps to ensure that the privatised insurance group of the ECGD will not operate in direct competition with the ECGD.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* The core business of the Insurance Services Group of the ECGD is quite different from that of the project group. The question of their competing is therefore unlikely to arise.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to announce the name of the successful bidder for the Insurance Services Group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* Final decisions have not yet been taken about the proposed method of sale of the Insurance Services Group, which would be subject to the necessary legislation. It is not therefore possible at present to say when I will be in a position to announce the name of any successful bidder(s).

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to announce the site of the new offices of the Insurance Services Group, Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* Decisions on the site of any new offices would be for the new management and owners.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any proposition has been submitted to him and the ECGD concerning the possible conversion of the ECGD's projects group into a "next steps"-style agency.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* In his written answer of 18 December 1989, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced that the precise form of the organisation of ECGD after the separation of its Insurance Services Group would be decided as soon as possible. Decisions would focus on whether ECGD should remain a Department or acquire agency status.

A review has been conducted by the Office of the Minister of the Civil Service (OMCS) to inform that decision. This has taken account of the views expressed by a number of interested parties some of which were opposed to the idea of agency status. A final decision is expected to be announced very shortly.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the accumulated net annual profit or loss in respect of the Export Credits Guarantee Department and the main export credit insurers in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* West Germany, *(d)* France and *(e)* Italy at the end of the 1988-89 financial year.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* The accumulated net annual profit and loss of the Export Credits Guarantee Department as at the end of the 1988-89 financial year can be found in the trading accounts laid before the House in HC 153 in February 1990. Owing to different organisational structures and accounting practices, no comparable figures are available for the other countries from published sources.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the annual profit or loss in respect of the Export Credits Guarantee Department and the main export credit insurers in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* West Germany, *(d)* France and *(e)* Italy in 1988-89.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* The profit and loss account for the 1988-89 financial year of the Export Credits Guarantee Department can be found in the trading accounts laid before the House in HC 153 in February 1990. Owing to different organisational structures and accounting practices, no comparable figures are available for the other countries from published sources.

Leather Industry

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he intends to take, in conjunction with the United States of America and European Community countries, to protect the leather industry when the current tariff quota agreement expires in March 1991.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* The hon. Member is right that the tariff quota agreement with Japan expires in March 1991.

The agreement imposes high import duties on all but a small volume of EC imports of dressed leather and leather footwear whereas EC import duties on those products are low.

Negotiations are handled by the EC. They are currently aiming to reduce Japan's import duties on dressed leather and leather footwear in the Uruguay round and bilaterally.

The EC Commission will look at any allegations of unfair trade practices if damage is being done to the domestic EC industry.

Takeovers

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to alter his policy regarding hostile takeovers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* No. The 1988 blue paper policy made clear our belief that the possibility of takeover acts as an important discipline on incumbent managements to demonstrate to their shareholders that they are running their companies as efficiently as possible. I have no plans to amend our policy in respect of hostile takeover bids (which form only a small proportion of the total merger activity in the United Kingdom). It is in general up to the shareholders whether to accept or reject a bid. The main grounds for deciding whether to refer a bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will continue to be its likely effect on competition.

Amateur Radio

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much time the radio investigation service spends monitoring *(a)* the amateur bands, and *(b)* amateur radio licence enforcement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* The radio investigation service (RIS) works to clearly defined priorities. These are firstly to deal with complaints of interference to radio used by emergency and other safety of life services; secondly with complaints of interference to those who depend on radio for the successful operation of their businesses; and thirdly with other categories of radio use. The amateur radio hobby falls within the third category. Figures of time spent monitoring the amateur bands and on amateur licence enforcement are not separately recorded.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce a novice amateur radio licence.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* The licensing of amateur radio is the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry. I announced on 19 April 1990 that a final draft of the amateur novice licence has been published and that the Radiocommunications Agency of the DTI hoped to be ready to issue the first novice licence in early 1991. A press notice was issued to that effect.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what action radio investigation service officers are taking to stop abuse on GB35L, GB3BM and GB3NA amateur radio repeaters; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received about the damage being done to amateur radio by continuous abuse of the VHF two-metre repeater network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* A number of complaints have been received about abuse on these repeater stations. When the radio investigation service (RIS) of my Department's Radiocommunications Agency is able to prove offences or to establish that improper use of radio facilities has occurred, appropriate action is taken. This may include licence variation or prosecution. In addition to action which the RIS can take it is currently discussing proposals with the Radio Society of Great Britain, the licensee for repeaters, to exercise closer control of repeater stations.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many radio investigation service officers were in post in 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 to date.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* Staff in post figures for radio investigation service district offices are published each year in the annual report of my Department's Radiocommunications Agency. The figures were (at 1 April each year):

	In post
1986	188
1987	184
1988	154
1989	140·5
1990	143·5

The figures for 1985 are not available.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will close down radio voice repeaters in the United Kingdom until the Radio Society of Great Britain self-policing scheme is in operation.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* In general, no. The majority of amateur radio repeaters are used by responsible licensees. Closure in specific cases is an option if there is abuse.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the number of radio investigation service officers required to cope with the workload.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* The performance of the radio investigation service of my Department's Radiocommunications Agency is kept under review to ensure that the service is correctly resourced. I am satisfied that the number of officers is appropriate to the present workload.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many amateur radio operators licences have been revoked by him in 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* The number of amateur radio licences revoked was: in 1988, nil; in 1989, seven; in 1990 to date, two are being considered.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Radio Society of Great Britain amateur observation service is currently operational; and if he will list any occasions in the last year in which it has not been operational.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* This is a matter for the Radio Society of Great Britain.

0898 Telephone Lines

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the voluntary codes for governing services available on 0898 number telephone lines; and if he has plans further to regulate such lines.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* This is a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications who has taken firm action to control 0898 and other premium-rate services. He announced on 29 June that from 10 July he is to withdraw recognition of the code of practice that governs "one-to-one" premium-rate services. They will not be able to operate from that date unless a new code of practice is recognised by the director general.

Philately Counters

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on *(a)* the number of specialist philately counters currently operating at post offices in England and Wales, *(b)* the location of those currently proposed for closure and *(c)* the total value of annual sales through these counters.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* The Post Office tells me there are currently 33 philatelic counters in operation in England and Wales of which seven are new-style "collections" centres opened this financial year. There are, I understand, no plans to close any philatelic counters at present. The figure for the total value of annual sales through these counters is not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Development Programme

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom's contributions to the United Nations Development Programme for every year since 1979 in current prices, real prices (1990 prices) and as a percentage of United Nations Development Programme's total budget.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Year	*Contribution* £ *million*	*Contribution at constant 1990 prices* £ *million*	*Proportion of UNDP total* *per cent.*
1979	28·53	62·5	8·3
1980	15·0	27·5	4·9
1981	17·5	28·8	5·1
1982	18·5	28·3	4·8
1983	18·5	26·9	4·2
1984	19·0	26·4	3·9
1985	21·0	27·6	3·6
1986	21·0	26·7	4·0
1987	23·0	27·8	4·2
1988	24·5	27·9	4·6
1989	26·0	27·7	4·5
1990	27·0	27·0	4·2

Aid and Trade Provision

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all aid and trade provision projects from 1979 to date with the companies and the sums of money involved.

Mrs. Chalker: The aid and trade provision projects funded since 1979 are listed in the following schedule.

Country	*Project*	*Company*	*Export value (£ million)*	*ATP element (£ million)*
January 1979 to March 1979				
Belize	Telecommunications	Plessey	3·000	0·688
Jordan	Potash Plant	Wimpey	35·000	10·000
Vietnam	Haiphon Power Station	JBE	9·600	2·888
Vietnam	SD 14 Ships	Austin Pickersgill	18·000	4·463
April 1979 to March 1980				
Egypt	Electrical Switchgear	GEC	7·500	2·000
Egypt	Electricity Generation Project	Rolls Royce	28·000	10·020
Egypt	(Draglines) Irrigation Project	Ransome Rapier	7·500	2·600
Kenya	Soda Ash Wagons	BRE Metro	3·098	1·279
Malaysia	Locum Submarine Cable	STC	23·000	9·018
Senegal	HS 748 Aircraft	British Aerospace	3·000	1·000
Tanzania	Bus Chassis	Leyland	0·960	0·481
April 1980 to March 1981				
Bangladesh	Combined Cycle Gas Power Station	GEC	17·297	4·680
Brazil	Seine Net Winch	Anglo Dansk	0·019	0·019
Burma	Gas Turbines Project	JBE	15·625	3·201
Burma	Jute Mill Expansion	Mackies	10·592	2·154
Burma	Marine Diesel Engines	Kelvin Diesels	7·350	1·202
Burma	Jute Carpet Backing Machinery	Mackies	5·882	1·178
Caribbean	HS 748 Aircraft (Liat)	British Aerospace	3·000	1·000
Cyprus	Dhekelia B Power Station	NEI Reyrolle	2·500	0·366
Madagascar	Maintenance for HS 748's	British Aerospace	2·800	0·600
Malaysia	Airport Study	BAI	0·443	0·443
Philippines	Wood Burning Power Station	Balfour Beatty	8·592	1·967
Sri Lanka	Locomotives	British Electrical	7·952	2·867
Zimbabwe	Railway Electrification	GEC/Westinghouse	27·465	8·068
April 1981 to March 1982				
Burma	Pharmaceutical Plant Study	Cementation/APV	0·188	0·188
Colombia	Bridges Project	Balfour Beatty	1·070	0·301
Kenya	Telecommunications	Plessey	2·815	0·703
Mexico	Sicartsa Steel Works	Davey McKee	200·000	34·943
Morocco	Nador Roll Mill	Davey Leowy	51·500	13·505
Mozambique	Bus Maintenance	Leyland	4·223	1·060
Mozambique	Mineral Survey	Hunting Geology	4·230	1·030
Pakistan	3 SD 18 Ships	Austin and Pickersgill	27·000	9·572
Paraguay	Power Transmission Scheme	Balfour Beatty	11·303	2·870
April 1982 to March 1983				
Brazil	Jacui Power Station	Klockner/NEI	90·800	24·138
Burma	Gas Turbines	JBE	11·044	2·213
Burma	Bridge Project	Balfour Beatty	0·360	0·090
Egypt	W. Sebaeya Phosphate Mine	Seltrust Engineering	20·000	7·315
India	Rihand Super Thermal Power Plant	NEI	231·200	17·034
Indonesia	Mrica Hydro Project	Balfour Beatty	44·646	12·075
Kenya	Railway Coaches	BRE Metro	23·700	5·030
Mexico	Scientific Instrument Training	Darwin Instruments	0·029	0·029
Paraguay	Power Transmission Scheme	Balfour Beatty	5·290	1·350
Peru	Mini Hydros	Balfour Beatty	25·625	4·852
Zimbabwe	Hwange Power Station	PED	3·600	1·000
April 1983 to March 1984				
Botswana	Moruple Power Station Turbines	NEI/Parsons	17·126	4·418
Burma	Outboard Propulsion Units	Sykes Marine	5·000	1·202
Colombia	Coffee Rust Control Programme	Wiles and Associates	0·201	0·201
Colombia	Mine Safety Training	BMC	0·018	0·018
Honduras	Aguan Valley Study	Halcrows	0·500	0·100
India	Amlori Coal Mine	BMC	80·030	15·030
Indonesia	Jambu Aye Hydro-Electric Dam Study	Rendel Williamson Hydro	0·200	0·200
Indonesia	Ombilin Coal Mine	Dowty Meco	19·200	4·445
Jordan	HV Transmission Line	Balfour Beatty	13·568	3·611
Malawi	Telecommunications	GEC/BT	1·000	0·260
Malaysia	View Data	GEC	2·367	0·851
Philippines	Dendro Power Station Adviser	Balfour Beatty	0·080	0·040

Country	Project	Company	Export value (£ million)	ATP element (£ million)
Zimbabwe	Abattoir Feasibility Study	Ove Arup	1·760	1·760
April 1984 to March 1985				
Botswana	Moruple Power Station Coal and Ash Plant	Butterfly Engineering	4·736	1·343
Brazil	Coal Mining Training	BMC Limited	0·019	0·019
Cameroon	4 Towns Water Project	Sir A. Gibb and W. S. Atkins	0·910	0·910
Colombia	Bridge Project Extension	Balfour Beatty	0·540	0·152
ECOWAS[1]	Telecommunications Feasibility Study	British Teleconsult	0·065	0·065
Egypt	Electricity Management Study	British Electricity Int	0·166	0·166
Egypt	Draglines	Ransome and Rapier	0·463	0·463
India	Balco Power Station	GEC	130·000	33·066
Indonesia	AIS Submarine Cable	STC	104·000	3·093
Indonesia	Isolated Diesels	HSPE	38·400	12·515
Indonesia	Education Equipment Study	British Council	0·036	0·036
Indonesia	Jabotabek Railway Study	L. H. Manderstan	1·000	1·000
Malaysia	Sunghai Ahning Dam	Balfour Beatty	9·000	2·344
Malaysia	Ulu Jelai Hydro Feasibility Study	WLPU/Ewbank	1·850	1·850
Paraguay	Ascuncion Sewerage Consultancy	Halcrow/Balfour	1·020	1·020
Sri Lanka	Colombo Airport	UKAG	20·940	5·264
Thailand	Mini Hydros Pilot Plant	Balfour Beatty	2·500	2·500
Thailand	Post-Harvest Ground Nut Study: Phase I	Rural Investment Overseas	0·081	0·081
Thailand	Railbus Evaluation Study	Transmark	0·082	0·082
April 1985 to March 1986				
Belize	Electricity Feasibility Study	Merz and McLellan	0·081	0·081
Bolivia	Mineral Concentrator	GEC	0·027	0·027
Caribbean	BAE 748 Aircraft	British Aerospace	10·336	3·838
Colombia	Coffee Bean Sorter	Gunsons Sortex	0·068	0·068
ECOWAS[1]	Telecommunications Implementation Study	British Teleconsult	0·250	0·250
Egypt	Maghara Coal Mine	Babcock	50·035	12·578
Egypt	Welding Equipment and Training	British Federal Limited	0·049	0·049
India	Ganga River Consultancy	Thames Water Authority	0·200	0·200
Indonesia	South Bengkulu Oil Palm Study	Massey Ferguson	0·400	0·400
Indonesia	Bukit Asam Rail Bridges	Balfour Beatty	0·750	0·152
Indonesia	Offshore Supply Vessels	Marine Design Consultants	2·156	0·571
Indonesia	Ombilin Coal Mining Training	Dowty Meco	0·655	0·655
Kenya	Sugar Milling Equipment	Fletcher and Stewart	0·891	0·235
Kenya	Upland Bacon Factory Study	Mitchell Cotts	0·100	0·100
Malaysia	Cross Braced Bogies	British Rail Engineering Limited	7·083	1·850
Mauritius	Plaisance Airport	Plessey	18·960	6·311
Papua New Guinea	Port Moresby Airport Study	Plessey	0·100	0·100
Thailand	Post-Harvest Ground Nut Study: Phase II	Rural Investment Overseas	0·499	0·499
Zimbabwe	Kariba South Power Consultancy	Merz and McLellan	0·300	0·300
April 1986 to March 1987				
Burma	Rangoon Electrical Distribution	BCPE	20·000	6·400
Cameroon	Ministry of Equipment/ Agriculture Technical Assistance	British Standards Institute	0·075	0·075
Cameroon	Bamenda Ring Road Survey	SWK	0·173	0·173
Cameroon	Limbe Port Feasibility Study	NYK	0·250	0·250
China	Coal Sector Training	Dosco	0·150	0·150
Egypt	N W Electrification Study	Numerous	0·825	0·825
Egypt	Brake Block Foundry	Davy McKee	2·749	0·884
Egypt	N W Electrification Project	Numerous	4·345	1·308
Egypt	El Omoun Drain	Sulzer	3·195	0·804
Indonesia	Jabotabek Feasibility Study	Manderstam/F. Wheeler	0·007	0·007
Kenya	Kipevu	JBE	7·618	1·959
Malawi	Telecommunications Study	GEC/BT	0·052	0·052
Malaysia	Rural Water Study	Biwater	194·000	59·460
Malta	Luqa Airport Study	BAI	0·131	0·131
Sri Lanka	Samanala Wewa Hydro	Balfour Beatty	57·200	16·570
Turkey	Ankara Natural Gas Study	British Gas	0·350	0·350
China	Shengli Power Plant	JBE	14·913	4·873
April 1987 to March 1988				
Belize	Leyland Trucks	British Leyland	0·463	0·117
Burma	Jute Carpet Mills	Mackies	0·040	0·040

Country	Project	Company	Export value (£ million)	ATP element (£ million)
Cameroon	N W Electrification Project	Balfour Beatty	5·428	1·362
Cameroon	Douala Port Telecoms	Placons Limited	0·100	0·100
China	Shandong Paper Mill	Black Clawson International Limited	1·667	0·502
China	Cosco Ships	British Shipbuilders	44·300	13·578
China	Beijing Traffic Management Study	MVA Consultants	0·450	0·450
China	Liaodong Bay Oil Training	Global Engineering	1·000	0·080
China	Shanxi Mining College	HSDE	0·061	0·061
Cyprus	Southern Conveyor	SPP	3·467	0·870
Djibouti	Transhipment Study	Ocean Mackenzie	0·179	0·179
India	India/UAE Submarine Cable	STC	24·450	6·140
India	HBJ Pipeline and Generators	Toyo UK	24·080	6·060
India	Geological Appraisal	Robertson Research International	0·305	0·305
Indonesia	Steel Bridging	Mabey and Johnson	10·702	6·846
Indonesia	Navigational Aids	Pharos Marine	9·906	7·007
Indonesia	Batam Island Power	Kennedy and Donkin	0·252	0·252
Indonesia	Coalfired Power Station Training	BEI	0·800	0·800
Indonesia	Radio/TV Consultancy	BBC	0·250	0·250
Indonesia	Batam Island Airport	Techcon	0·013	0·013
Jordan	Walking Draglines	Ransome and Rapier	9·000	4·654
Kenya	Rural Telecommunications	Communication Supplies	20·625	7·300
Malawi	Power Transmission	Balfour/HSPE/Kennedy	8·080	2·590
Malawi	UXD5 Telecoms Study	GEC	0·300	0·300
Malawi	UXD5 Telecoms Stage I	GEC	5·580	1·734
Mozambique	Trucks	Leyland	2·496	0·661
Malaysia	Liwagu Hydroelectric Study	Watermeyer Ewbank	0·850	0·850
Malaysia	Rural Water Supervision	John Taylor	3·000	3·000
Panama	Gas Turbine Power Station	JBE	14·222	6·727
Pakistan	Karachi Water II	Sir M. McDonald/ Balfour Beatty	1·500	1·500
Peru	Water Test Units	Potopak	0·088	0·088
Seychelles	Mahe Water Consultancy	Sir A. Gibb	0·122	0·122
Tunisia	Polypropylene Plant Equipment	Extrusion Systems	0·188	0·047
Tunisia	Sakmo II	Froude Consine	1·933	0·584
Turkey	Circuit Breakers	GCE Switchgear	3·745	0·940
Turkey	Cerkezkoy Water Consultancy	Thames Water	0·498	0·498
Zimbabwe	Harare Airport Master Plan	Sir A. Gibb	0·257	0·257
Zimbabwe	Zisco Steel Works	Otto-Simon Carves	14·161	5·117
April 1988—March 1989				
China	Shanghai No. 3 Flour Mill	Henry Simon	8·450	2·121
China	Traffic Control Equipment	Plessey Controls Limited	3·999	1·204
China	Infant Rusks Factories	Baker Perkins	7·070	2·128
China	Jinzhou Textile Mills	PSL	6·408	1·929
China	Chongqing Tyre Factory	Dunlop International	21·200	6·380
China	Fushun Textile Plant	William Tatham Limited	2·373	0·715
China	Chongqing Power Station	JBE	21·710	6·500
China	Yue Yang Transmission	Balfour Beatty	8·776	3·072
China	Bohai Aluminium Phase I	Davey McKee (Poole)	27·750	8·786
China	Yue Yang Coal Power Station	GEC	171·718	51·417
China	Yue Yang Monitoring	Hattersley	0·273	0·273
China	Yue Yang Third Party Inspection	Kennedy Donkin	0·324	0·324
China	Yue Yang Power Training	GEC	3·865	3·865
Egypt	Pyramid Road Hospital	Higgs and Hill	3·290	1·200
Egypt	Leak Detection Equipment	Palmer Environmental	0·251	0·251
Indonesia	Cigading Port	Tarmac Consortium	17·280	13·173
Indonesia	Bandung TV Studio	Quantel-Link Systems	11·735	9·201
Indonesia	Scattered Diesals	GEC	6·887	5·421
Indonesia	Airport Security Systems	Holmes Aviation	0·020	0·020
Indonesia	Forest Radio Communications	Phillips Radio Communications	0·228	0·138
Kenya	Telephone Cables	BICC Cables Limited	13·088	5·242
Kenya	Rural Telecoms (Systems X)	Communications Supplies	27·300	7·525
Kenya	Chemical Sugar Mill	—	0·003	0·003
Kenya	Power Distribution	—	0·007	0·007
Kenya	Mombasa Causeway	Sir A. Gibb	0·412	0·315
Pakistan	Switching Systems	Ferranti Computers	1·513	0·398
Panama	Gas Turbines	JBE	14·222	6·958
Malaysia	Sandakan Power Station	NEI/APE	2·965	0·929
Malaysia	Privatisation Programme	J. H. Schroder Wagg and Co.	0·642	0·194
Sri Lanka	Bus Bodies	Duple Metsec	8·894	2·677
Thailand	Laem Chabang Port	Port of Flexstowe International	0·151	0·151

Country	Project	Company	Export value (£ million)	ATP element (£ million)
Thailand	Supply of DMU	BREL	12·784	4·487
YAR	MF Tractors	Massey Ferguson Limited	3·840	1·924
Zimbabwe	Zisco Monitoring	W. S. Atkins	0·048	0·048
April 1989-March 1990				
Colombia	System X Digital Telecoms	GEC/Plessey	8·601	4·939
Egypt	Maghara Coal Mine	Babcocks	0·080	0·080
India	URI-Hydro	Bovine and Co.	51·200	17·920
Indonesia	Radio Studios	David Whittle Associates	0·390	0·390
Indonesia	Aircraft Simulator	CAA	0·050	0·050
Indonesia	Satellite Remote Sensing	Technology Applied Systems	0·062	0·025
Indonesia	Cigading/Serpong Railway Rehabilitation	Davy/British Rail International	33·000	20·995
Indonesia	Radio Studio Rehabilitation	Audix Limited	6·330	5·040
Jordan	Reconstruction of TCC	BT Telecoms	1·585	0·793
Kenya	Moi University	Cambridgeshire University	0·050	0·050
Kenya	Digital Radio Link I	GEC	6·109	2·434
Kenya	Digital Micro Wave Link	Telectron Systems	12·040	4·214
Morocco	Gas Turbines	JBE	18·564	7·276
Morocco	Diesel Electric Locos	Brush Electrical	18·000	6·300
Morocco	Nador Steel Works Study	W. S. Atkins	0·265	0·133
Pakistan	Karachi Water II	Portals Water Treatment	18·940	6·629
Philippines	Gas Turbines Power Station	JBE	37·500	7·276
Red Sea	Regional Hydro Carbon Study	Robertson Research International	0·375	0·187
Swaziland	Fire Equipment	Carmichael Fire and Bulk	0·410	0·123
Tunisia	Railway Equipment	Balfour Beatty	1·584	0·572
Tunisia	Yarn and Fibre Plant	Extrusion Systems Limited	1·118	0·337
Turkey	Natural Gas Conversion	AMEC International Construction	68·019	62·470
April 1990 to June 1990				
China	Beijing Metro	Metrotec Group	20·020	7·070

[1] Economic Commission for West African States.

India

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 26 June, *Official Report*, column *125*, what proportion of United Kingdom bilateral aid was spent on the projects in housing, welfare, education and renewable natural resources sectors, which were regarded as being for direct poverty alleviation.

Mrs. Chalker: The proportion of bilateral aid to India spent from 1980 to 1988 on projects in housing, welfare and education was 7 per cent., and in renewable natural resources sectors 11 per cent., giving a total for the poverty-focused sectors of 18 per cent.

It is not possible to extend this analysis to the aid programme as a whole because the circumstances in India, which mean that spending there in these sectors can be directly attributed to poverty alleviation, are not necessarily applicable in other countries.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Secondary Schools

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria he uses to define the physical capacity of secondary schools; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of these criteria.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The pupil capacity of a maintained school is defined in the light of the statutory minimum teaching area (MTA) requirements set out in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981. In connection with the more open enrolment provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988, an LEA or school governing body wishing to vary the standard number for admissions to a secondary school is invited to complete a questionnaire based on pupil work places. The information provided permits the calculation of an indicated admission limit for the school. The method, with minor amendments, has been in use since 1978. It takes account of the size, purpose and intensity of use of each space, and of the number and age of pupils on roll. These criteria appear adequate for the purpose. The procedures allow for the individual consideration of cases where necessary.

Computers

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the level of integration of computers on to the school timetable.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is not available. The level of integration of information technology across the curriculum will vary with such factors as the age of pupils, subjects timetabled, the availability of microcomputers and other information technology equipment, and the expertise of teachers in the effective use of information technology. This is not statistically quantifiable.

City Technology Colleges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to have all appointments to the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college suspended until such time as the Haberdashers' city technology college trust company has been formed and that body has adopted a code of good employment practices.

Mrs. Rumbold: Appointments will be made in conformity with the requirements of employment legislation following the establishment of the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college trust.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will make a statement concerning the compensation of local education authorities for costs they may incur directly or indirectly, as a result of the closure of a voluntary school under section 14 of the Education Act 1944 for the purposes of converting the school to a city technology college;

(2) if he will fully compensate Lewisham education authority for the redundancy payments it will be obliged to make as a result of the closure of the Haberdashers' Aske's schools in Deptford and their conversion to a city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is not empowered to pay compensation to any local education authority for the costs, if any, it may incur as a result of the discontinuance of a voluntary school under section 14 of the Education Act 1944.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the deadline for receiving proposals relating to the catchment area, admissions policy and pupil numbers for the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is for the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college trust, when established, to decide when it wishes to invite applications for first year places at the CTC for September 1991, subject to the Secretary of State having already agreed the trust's admissions policy.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the £1 million sponsorship for the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college, to be underwritten by the Haberdashers' Company, additional to the value of the existing schools' sites, will be contributed towards either capital or revenue costs of the college.

Mrs. Rumbold: The £1 million sponsorship which the Haberdashers' Company has undertaken to underwrite may be contributed towards capital costs.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional steps his Department will take to consult those local education authorities whose own educational planning may be affected before approving any proposals relating to catchment area, admissions policy and pupil numbers for the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave her on 22 June 1990, *Official Report*, column 717.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college will be legally constituted, for the purposes of section 105 of the Education Reform Act 1988 and paragraph 21 of the model funding agreement, as a single school or two schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college will be a single CTC which has single-sex departments. The college will be managed by a single charitable company, and will be conducted by one governing body on the basis of a single instrument of government and one funding agreement with the Secretary of State.

Higher Education (Research Equipment)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to ensure that the most recent allocations of the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council for research equipment in universities and polytechnics match the investment recommended by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The allocation of grant to individual higher education institutions is the responsibility of the funding councils. The Universities Funding Council's allocations for equipment take into account relative research strengths. The Government's latest expenditure plans allow for further increases in spending on equipment.

Reading Standards

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will place in the Library of the House a note summarising the main evidence and conclusions of the group of senior educational psychologists from nine local education authorities, concerning reading standards; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what study, and with what conclusions, Her Majesty's inspectors have yet been able to make of the evidence and conclusions about reading standards of senior educational psychologists from nine local education authorities.

Mr. MacGregor: I have called for the evidence underlying the reported conclusions of the nine senior educational psychologists. The information that has been made available to Her Majesty's inspectors to date provides an insufficient basis to support firm conclusions concerning the claim that reading standards have fallen significantly. I am continuing to try to accumulate evidence.

SCOTLAND

Takare plc

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct Greater Glasgow health board to disclose the weekly cost per bed which it will pay to Takare plc under the recently signed contract for care of the elderly in Rutherglen.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have already asked Greater Glasgow health board to write to the hon. Member on this matter. I understand that it has now done so.

City of Culture

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any current plans to commemorate Glasgow's year as the City of Culture by releasing further specific funding to the city for a permanent environmental testament to the year; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government are contributing £0·5 million directly to the European City of Culture 1990 and, in addition, Government-funded bodies are committing significant resources in support of particular events taking place in 1990. The City of Glasgow district council did not include in its latest financial plan any proposals to commemorate Glasgow's year as City of Culture and there has been no subsequent request for funding or capital consent for this purpose.

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many registered holdings in Scotland are eligible for less-favoured area projects.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Scotland, 19,047 holdings submitting agricultural census returns in 1989 contained land classified as less favoured, which confers eligibility for benefits such as hill livestock compensatory allowances and enhanced rates of capital grants.

Drinking Water

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to make mandatory the awarding of grant where the level of lead in drinking water of a privately owned house is above that set out in the European Community directive on the quality of water for human consumption.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have at present no plans to alter the grant arrangements for replacement of lead plumbing. I shall, however, give this matter further consideration when I have the findings of a survey which the Scottish Development Department is currently undertaking of local authorities, new towns and Scottish Homes to establish the incidence of domestic lead plumbing in Scotland.

Mental Welfare Commission

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of the Mental Welfare Commission are members of health boards; and if he will give their names.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: One, Mrs. J. I. D. Isbister.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of the Mental Welfare Commission since its inception have simultaneously held health board appointments; and if he will give their names.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not readily available.

Prisoners

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average length of custodial sentence of female prisoners in Scotland in 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics on court disposals during 1989 are not yet available. Provisional estimates based on prison reception statistics indicate that in 1989 the average length of sentence of females received into the penal system on direct sentence was 118 days. Thee were no females received into penal establishments in 1989 sentenced to life imprisonment or indeterminate detention.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners were transferred from *(a)* Scotland to Northern Ireland and *(b)* Northern Ireland to Scotland in 1989; and under which section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfers were carried out.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One from Scotland to Northern Ireland and one from Northern Ireland to Scotland, both under section (27)1.

Paramilitary Activity

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in Scotland in 1989 as a result of paramilitary activity; and if he will break down the figures specifying whether the paramilitaries were (i) from western Europe, (ii) from Northern Ireland, (iii) from the Republic of Ireland, (iv) from other parts of the world and (v) of unknown origin.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None.

A1 (Upgrading)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to upgrade the A1 to motorway standard.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Traffic levels on the A1 through Borders region are approximately 5,000 vehicles per day. Even on the highest predictions for traffic growth and making allowance for improvements to the route south of Newcastle we do not expect this figure to rise to a level which would justify dual carriageway or motorway provision. We are, however, providing dual carriageway on those sections of the route which justify it, and plan to spend £50 million on the A1 in due course.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of agricultural land has been designated as environmentally sensitive in Scotland; what percentage of land in the environmentally sensitive areas is farmed under this scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Approximately 3 per cent. of agricultural land in Scotland is within environmentally sensitive areas. Some 46 per cent. of the eligible agricultural land within those areas is farmed under the scheme.

School Class Sizes

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a breakdown by subject of class sizes from years S1 to S6 categorised according to *(a)* normal classes, for class sizes (i) under 20, (ii) 20 to 24, (iii) 25 to 30 and (iv) over 30 and *(b)* practical classes, for class sizes (i) under 15, (ii) 16 to 20 and (iii) over 20.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The information requested is shown in the form of a percentage distribution of subject groups by average teaching group in roll bands, using provisional figures for September 1989.

Four key points arise from these figures of interest to those concerned about the issue of class sizes in our schools.

(i) in years S1 and S2 over 96 per cent. of teaching groups have no more than 30 pupils (the normal maximum in the teachers' scheme of conditions of service is 33 pupils per class);

(ii) in S3 and S4 almost two thirds of teaching groups have 20 pupils or fewer. In languages, mathematics and social subjects around 80 per cent. of teaching groups have 25 pupils or fewer (the S3-S6 maxima are 30 pupils per class);

(iii) in S5 almost 80 per cent. of teaching groups have up to 20 pupils and over 80 per cent. in many subjects have up to 15 pupils;

(iv) in S6 84 per cent. of teaching groups have up to 15 pupils.

Distribution of average teaching group roll

Percentages

	Pupil Roll Band (over and up to)					
	0-15	*15-20*	*20-25*	*25-30*	*30 any*	*Total number 100 per cent.*
Stage 1						
English	3·3	5·9	26·8	56·4	7·7	2,306
Modern Languages	3·9	6·8	26·3	53·9	9·1	2,252
Classical Subjects	3·1	11·7	22·1	53·5	9·5	452
Mathematical Subject	4·7	9·7	26·5	51·8	7·3	2,299
Business Subjcts	25·1	59·4	8·9	4·8	1·8	271
Computing Subjects	33·8	49·3	4·4	10·6	1·9	1,167
Science Subjects	8·8	89·5	1·3	0·4	0·0	3,459
Technical Subjects	15·4	81·1	2·3	1·0	0·1	3,372
Social Subjects	4·7	7·3	25·9	54·6	7·5	4,615
Religious Education	5·4	13·8	23·1	49·9	7·8	1,932
Home Economics	18·4	78·9	1·6	0·8	0·2	3,224
Creative/Aesthetic Subjects	14·3	61·3	10·6	11·8	2·0	9,599
Other Subjects	23·2	29·1	18·3	26·5	2·9	2,035
Total	11·7	45·3	14·1	25·2	3·7	36,983
Stage 2						
English	3·7	6·4	25·6	57·3	7·1	2,328
Modern Languages	7·3	8·1	29·0	47·6	8·0	2,601
Classical Subjects	18·9	14·3	21·3	37·6	7·9	455
Mathematical Subject	5·5	9·5	28·3	51·2	5·6	2,378
Business Subjects	28·1	47·3	11·3	11·5	1·8	391
Computing Subjects	33·2	52·7	4·3	7·4	2·5	1,414
Science Subjects	7·4	91·0	0·9	0·6	0·2	3,817
Technical Subjects	14·3	84·4	0·8	0·3	0·2	3,542
Social Subjects	5·7	5·9	20·9	59·4	8·0	5,292
Religious Education	6·6	12·8	20·9	51·4	8·2	1,946
Home Economics	16·7	81·2	1·5	0·4	0·2	3,132
Creative/Aesthetic Subjects	14·5	62·1	11·1	10·8	1·5	9,721
Other Subjects	27·6	31·7	11·1	24·4	5·2	2,135
Total	12·3	45·6	13·2	25·2	3·7	39,152
Stage 3						
English	3·9	9·2	61·0	25·7	0·2	2,711
Modern Languages	26·5	29·3	31·6	12·5	0·2	1,686
Classical subjects	85·8	5·7	6·3	1·7	0·6	176
Mathematical subject	4·1	12·3	60·6	22·8	0·2	2,669
Business subjects	40·6	51·5	4·9	2·7	0·4	1,652
Computing subjects	24·6	71·4	3·2	0·5	0·3	1,096
Science subjects	34·1	65·6	0·3	0·0	0·0	5,035
Technical subjects	53·7	45·0	0·8	0·4	0·0	2,243
Social subjects	17·2	26·5	35·2	20·2	0·9	3,050
Religious education	11·1	21·2	38·5	28·4	0·8	1,889
Home economics	61·0	38·0	0·5	0·3	0·2	1,169
Creative-aesthetic subjects	30·0	40·6	19·3	9·1	1·0	6,555
Other subjects	26·0	39·6	21·1	12·2	1·0	2,786
Total	26·9	38·0	23·3	11·2	0·5	32,717
Stage 4						
English	3·1	10·8	66·6	19·1	0·3	2,780
Modern Languages	34·1	29·2	26·0	10·0	0·7	1,628

	Pupil Roll Band (over and up to) 0-15	15-20	20-25	25-30	30 any	Total number 10 per cent.
Classical subjects	84·0	8·5	5·2	2·4	0·0	212
Mathematical subject	4·1	13·2	64·5	17·9	0·2	2,894
Business subjects	44·2	46·8	5·7	3·0	0·3	1,757
Computing subjects	29·3	67·7	1·9	0·8	0·2	883
Science subjects	35·9	63·5	0·5	0·1	0·0	5,108
Technical subjects	60·3	39·2	0·5	0·0	0·0	2,161
Social subjects	20·0	26·6	35·5	17·0	1·0	3,203
Religious education	10·0	21·2	41·8	26·2	0·9	1,758
Home economics	63·6	34·0	1·3	0·6	0·4	1,386
Creative-aesthetic subjects	31·7	37·1	22·2	8·0	1·0	6,578
Other subjects	25·6	37·6	25·4	10·5	0·9	2,907
Total	29·0	35·8	25·3	9·4	0·5	33,255
Stage 5						
English	13·8	25·1	42·3	17·4	1·4	2,370
Modern Languages	82·2	11·0	5·0	1·2	0·5	1,142
Classical subjects	97·8	1·1	0·6	0·6	0·0	179
Mathematical subject	26·5	30·8	30·5	11·4	0·8	2,118
Business subjects	66·3	23·4	7·4	2·5	0·4	2,470
Computing subjects	66·2	26·8	5·7	0·8	0·6	848
Science subjects	60·2	38·2	1·5	0·1	0·0	3,441
Technical subjects	89·0	10·2	0·8	0·0	0·0	1,310
Social subjects	56·4	25·0	13·4	4·3	0·8	2,296
Religious education	28·1	20·5	35·7	12·9	2·8	677
Home economics	83·4	15·3	0·9	0·2	0·1	1,372
Creative-aesthetic subjects	56·9	22·9	11·8	6·6	1·7	4,363
Other subjects	36·6	31·7	18·1	10·4	3·1	1,893
Total	54·1	25·1	14·0	5·8	1·0	24,479
Stage 6						
English	80·7	9·6	5·2	4·2	0·3	384
Modern Languages	98·1	0·8	0·8	0·3	0·0	371
Classical Subjects	100·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	73
Mathematical Subject	88·5	6·2	4·1	0·9	0·3	581
Business Subjects	84·3	9·6	5·4	0·8	0·0	261
Computing Subjects	83·9	16·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	62
Science Subjects	96·3	3·6	0·1	0·0	0·0	807
Technical Subjects	98·2	1·8	0·0	0·0	0·0	55
Social Subjects	92·7	4·5	1·8	1·0	0·0	494
Religious Education	29·8	19·6	30·4	19·0	1·2	168
Home Economics	78·9	20·0	1·1	0·0	0·0	95
Creative/Aesthetic Subjects	84·2	6·6	4·9	2·3	2·1	576
Other Subjects	45·6	21·3	24·3	6·0	2·7	333
Total	84·1	7·6	5·4	2·2	0·6	4,260

Information on which classes are practical is not collected centrally.

Seals

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show the species of seals and the number of each species found and/or resident in Scottish coastal waters, and indicate how many *(a)* juveniles, *(b)* adult males and *(c)* adult females there are of each species; what the numbers were five, 10 and 20 years ago; and if he will indicate his estimate of the amount of fish consumed by each seal species every year and the breakdown of fish species consumed by weight and/or number or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 July 1990]*: There are no complete counts of either grey or common seals in Scottish waters, and no separate figures for the numbers of juveniles, adult males, or adult females of either species.

Estimates of total population of seals, resident in Scottish waters, made by the sea mammal research unit (SMRU) of the Natural Environment Research Council are as follows:

GREY SEALS

1989—between 76,500 and 97,500
1984—between 58,500 and 74,500
1979—between 41,000 and 53,500
1969—between 27,000 and 34,000

COMMON SEALS

1989—19,900

The figures for grey seals are based on counts of pups, and the ranges given reflect the confidence limits of indirect calculation in this way. The estimate for common seals in 1989 is the only such estimate available at present.

The diet of seals varies with locality and season and it is difficult to analyse or estimate accurately prey taken by seals at sea.

Estimates of total diet of grey seals in the North sea in 1985 have been made by SMRU for a report, "Impact of Grey and Common Seals on North Sea Resources", under

a research contract for the Commission of the European Communities (Contract Number ENV 665 UK(H)). The estimates, based on faecal analysis, were as follows:

Estimated consumption by grey seals in 1985

Tonnes

	Northern North sea ICES division IVa	*Central and Southern North sea ICES division IVb and IVc*
Cod	1,250	9,575
Whiting	146	1,245
Haddock	690	788
Saithe	2,278	933
Norway Pout	—	31
Ling	—	374
Plaice	—	127
Lemon Sole	—	407
Mackerel	—	21
Sandeels	29,803	5,180
Dover Sole	—	304
Flounder	535	481
Dab	196	95

There are no reliable estimates of consumption by either species of seal in waters to the west of Scotland (ICES division VIa).

Methods of estimation of consumption by seals are known to have limitations. Further research is being undertaken to improve identification of the species and estimation of the quantities of fish in seal diets. The findings of these studies will be published in due course.

Warrant Sales

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what research has been carried out into warrant sales since the research report from the Scottish Law Commission published in October 1980;

(2) whether he has instructed any research to be undertaken as to the impact of *(a)* the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 and *(b)* the Debtors Scotland Act 1987 upon the use of warrant sales; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will commission further research into the characteristics of warrant sales, with particular reference to the number of warrant sales per annum, the total principal sums, expenses and sums realised, pursuer groups, amounts of principal sums, and the proportions of expenses and principal sums covered by sale proceeds distinguishing between personal warrant sales and commercial warrant sales.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate keeps under review the need for and the optimum timing of the commissioning of research into the law of diligence. To this end, the operation of the new diligence legislation is being monitored, including the collection of statistical information on the number of poindings and warrant sales. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has policy responsibility for the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985.

Security Contracts

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy in respect of the Department of the Registers of Scotland putting security contracts out for private tender.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* Consistent with Government policy, and with a view to achieving value for money, the Department of the Registers of Scotland has been testing the market for the provision of security guarding at its premises.

EMPLOYMENT

Advisers

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to second a public relations adviser from the firm WPP to his Department.

Mr. Howard: I have no such plans.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to appoint further advisers to his Department.

Mr. Howard: My Department employs advisers in a range of specialist areas, including further education, TVEI and health and safety. Such appointments are made as circumstances require.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the external advisers currently assisting his Department.

Mr. Eggar: My Department seeks advice from those in a position to help with the development of its policies and its programmes. Details could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which firm has been appointed to advise on the work of his Department in the autumn campaign on training.

Mr. Eggar: Saatchi and Saatchi was appointed in May to advise on the Department's paid publicity. No decisions have been taken on an autumn training campaign.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) when he last met representatives of the firm WPP to discuss services to his Department;

(2) if he will make a statement on his meeting with Mr. Martin Sorrell, chief executive of WPP Group plc.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* I last met the chief executive of WPP plc on 21 March 1990. We discussed a wide range of issues.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what has been the total cost of paying retirement pensions in each year since 1980;

(2) what would have been the total cost of paying retirement pensions in each year since 1980, had pensions been uprated in line with the higher of earnings or movements in the retail prices index in each year concerned.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is set out in the table.

Year	Cash expenditure £ million	Estimated cash expenditure if pensions increased by higher of prices or earnings £ million
1980-81	10,526	10,532
1981-82	12,126	12,326
1982-83	13,549	13,859
1983-84	14,613	14,963
1984-85	15,268	16,138
1985-86	16,584	17,604
1986-87	17,779	18,719
1987-88	18,648	21,398
1988-89	19,237	22,817
1989-90	20,802	24,972

Community Charge

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what level of net income full community charge becomes payable at *(a)* £310, *(b)* £320, *(c)* £325, *(d)* £345, *(e)* £355, *(f)* £360, *(g)* £385, *(h)* £390, *(i)* £415, *(j)* £420, *(k)* £430, *(l)* £435 and *(m)* £440 for a (i) single person aged under 25 years, (ii) single person aged over 25 years, (iii) single person aged 60 to 75 years, (iv) single person 75 to 80 years, (v) single person over 80 years, (vi) married couple with no children, (vii) married couple with two children under 11 years, (viii) married couple with one child under 11 years and one 11 to 15 years, (ix) pensioner couple aged under 75 years, (x) lone parent with one child under 11 years and (xi) lone parent with two children under 11 years.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Net income at which full community charge becomes payable

Annual charge	Weekly charge	Maximum 80 per cent. rebate	(i) Single under 25 working	(ii) Single over 25 working	(iii) Single aged 60-74	(iv) Single aged 75-79	(v) Single over 80	(vi) Married couple working
310·00	5·95	4·76	62·21	70·11	76·91	79·51	82·16	127·72
320·00	6·14	4·91	63·24	71·14	77·94	80·54	83·19	129·77
325·00	6·23	4·99	63·75	71·65	78·45	81·05	83·70	130·79
345·00	6·62	5·29	65·79	73·69	80·49	83·09	85·74	134·88
355·00	6·81	5·45	66·82	74·72	81·52	84·12	86·77	136·93
360·00	6·90	5·52	67·33	75·23	82·03	84·63	87·28	137·95
385·00	7·38	5·91	69·89	77·79	84·59	87·19	89·84	143·06
390·00	7·48	5·98	70·40	78·30	85·10	87·70	90·35	144·09
415·00	7·96	6·37	72·95	80·85	87·65	90·25	92·90	149·20
420·00	8·05	6·44	73·47	81·37	88·17	90·77	93·42	150·22
430·00	8·25	6·60	74·49	82·39	89·19	91·79	94·44	152·27
435·00	8·34	6·67	75·00	82·90	89·70	92·30	94·95	153·29
440·00	8·44	6·75	75·51	83·41	90·21	92·81	95·46	154·32

(vii) Couple, two children under 11, working	(viii) Couple, one child under 11 and one aged 11-15, working	(ix) Couple under 75	(x) Lone parent, one child under 11, working	(xi) Lone parent, two children under 11, working
159·77	165·67	135·67	109·51	121·86
161·82	167·72	137·72	110·54	122·89
162·84	168·74	138·74	111·05	123·40
166·93	172·83	142·83	113·09	125·44
168·98	174·88	144·88	114·12	126·47
170·00	175·90	145·90	114·63	126·98
175·11	181·01	151·01	117·19	129·54
176·14	182·04	152·04	117·70	130·05
181·25	187·15	157·15	120·25	132·60
182·27	188·17	158·17	120·77	133·12
184·32	190·22	160·22	121·79	134·14
185·34	191·24	161·24	122·30	134·65
186·37	192·27	162·27	122·81	135·16

Residential Homes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how much was spent on supplementary benefit or income support to people in independent residential care homes and nursing homes in Wales for each year since 1979 in Wales; and for each year what was the average payment made;

(2) how many claims there were for supplementary benefit or income support by people in independent residential care homes and nursing homes for each year since 1979 in Wales; and what proportion of residents received supplementary benefit for each year since 1979 in Wales.

Mr. Scott: Information in the form requested is not available.

Rochdale Offices

Sir Cyril Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to close offices in Rochdale metropolitan district council area, including Middleton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no such plans. We have been carrying out a comprehensive review of the Department's existing network of local offices, arising from our plans to convert social security benefit operations into a "next steps" agency from April 1991. We intend to devolve authority for the day-to-day running of operations, to the greatest extent possible, from headquarters and the present regional tiers of management to local level. In practice, these units of administration, to be known as local management units, will be made up of two or more existing local offices controlled by a single management team. It is no part of our plans to reduce the number of local offices.

Local managers will have much more responsibility for planning their service to fit local needs, depending on factors such as the population to be served, predicted

economic activity and local transport facilities. The emphasis will be on making the local service more responsive to the needs of local customers, not less.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he proposes to implement to increase the take-up of attendance allowance among members of the social security disabled persons register.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to mount such a campaign. The number of people receiving attendance allowance has more than doubled from 306,000 in 1979 to 763,000 in 1989.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the percentage of people on the social security disabled persons register currently not receiving the attendance allowances entitled to them; and how much money the unclaimed benefit amounts to.

Mr. Scott: Information is not kept in a form which would enable such a comparison to be made.

Pensioners

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners have ceased to be eligible for exemption from community charge benefit as a result of SI 1990 No. 462.

Mr. Scott: The statutory instrument quoted by the hon. Member amended the rules governing the exemption of severely mentally impaired people from any liability to pay the personal community charge. It did not alter the rules governing entitlement to community charge benefit: any person liable to pay the personal community charge, except for registered students who pay only 20 per cent. of that charge, is eligible to receive community charge benefit if his net income is low enough.

DEFENCE

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give such details as he is prepared to make public of the military equipment of the Ulster Defence Regiment and its reserve, listing separately firearms and the type of firearms, motor vehicles, armoured vehicles and the number of radio, radar and electronics surveillance equipment with which the regiment was equipped at the end of 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current deployment of weapons and vehicles for the Ulster Defence Regiment is as follows; the equivalent data for the end of 1989 have not been kept. The UDR has no reserve.

Weapons and vehicles	*Number*
5·56mm Rifle SA 80	5,843
5·56mm Rifle Light Support Weapon	912
7·62mm Machine Gun	6
9mm Pistol (Browning)	[1]865
9mm Pistol (Walther)	[2]1,985
Shotgun	3
L67 Riot Gun	167
Landrovers	447
4 Ton Trucks	16
Trailers	61
Recruiting Trailer	1
Other Vehicles	340

[1] 265 of which are issued as personal protection weapons—PPWs.
[2] 1,846 of which are issued as PPWs.

The Walther 9mm pistol has replaced the ·38in revolver, the ·22in pistol, and 7·65mm pistol as the standard UDR PPW. However, some Browning 9mm pistols are still issued as PPWs. The L67 riot gun was issued for use by the UDR in 1989. Other equipment can be issued when commitments or circumstances dictate. The radio allocation varies from week to week, depending upon the tasks and commitments of each battalion.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning current policy and practice of deployment of the Ulster Defence Regiment, with particular reference to the areas and circumstances in which it is deemed opportune and inopportune to deploy the regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The role of the Ulster Defence Regiment, as of any other regiment deployed in Northern Ireland, is to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the fight against terrorism. To fulfil this role the Ulster Defence Regiment may be deployed how and where military support to the police is required, except that for policy reasons the Ulster Defence Regiment is not deployed in west Belfast or the city of Londonderry; nor is it used for crowd control or riot duties.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment are currently estimated to be Catholics; what was the total recruitment in 1989; and what proportion of those recruited in 1989 are thought to be Catholic.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At the end of April 1990, a total of 184 soldiers, or 3 per cent. of the UDR were Roman Catholics. During the period 1 January to 31 December 1989, a total of 898 were enlisted, 34 of whom were Catholics.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the number of operatives, by rank, of those who have joined the Ulster Defence Regiment and its reserve, and of those who have resigned from the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its reserve, in the calendar year 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the costs of the Ulster Defence Regiment and its reserve, divided between wages and salaries, other personnel costs, costs of construction and buildings, investment in military equipment and other costs for the fiscal years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Estimated costs of the Ulster Defence Regiment for the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90 are as follows:

£ million, current prices

Financial year	Wages and salaries	Support costs	Capital expenditure on equipment	Total
1988-89	54·1	5·0	0·6	59·7
1989-90	54·7	5·0	0·6	60·3

The figures for works costs are not readily available.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average time served by (i) full-time and (ii) part-time *(a)* officers and *(b)* other ranks of the Ulster Defence Regiment as at 31 December 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The most recent information available is for 1988 when the average length of service in the UDR was:

	Permanent cadre	Part-time
Officers		
Male	4 years 6 months	9 years 4 months
Female	4 years 5 months	4 years 1 month
Soldiers		
Male	7 years 6 months	6 years 9 months
Female	6 years 9 months	4 years 6 months

Radiation

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the implications for other ex-service personnel who were exposed to radiation, of the Lancashire coroner's findings in the case of Mr. Walter Fazackerley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the right hon. Member.

Military Flights

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *647-48*, to the hon. Member for Don Valley, concerning the cost of passengers on military flights, what insurance cover was provided for the non-military persons involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

WALES

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the *(a)* chairmen and women, *(b)* vice-chairmen and women and *(c)* members of the boards of non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The information required is shown as follows:

NON-DEPARTMENTAL PUBLIC BODIES IN WALES—EXECUTIVE BODIES (AS SHOWN IN 'PUBLIC BODIES 1989')

AGRICULTURAL WAGES COMMITTEES

Clwyd
Mr. T. Jones *(Chairman)*
Mr. J. E. Ambrose
Mr. I. G. Richards

Dyfed
Mr. T. E. Davies *(Chairman)*
Mr. C. F. Hosking
Mrs. E. D. Williams

Glamorgan
Mr. D. R. I. Williams *(Chairman)*
Mr. P. T. Hart
Mrs. S. E. L. Reeve

Gwent
Mr. P. A. Thomas *(Chairman)*
Mr. J. M. H. Stephens
Mr. J. L. Evans

Gwynedd
Mr. T. H. Morgan *(Chairman)*
Mr. R. R. Harris
Dr. E. Lloyd Evans

Powys
Mr. W. G. Davies *(Chairman)*
Ms. G. L. Thomas
Canon E. C. John

CARDIFF BAY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Mr. G. Inkin OBE *(Chairman)*
Councillor Lord Brooks of Tremorfa *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mrs. M. Barnes
Mrs. H. Chapman
Councillor P. Chapple
Mr. A. Cox
Mr. H. Hudson-Davies
Councillor P. Kitson
Councillor R. F. Watkiss
Professor R. Silverman
Mr. J. Beveridge

CURRICULUM COUNCIL FOR WALES
Mr. H. Evans *(Chairman)*
Mr. R. Dougherty
Mr. A. Evans
Mrs. M. Hemmings
Mr. M. Jones
Mr. W. Lewis
Mr. J. Love
Miss R. A. Powell
Mr. E. Roberts
Mr. I. Roberts
Mr. I. Price
Dr. P. Winterborn
Mrs. G. Jeffreys
Mr. J. Walne

DEVELOPMENT BOARD FOR RURAL WALES
Mr. E. G. Davies *(Chairman)*
Mr. R. Gee
Councillor Mrs. V. Hollis
Councillor A. M. Leonard
Mr. J. Morgan
Mr. E. Rea
Mr. H. Roberts
Mr. P. Saunders
Councillor M. W. Shaw
Sir Donald Walters
Councillor R. Williams
Mr. I. A. Jones

HOUSING FOR WALES
Mr. J. Allen CBE *(Chairman)*
Mr. J. Evans *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mr. G. Lloyd
Professor P. Williams
Mr. J. Proctor
Mrs. A. Mainwaring

LAND AUTHORITY FOR WALES
Mr. G. Inkin OBE *(Chairman)*
Mr. J. Allen CBE *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mr. R. P. V. Rees
Mr. G. Jones

Cllr. R. F. Watkiss
Mr. W. Rhys-Webb
Cllr. R. G. Owen OBE
Mr. A. Edwards
Mr. E. M. W. Griffith CBE

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Prof. J. Gwyn Williams *(President)*[1]
Prof. Dr. Ellis Evans *(Vice President)*[1]

Court of Governors
Mr. J. H. Davies
Mrs. O. C. Evans
Dr. E. Gwynn
Mr. I. G. M. Hughes
Mr. H. G. Jones
Mr. R. Keen
Mr. J. Morgan
Miss M. Owen
Mr. P. G. Price
Mr. P. Riden
Mr. J. Watkin

Council
Mr. J. H. Davies
Mr. I. G. M. Hughes
Miss M. Owen
Mr. P. G. Price
Mr. J. Watkin

The above listed governors and council members are appointed by the Secretary of State. In addition, there are another 123 governors and 26 council members. A full list appears in the library's annual report, a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. Membership is under review.

[1] Not appointed by the Secretary of State.

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[1] Not appointed by the Secretary of State

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Mr. P. Edington
Mr. E. W. Jones
Mr. J. E. H. Rees
The right hon. the Lord Rees
Mrs. M. Thomas
Mr. R. G. Thomas
Mr. H. L. Williams

Council
Mr. A. G. Davies
Mr. J. E. H. Rees
The right hon. the Lord Rees

The above listed governors and council members are appointed by the Secretary of State. In addition, there are another 156 governors and 30 council members. A full list appears in the museum's annual report, a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. Membership is under review.

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Mr. D. A. Kingswell
Mis J. Martin
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Mr. P. J. Pye
Ms. L. I. Silverton
Ms. R. Thome
Mr. N. S. Towns
Mrs. A. Whitehead
Mrs. B. Wroe

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to non-departmental public bodies in Wales at chief executive level on equal opportunities principles to be used in appointments procedures for vacancies.

Mr. David Hunt: The principles of equal opportunities are covered by legislation of which non-departmental public bodies are aware. More detailed advice is given as and when the need arises.

Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps his Department is taking to help first-time house seekers in Wales to secure a house to buy or rent at a price within their reach.

Mr. Grist: A large number of first-time buyers are able to buy a house at prices well within their reach through our right-to-buy policy and, more recently through our pilot flexi-ownership scheme in mid-Wales. Furthermore, there are a number of established low-cost home ownership initiatives operating in Wales and several authorities have developed innovative schemes to meet particular local needs. The Department actively encourages the development of these schemes both through the dissemination of information and best practice and by allowing the beneficial treatment of capital receipts derived from such schemes. In addition, Housing for Wales, funded this year in excess of £100 million, will provide some 3,000 new homes to rent and to buy at affordable prices, including innovative schemes for the elderly and for homes in rural areas. These new homes will supplement the substantial number of homes available for rent each year by local authorities at affordable rents.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information there is as to the number and proportion of homes in Wales *(a)* in need of repairs exceeding £2,000 and *(b)* which lack basic amenities; and whether the Welsh housing survey identifies those occupied by pensioners, unemployed single-parent families, disabled people and people with low incomes, respectively.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the following table; that for disabled people is not available.

Repair Costs and Availability of Basic Amenities, By Household Type[1]

Occupied first homes	*Number*	*As a percentage of all occupied first homes*[2]
Repair costs of £2,000 and over	180,900	17·7
Of these:		
Household headed by person of pensionable age	71,200	7·0
Single parent household headed by unemployed person	500	—
Gross household income less than £4,000	90,900	8·9
Lacking one or more basic amenity	42,200	4·1
Of these:		
Household headed by person of pensionable age	22,600	2·2
Single parent household headed by unemployed person	200	—
Gross household income less than £4,000	28,600	2·8

Source:

[1] Welsh Housing Surveys, 1986. Figures are estimates based on the results of sample surveys and are rounded to the nearest hundred.

[2] "—" represents less than one half of one per cent.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses were built in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private sector in each district authority area in Wales in 1989; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the following tables. Figures exclude dwellings provided by rehabilitation or conversion.

New housebuilding in Wales: 1979 to 1989

	Completions of new dwellings for local authorities, new towns and Government departments										
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Aberconwy	125	—	123	—	38	—	20	—	—	—	—
Alyn and Deeside	29	32	52	50	86	39	30	33	49	31	29
Arfon	59	31	19	46	4	28	9	—	18	—	31
Blaenau Gwent	58	331	366	67	—	30	48	—	27	27	39
Brecknock	70	49	—	30	24	14	12	—	25	32	12
Cardiff	353	443	368	240	310	344	107	—	6	16	—
Carmarthen	22	66	55	61	132	46	28	18	43	13	4
Ceredigion	89	48	113	86	—	165	—	41	40	23	3
Colwyn	43	109	81	—	50	24	—	18	—	—	—
Cynon Valley	122	40	—	14	—	40	—	—	—	25	—
Delyn	—	39	10	7	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Dinefwr	34	54	52	2	22	55	16	34	30	2	—
Dwyfor	40	30	27	8	5	—	9	4	—	5	—
Glyndwr	100	13	114	43	23	4	—	—	—	—	42
Islwyn	151	26	119	44	25	64	21	40	64	21	28
Llanelli	70	34	78	26	42	—	67	40	70	—	81
Lliw Valley	211	124	132	91	90	111	22	34	33	21	6
Meirionnydd	33	54	51	16	33	12	—	—	1	—	12
Merthyr Tydfil	75	218	156	12	7	9	—	—	4	12	20
Monmouth	—	93	6	80	71	60	107	74	15	—	16
Montgomeryshire[1]	141	98	99	26	41	103	—	64	8	26	73
Neath	103	56	43	18	71	76	16	26	38	39	4
Newport	159	85	285	172	43	169	67	119	42	261	111
Ogwr	97	131	202	79	9	60	139	40	51	8	—
Port Talbot	60	—	24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Preseli Pembrokeshire	62	62	3	16	—	—	—	9	24	21	20
Radnorshire	39	30	20	20	—	69	10	2	12	—	—
Rhondda	78	161	116	27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rhuddlan	24	57	25	37	40	59	24	44	42	—	24
Rhymney Valley	70	169	161	58	73	79	30	15	—	18	24
South Pembrokeshire	88	65	—	—	6	1	20	—	—	—	—

Completions of new dwellings for local authorities, new towns and Government departments

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Swansea	153	107	63	126	29	105	57	—	29	53	9
Taff-Ely	104	227	110	62	85	90	—	12	54	58	24
Torfaen[2]	345	313	145	137	252	131	112	122	20	33	—
Vale of Glamorgan	13	69	124	49	24	20	18	36	3	28	6
Wrexham Maelor	6	42	113	69	62	61	66	11	55	—	12
Ynys Môn	109	198	81	61	41	84	18	34	9	21	—
Wales	3,335	3,704	3,536	1,880	1,738	2,152	1,075	870	812	794	630

[1] Includes dwellings in the New Town of Newtown.
[2] Includes dwellings in the New Town of Cwmbran until April 1986.

Completions of new dwellings for housing associations

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Aberconwy	10	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	24
Alyn and Deeside	0	33	0	0	0	0	24	19	0	0	0
Arfon	0	25	52	12	0	0	1	9	30	20	40
Blaenau Gwent	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	38	40	0	64
Brecknock	11	18	22	36	30	0	0	0	12	0	65
Cardiff	223	207	76	180	57	38	117	38	23	214	462
Carmarthen	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	23	21	2
Ceredigion	30	43	12	10	0	0	0	17	12	43	65
Colwyn	25	0	50	34	2	15	0	0	10	30	34
Cynon Valley	0	0	0	46	14	0	0	40	40	34	67
Delyn	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	16	0	0	12
Dinefwr	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	22
Dwyfor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	21	8
Glyndwr	0	46	0	0	0	0	0	8	9	10	7
Islwyn	0	0	0	12	37	13	8	0	0	0	0
Llanelli	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lliw Valley	0	0	0	0	0	54	0	14	0	0	14
Meirionnydd	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	142	154	0	154	80	15	3	0	14	28	26
Monmouth	0	0	63	0	0	39	0	0	0	74	121
Montgomeryshire[1]	0	0	0	0	0	12	15	19	0	23	79
Neath	51	76	0	0	11	24	0	10	0	32	0
Newport	60	0	0	6	0	54	84	74	0	9	0
Ogwr	0	116	28	49	58	0	0	0	0	0	0
Port Talbot	0	0	91	8	0	0	0	39	28	6	40
Preseli Pembrokeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	33	0	29
Radnorshire	24	35	0	17	34	13	0	37	0	6	4
Rhondda	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	12	8	16	73
Rhuddlan	34	0	24	0	39	0	10	0	0	12	16
Rhymney Valley	134	54	0	21	64	6	9	27	14	4	80
South Pembrokeshire	0	0	0	0	6	30	0	0	0	0	0
Swansea	128	14	0	0	76	118	88	33	46	44	50
Taff-Ely	0	0	0	0	0	24	68	20	12	0	16
Torfaen[2]	2	0	0	117	0	0	58	7	0	12	0
Vale of Glamorgan	70	78	61	51	9	68	0	0	31	0	0
Wrexham Maelor	32	18	61	41	0	52	0	28	47	20	24
Ynys Môn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	21
Wales	1,016	917	540	794	529	593	607	534	467	708	1,465

[1] Includes dwellings in the New Town of Newtown.
[2] Includes dwellings in the New Town of Cwmbran until April 1986.

Completions of new dwellings for the private sector

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Aberconwy	102	48	59	81	67	35	260	156	255	132	151
Alyn and Deeside	228	151	79	151	181	170	98	150	208	294	148
Arfon	75	121	101	87	64	47	98	83	110	112	101
Blaenau Gwent	3	19	0	18	37	123	53	12	59	84	167
Brecknock	117	108	87	80	75	90	108	82	84	116	150
Cardiff	458	495	639	694	686	695	1,165	1,219	1,458	1,894	1,070
Carmarthen	71	140	148	92	125	236	120	145	169	270	205
Ceredigion	198	238	165	149	134	189	132	171	149	227	262
Colwyn	305	263	156	159	261	212	235	252	241	355	358
Cynon Valley	35	13	83	40	112	102	53	52	60	66	148
Delyn	166	197	150	134	106	140	106	210	189	212	229
Dinefwr	61	104	88	39	51	60	88	54	69	140	222
Dwyfor	186	168	71	64	110	62	66	61	69	82	83
Glyndwr	110	74	112	101	135	131	183	182	116	89	249
Islwyn	12	0	43	22	75	43	115	88	25	31	87
Llanelli	105	91	72	67	105	45	103	98	51	38	63
Lliw Valley	114	160	108	71	153	203	180	130	160	88	233

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Meirionnydd	62	74	49	55	2	25	54	46	19	72	51
Merthyr Tydfil	108	70	15	30	75	68	113	83	127	153	165
Monmouth	392	291	247	211	254	427	364	348	376	414	327
Montgomeryshire[1]	170	282	202	174	195	92	165	231	298	283	317
Neath	124	137	115	72	58	55	50	90	94	161	141
Newport	375	323	374	304	184	124	702	527	335	376	453
Ogwr	365	319	265	273	375	359	351	275	438	527	399
Port Talbot	29	11	34	32	9	15	12	35	15	79	87
Preseli Pembrokeshire	233	138	77	101	104	83	34	70	331	244	229
Radnorshire	104	76	62	43	40	106	79	74	130	171	216
Rhondda	38	33	45	27	9	16	19	16	15	124	81
Rhuddlan	233	166	179	115	108	183	129	143	109	122	67
Rhymney Valley	319	172	179	156	109	168	109	131	213	127	182
South Pembrokeshire	105	153	121	99	65	161	78	90	166	165	162
Swansea	358	212	197	136	278	211	78	313	361	497	302
Taff-Ely	380	262	152	190	172	178	286	306	330	527	437
Torfaen[2]	18	0	4	192	126	290	247	164	273	259	245
Vale of Glamorgan	395	163	41	267	256	448	159	383	457	463	958
Wrexham Maelor	436	379	363	295	295	484	207	422	250	388	371
Ynys Môn	294	281	223	261	204	200	141	134	166	153	182
Wales	6,914	5,932	5,105	5,082	5,395	6,276	6,540	7,026	7,975	9,535	9,298

[1] Includes dwellings in the New Town of Newtown.
[2] Includes dwellings in the New Town of Cwmbran until April 1986.

District Nurse Training

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many places were *(a)* offered and *(b)* filled on district nurse training programmes in Wales in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Grist: The information from 1983-84, obtained from the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, is given in the table. Data are not held centrally before the setting up of the board in 1982.

	District Nurse Training		*District Enrolled Nurse Training*	
Year	*Places*	*Numbers*	*Places*	*Numbers*
1989-90	70	50	—	—
1988-89	85	62	39	25
1987-88	84	62	39	33
1986-87	84	61	39	26
1985-86	90	69	30	22
1984-85	90	74	30	26
1983-84	90	77	[1]—	25

[1] Data not available.

It is the responsibility of each district health authority in Wales to determine its demand and training needs for district nurses according to manpower requirements.

Corlan Housing Association

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 4 July, if the investigation of the affairs of Corlan housing association will include its purchases of land over the last five years and the prices paid for that land.

Mr. Grist: The investigation is to establish whether mismanagement of the affairs of Corlan housing association or misconduct have taken place. The inquiry will focus on relevant events, including purchases of land, which have taken place in the last two years.

Inflation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he is offering to *(a)* district councils and *(b)* county councils in Wales in respect of the estimate of inflation they should use in the initial stages of preparing their finances for 1991-92.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 9 July 1990, column 59.

Rivers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the causes of the increase between 1987 and 1988 in the percentage of rivers in Wales that fall into class 3 and 4 of the National Water Council grading system as shown in table 2.09 of the "Environmental Digest for Wales".

Mr. Grist: Between 1987 and 1988, 364 stretches of rivers in Wales, totalling 1,602·6 km, changed classification. Details are held by the Welsh region of the National Rivers Authority. The increases of stretches falling within classes 3 and 4, at 0·8 per cent. (37 km) and 0·2 per cent. (7 km) respectively are such that the authority does not consider them to be indicative of any significant overall trend.

Recycling

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to encourage the reclamation and recycling of *(a)* paper, *(b)* domestic waste and *(c)* industrial waste in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Environmental Protection Bill contains a range of measures which will assist and promote waste recycling and waste minimisation including a requirement for local authorities to draw up recycling plans. The Welsh Office is currently setting up an initiative to encourage industry to develop high standards of performance in waste minimisation and recycling. A wide range of Government grants is available to support research and development and industrial innovation in these areas.

Beaches

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by which date he expects those non-EC identified beaches currently failing to comply with standard criteria to meet such criteria; what standard criteria it is his policy that they should meet, and what actions he is taking or encouraging to that end.

Mr. Grist: The Government's priority is to ensure compliance of bathing waters identified under the EC directive. However, the recent announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that all significant coastal and estuarial discharges of sewage will, as soon as practicable, receive treatment should have a beneficial effect on all our bathing waters.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of agricultural land has been designated as environmentally sensitive in Wales; what percentage of land in the environmentally sensitive areas is farmed under this scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The designated areas of the Lleyn peninsula and Cambrian mountains ESAs between them represent just over 11 per cent. of the total agricultural land in Wales. The Lleyn peninsula ESA covers 39,700 ha, 40 per cent. of which has been entered into the scheme. The Cambrian mountains ESA covers a total area of 153,000 ha, within which 79,900 ha will be eligible for management agreements. Twenty-eight per cent. of this eligible land has been entered into the scheme. Further applications are being processed.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Central America

18. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any contact with the countries of central America on the prospects for peace in and between the countries concerned.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have regular contacts with the Governments of central America, including at the San Jose VI conference at which the EC, central America and Panama were represented together with Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. We consistently make clear our support for peaceful negotiated settlements to the various conflicts in the region. Recent events have given grounds for optimism.

Burma

19. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the elections in Burma and the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policies.

Mr. Sainsbury: In a decisive rejection of the repressive policies of the current regime, the National League for Democracy won a massive victory in the election on 27 May. We welcome this, and are doing all we can to ensure that the regime gives effect to the clearly expressed wishes of the Burmese people by handing over power and releasing detained political leaders immediately.

Soviet Union

20. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the European Community proposal to provide an £8·5 billion economic development package for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Maude: There is no such Community proposal.

European Free Trade Association

21. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in negotiations with the European Free Trade Association for the extension of the single market to European Free Trade Association countries through the creation of a European economic area.

Mr. Maude: These negotiations opened on 20 June and are being conducted in five working groups. Both the Community and the European Free Trade Association countries want agreement by the end of 1990 on the creation of the European economic area. We strongly support this.

Antarctica

22. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has had expressing concern about non-scientific activities in Antarctica.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have received representations from many hon. Members and members of the public.

31. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning proposals to make Antarctica a world park.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to a reply given on 9 May to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall). I also met representatives of the environmental organisation Wildlife Link on 5 March.

26. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he is taking to ensure that the environment is protected in Antarctica.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 13 June to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir. R. Johnston).

Middle East

23. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to European Community statements of 26 June on the middle east, what further action Her Majesty's Government intend taking to ensure protection of the Palestinian population.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Dublin declaration speaks for itself. We and our partners are committed to continued vigilance over human rights abuses in the occupied territories and to taking these up, in as effective a manner as possible, with the Israeli authorities.

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts have been made by Her Majesty's Government with the newly formed Government in Israel.

Mr. Waldegrave: There have been a number of contacts on diplomatic channels. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to see his new Israeli colleague before long.

72. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to seek the same undertakings from the Government of Israel in relation to international terrorism as he has sought from the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Israeli Government know we abhor terrorism from whichever quarter it comes. Resort to deliberately planned acts of violence can only increase tension in the region and set back the search for peace.

63. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation to discuss the situation in Palestine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Mr. Bassam Abu Sharif on 1 March and I met him again as recently as 4 June.

We remain in regular contact with the PLO leadership and take every opportunity to urge them to maintain their commitment to the moderate policies adopted in 1988.

60. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received about the plight of United Kingdom citizens kidnapped in the Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have continued to receive representations as described in my answer of 12 July 1989 to the hon. Member.

58. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has plans to meet the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation to discuss the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to meet Mr. Arafat. We are however in regular contact with the PLO leadership and urge them to maintain their commitment to the moderate policies adopted in 1988. It is this commitment which entitles them to participate in the peace process.

54. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to visit Israel to discuss the middle east peace process.

82. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Israel to discuss the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to visit Israel before long. The Israeli Government are well aware of our views on the urgent need for direct dialogue with representative Palestinians.

40. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east peace process.

53. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards a peace settlement in the middle east.

59. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the measures he is taking to advance the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: The situation in the middle east is serious. The continuing stalemate in the peace process plays into the hands of extremists on all sides and increases the danger of greater violence. European concerns were expressed in the Dublin declaration of 26 June. We are working closely with partners and with the United States to encourage Israel to open a dialogue with representative Palestinians as a first step towards a comprehensive settlement.

38. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to meet the new Foreign Minister of Israel to discuss the middle east situation.

64. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet a representative of the Israeli Government to discuss the middle east peace process.

65. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Israel concerning the situation in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to meet the new Israeli Foreign Minister before too long. We regularly discuss the peace process with the Israelis. They are well aware of our view that a direct dialogue between Israel and representative Palestinians is needed soon as a first step towards an overall settlement.

37. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Israeli Government about the occupation of the west bank and Gaza strip.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Israeli Government are in no doubt about our view that Israel should withdraw from territories occupied since 1967 as part of a comprehensive peace settlement and that pending such a withdrawal Israel should adhere to its obligations under the Geneva convention.

Economic and Political Co-operation

24. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the President of the European Commission to discuss economic and political co-operation.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the President of the European Commission are at present taking part in the economic summit discussions at Houston. They will meet again at the Foreign Affairs Council on 16 July, which is likely to discuss follow-up to the Dublin European Council.

Cambodia

25. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the measures he is taking to advance the peace process in Cambodia.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 26 March, we have continued to promote a comprehensive political settlement, notably through meetings of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The permanent five plan to meet again later this month.

51. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to review the Government's position on the seating of Cambodia at the United Nations when the matter comes before the credentials committee.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 13 June.

36. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed Cambodia with members of *(a)* the United States Government and *(b)* European Economic Community Governments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discusses Cambodia regularly with the US Secretary of State and his European colleagues.

Treaty of Rome

27. **Mr. Carr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the extent, under United Kingdom legislation, to which article 27(2) of the Rome convention has been invoked.

Mr. Maude: Article 227 of the treaty of Rome is fully incorporated into United Kigndom law and the question of invocation does not arise.

Drug Traffickers

28. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussion he has had with the Foreign Ministers of Spain and Portugal about the strengthening of their external non-European Community borders against drug traffickers.

Mr. Maude: The subject of strengthening external Community borders against drug traffickers, terrorists and other criminals, is discussed regularly between Interior and Justice Ministers of the Twelve, and in the relevant working groups.

Yemen

29. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has plans to have early talks with the Foreign Secretary of the new Republic of Yemen to discuss United Kingdom-Yemen relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no firm plans for an early meeting with the Yemeni Foreign Minister. But Dr. Al Iryani has an open invitation to visit London. I recently met the Vice-President of the Republic of Yemen when he was visiting London.

74. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with the new Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Waldegrave: We enjoy good relations with the new Republic of Yemen. This was reflected in the warm messages of congratulations from the Queen, my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, sent on the occasion of the unification of the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen on 22 May. We wish the Government and people of the Republic of Yemen well.

Franco-British Relations

30. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the French Minister for Foreign Affairs to discuss Franco-British relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs had extensive discussions of Franco-British relations with M. Dumas at the annual bilateral summit on 4 May. Since then they have kept closely in touch when they have seen each other at a dozen or so multilateral meetings.

Bilateral relations are extremely good. We consult and co-operate very closely.

Eastern Europe

32. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement regarding recent developments concerning anti-Semitism in eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: We deplore anti-Semitism in all its forms and will continue to do all we can to counter it. We worked for the unequivocal condemnation of anti-Semitism contained in the concluding document adopted by the CSCE participating states at the human dimension conference in Copenhagen on 29 June. We strongly endorse the recent statement in Dublin by the European Council on anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for which countries he has received IPU observers' reports on the elections in eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received reports, either written or oral, from IPU observers to the elections in East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. We have found the information from the IPU observers of great interest and value, along with reports from others, in assessing the fairness of the elections. We welcome these elections and look forward to continuing moves towards full democracy in all of the countries of eastern Europe.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make it his policy to apply the principle of conditionality to United Kingdom assistance to the countries of eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our policy remains that the type and degree of aid to the reforming eastern European countries should match the stage of political and economic reform they have each reached.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the grounds upon which he would extend the know-how funds to other countries in eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: The know-how fund, which currently covers Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the GDR, will be extended to other eastern European countries once they are firmly committed to reform.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Foreign Secretary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to discuss the relationship between the European Community and the Baltic states.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will doubtless discuss progress in negotiating between Moscow and the Baltic states at one of his forthcoming meetings with Mr. Shevardnadze; he has no plans specifically to raise relations between the EC and the Baltic states.

44. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European partners concerning the reconstruction in eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the second ministerial meeting of the Group of 24 countries on 4 July in Brussels. Ministers welcomed the reforms being undertaken in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and the GDR, and agreed to extend G24 assistance to these countries, in addition to Poland and Hungary. Ministers have called on Romania to implement the necessary reforms to permit it to qualify for such assistance. There was brief discussion of aid to the Soviet Union.

35. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Foreign Affairs Council is next due to discuss the proposed introduction of association agreements with those countries of eastern Europe making progress in implementing political and economic reforms.

Mr. Maude: The FAC on 16-17 July will discuss association agreements with the reforming countries of central and eastern Europe. The European Council on 25-26 June called for exploratory talks to be opened soon. We are continuing to press the European Commission to make rapid progress with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Hong Kong

34. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in encouraging the Chinese Government to introduce a series of confidence-building measures with respect to the future of Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: The Chinese Government have, on a number of recent occasions, reaffirmed their commitment to the joint declaration. During my forthcoming visit to China I will be discussing with the Chinese leadership measures which both our Governments can take to build confidence in Hong Kong.

Romania

39. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations were made by the United Kingdom and by the European Community about the violent repression of demonstrations in Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: We protested formally to the Romanian authorities in London and Bucharest on 15 June about President Iliescu's use of vigilantes to crush the opposition on 14-15 June. We invoked the Helsinki agreement on 21 June to request information on three arrested student leaders. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and his EC colleagues strongly condemned the violence in a statement on 18 June.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Romania to discuss the aftermath of the recent elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs plan to visit Romania at present. We condemn President Iliescu's use of miners as vigilantes to attack the opposition on 14-15 June, and urge the Romanian Government to take decisive steps to restore progress towards democracy.

NATO

42. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters; and what he plans to discuss.

50. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and what he plans to discuss with him.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following the successful NATO summit in London last week, the alliance has a full programme of work to adapt its policies and strategies to

the changing circumstances of Europe. We shall keep in close touch with the NATO Secretary-General on the full range of issues set out in the declaration from the summit, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

55. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the NATO summit in Turnberry.

81. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the NATO summit at Turnberry.

Mr. Waldegrave: The North Atlantic Council ministerial meeting, held at Turnberry on 6-8 June, usefully prepared the ground for the important and successful NATO summit, held in London on 5-6 July, at which the allies set out the future direction of NATO in the 1990s. A copy of the Turnberry communiqué and the London declaration have been placed in the Library of the House.

Southern Africa

43. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid and development assistance Her Majesty's Government propose to give to those states which form the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference.

Mrs. Chalker: We have provided nearly £1,300 million gross bilateral aid to the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference member states since 1980, and continue to maintain substantial programmes in most of them.

Somalia

45. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Somalia and on the hopes for an end to the internal conflict in Somalia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made clear to the Somali Government that respect for human rights and good government are the touchstones of our bilateral relations. We have been urging all parties to the conflict to negotiate, but the Somali National Movement continues to refuse to do so with the present Government.

Latin America

47. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution the United Kingdom is making to international efforts to achieve the consolidation of democracy in Latin America.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have given consistent and strong support to democratisation in Latin America in our bilateral dealings with the countries concerned and in conjunction with our EC partners and other members of the international community. Specific examples include:

- Contributions to United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the region including demobilisation of the Contras (some £3 million to date);
- A grant to Nicaragua announced on 2 June (£600,000);
- Restitution of our modest aid to Panama; maintenance of existing aid elsewhere in the region; additional assistance to the Colombian Government's efforts against drugs trafficking;
- Participation in the San Jose dialogue between the EC, central America and Panama (with Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela as co-operating countries), which includes as one of its prime objectives the establishment of pluralist democracies in the region. As a result of this dialogue, EC aid to the region has doubled since 1984. The United Kingdom contributes some 20 per cent;
- Political support for human rights organisations in the region, and for those promoting dialogue in Guatemala;
- Support for a Nicaraguan parliamentary delegation visiting the United Kingdom for know-how talks with the Inter-Parliamentary Union;
- Recent visits by Mr. Donald Limón, a British parliamentary expert to Chile, and by 10 senior Chilean parliamentarians to this country.

73. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of recent trends towards democracy in Latin America.

Mr. Sainsbury: We warmly welcome them. We particularly welcome the restoration of democracy in Chile, Nicaragua and Panama. We are encouraged that in El Salvador the third round of talks between the Government and the FMLN guerillas ended on a positive note, and that they are to be resumed on 20 July. We hope that the FMLN will soon agree to join the democratic process, and that Cuba will at last join the rest of Latin America in adopting pluralist democracy.

Security and Co-operation in Europe

48. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether sufficient progress is being made in the two-plus-four talks and in CFE negotiations to enable a conference on security and co-operation in Europe to take place in the current year.

Mr. Waldegrave: We and our NATO partners continue to regard it as important that the CFE negotiations should reach a satisfactory conclusion in order to lay the necessary basis for a CSCE summit to take place this year. It is also our aim to complete the two-plus-four talks by then. Progress is being made in both sets of talks. We were encouraged to note that the Warsaw pact summit declaration on 7 June committed Warsaw pact members to a successful termination of the CFE talks in time for the treaty to be signed at a CSCE summit late in 1990.

49. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have put forward any proposals to enhance the role of the CSCE in European affairs and in relation to the security of European states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The NATO summit meeting on 5 and 6 July agreed that the CSCE should become more prominent in Europe's future, and that a CSCE summit later this year should set new standards for the establishment and preservation of free societies. The NATO summit also made specific proposals on the institutionalisation of the CSCE, including in the security field establishing a CSCE centre for the prevention of conflict that would provide conciliation of disputes involving member states, together with measures to increase transparency and confidence-building. The United Kingdom played a leading role in the formulation of these proposals, in particular in relation to the proposed

centre for the prevention of conflict. The full text is contained in the NATO summit declaration, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions took place at the recent CSCE conference on the human dimension in Copenhagen about the conditions under which the next conference is to take place in Moscow in September 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The annex to the concluding document of the Copenhagen CDH meeting reiterates the practices of openness and access which should be respected at forthcoming conferences on the human dimension. We have made clear to the Soviet Union on a number of occasions the human rights conditions which we consider must be fulfilled if the United Kingdom is to attend the Moscow meeting. We continue to monitor the situation.

57. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the Council of Europe providing the framework for the structured consideration of CSCE matters.

Mr. Maude: The United Kingdom and other CSCE member states recognise the important expertise of the Council of Europe in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms and will be considering further ways and means to enable the Council to make a contribution to the human dimension of the CSCE.

Council of Europe

52. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will be seeking a revised and enlarged role for the Council of Europe in a new European framework; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We believe that the Council of Europe has an increasingly important and valuable role to play in the development of democracy in Europe. With other member states we shall be examining the role of the Council in the architecture of the new Europe.

EC Policies

56. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further proposals he intends to place before his European Community partners for the development of Community policies.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers I gave him on 9 May and 13 June. We shall continue to play a constructive role in Community discussions.

Nelson Mandela

61. **Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has yet had discussions with Mr. Nelson Mandela.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I had friendly and positive discussions with Mr. Mandela on 3 July about how best to take forward the process of ending apartheid in South Africa by negotiation.

European Political Union

62. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will be submitting proposals to the conference on European political union, initiated at the Dublin European conference; and if he will publish a White Paper setting out the views of Her Majesty's Government on this issue.

Mr. Maude: We have already made a number of suggestions for institutional reform. These will be pursued in the preparations for and at the intergovernmental conference. We have no plans at present for a White Paper.

EC Summit, Dublin

66. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the European Community summit in Dublin.

70. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the European Community summit in Dublin.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady to the statement my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made to the House on 28 June.

Korea

67. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to encourage the peaceful reunification of Korea.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have consistently supported efforts to achieve the peaceful reunification of Korea. But our view is that this can be achieved only through direct contacts between North and South Korea. We welcome the resumption of contacts on 3 July at Panmunjom.

Chemical Weapons

68. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made through the chemical weapons convention in achieving a comprehensive and verifiable global ban on the production, possession and use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: Some progress has been made recently on technical issues in the negotiations in Geneva for a comprehensive, effectively verifiable, global ban on chemical weapons, but some key issues remain to be resolved, particularly verification. I will be visiting Geneva tomorrow to present a report on the United Kingdom's extensive series of trial inspections over the last two years at a number of Government-owned establishments. The practical lessons and conclusions drawn will, I am sure, be a valuable input to the negotiations.

77. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any information relating to geological specimens purporting to confirm the use of chemical weapons in Angola; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: A number of soil and vegetation samples purported to be from Angola have been examined by Government experts. The samples have not been found to contain any traces which would indicate the use of chemical weapons.

Bulgaria

69. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the United Kingdom is giving to help Bulgaria implement its democratic reforms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made no firm commitment yet of bilateral help to Bulgaria. The elections of 10 and 17 June mark a considerable step towards democracy. But, in view of residual doubts about some aspects of those elections, we shall still need to assess the policies of the new Government, and their commitment to political and economic reform, before we can extend aid.

United States Secretary of State

71. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the United States Secretary of State; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs saw the United States Secretary of State at the G24 meeting in Brussels on 4 July and at the subsequent NATO and Houston summits. They discussed a wide range of subjects.

Seychelles

75. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to pay an official visit to the Seychelles; and if he will make a statement on relations with that country.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to do so. We have normal relations with the Seychelles' Government and an aid programme directed towards the needs of the Seychelles' people. As elsewhere in Africa, we have made it clear we support freedom of expression and genuine political participation.

Rights of the Child

78. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet set the timetable for ratification of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 9 May.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet set a timetable for the ratification of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom signed the United Nations convention on the rights of the child on 19 April 1990. We intend to ratify the convention as soon as possible.

El Salvador

79. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the Foreign Minister of El Salvador to discuss the activities of death squads in that country.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no present plans to meet the Foreign Minister of El Salvador. The subject of human rights is invariably on the agenda when we meet Ministers from that country. Most recently I raised it with Presidency Minister Altschul on 12 June.

French Foreign Minister

80. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the French Foreign Minister to discuss developments in the European Community.

Mr. Maude: Apart from contacts in the margins of other international meetings, the last such meeting took place at the European Council in Dublin on 25-26 June.

Poland

83. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to further improve relations with Poland.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have close and friendly relations with Poland. High-level contacts are increasingly frequent. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Poland from 30 April —2 May and many more visits are planned this year.

We will continue to give substantial help to ease Poland's transition to a market-based democracy, including through the know-how fund.

Vietnamese Boat People

84. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made in the intergovernmental discussions concerning the resettlement of Vietnamese boat people currently held in Hong Kong detention camps.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 24 May 1990 to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague).

The next meeting of the full steering committee is expected to take place on 16-17 July in Geneva.

Western Sahara

85. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European Community partners to obtain a joint approach to the western Sahara dispute.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Twelve have issued a statement supporting the United Nations Secretary-General's referendum proposals and welcoming their acceptance in principle by both parties to the dispute.

Aid Policy

87. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make it his policy to use aid as a lever to promote democracy, human rights and free market economies.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's speech to the Overseas Development Institute on 6 June 1990.

Economic and social progress depends to a large degree on effective and honest government, political pluralism, observance of the rules of law and sound market-based economic policies.

The adoption or otherwise of such policies and practices is an important factor in deciding upon the level and form of aid we are prepared to provide to particular developing countries.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when Mr. Nazir Ahmed Qureshi, ref. TH/10238/89, is to be issued with a visa by the post in Islamabad; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when Mrs. Azra Bibi, ref. GV/G100/8597, is to be issued with a visa by the post in Islamabad to join her husband in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred these questions to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive replies from the unit as soon as possible.

Nuclear Arms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty he has received recently from the Mexican Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

EC Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which extra-European territories European Communities Foreign Affairs Council decisions apply.

Mr. Maude: Responsibility for the Community's relations with third countries rests with the Foreign Affairs Council. Decisions of the Council applying to the territory of the Community apply to French overseas Departments, Martinique, French Guyana, Guadeloup and Reunion, and according to the precise proposal before the Council and the provisions of the EEC treaty can also apply to the dependent territories listed in part IV of the EEC treaty.

Brazil

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any discussions with the Brazilian Government concerning the relationship between the military and non-governmental organisations working in the Amazon.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on alleged threats made by the Brazilian superior war college to non-governmental organisations working with the indigenous peoples in the Amazon.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no information other than that referred to in press reports.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he proposes to implement and enforce his latest regulations relating to the handling of bovine brains in slaughterhouses.

Mr. Maclean: The Bovine Offal (Prohibition) Regulations 1989 require that specified bovine offal—which includes brains—should be excluded from food for human consumption. The practice in some plants of removing brains before recovering head meat intended for human consumption was raised with my Department, and, after taking advice from the Tyrrell committee, I have issued guidance to local authorities that head meat should be recovered from the intact skull before the brain is removed so that the requirements of the regulations can be met.

I am confident that these guidelines are sufficient to achieve their purpose. Nevertheless, it will be necessary for the Department shortly to be consulting on changes to slaughterhouse legislation to take account of future EC requirements and other technical amendments and I shall consider whether to include in those consultations proposals to give the guidelines legislative force.

Animal Feed

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to require animal feed compounders henceforth to include only crop protein in cattle, sheep, pig and poultry rations.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to do so.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what research his Department is conducting into a possible link between BSE in cattle and maedi visna in sheep;

(2) whether any research of which he is aware has established any links between BSE in cattle and maedi visna in sheep.

Mr. Maclean: Maedi visna is a disease of sheep caused by a well characterised virus unrelated to the unconventional agents which cause BSE and the other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. Research into a link between the two diseases would therefore not be appropriate.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Ward: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure that milk produced by animals treated with BST can be identified by the consumer.

Mr. Maclean: This matter will be covered by the Food Advisory Committee's current review of food labelling.

Swine Swill Farms

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many swine swill farms are licensed in Norfolk.

Mr. Maclean: Eleven such farms in Norfolk are licensed under the Diseases of Animals (Waste Food) Order 1973.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of agricultural land has been designated as environmentally sensitive in England; what percentage of land in the environmentally sensitive areas is farmed under this scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Some 3·4 per cent. of agricultural land in England has been designated as an environmentally sensitive area. Of the eligible land in each ESA which I targeted in the schemes some 92 per cent. is now being farmed under ESA agreement demonstrating the high level of interest among farmers in participation in this voluntary scheme.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 12 July 1990

NATIONAL FINANCE

Top-rate Tax

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers paid top rate tax in 1989-90; and how much revenue his Department derived from taxing this band.

Mr. Lilley: The latest estimate is that about 1·6 million married couples and single people were liable to tax at the higher rate in respect of 1989-90 incomes. Their income tax liability in excess of the basic rate was about £3·9 billion. This figure represents the additional tax liability resulting from the difference between the higher rate and the basic rate of tax.

Allowing for independent taxation, it is estimated that in 1990-91 about 1·7 million individuals will be liable to pay tax at the higher rate, counting husbands and wives separately, and that their income tax liability in excess of the basic rate will be £4·4 billion.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average rates bill as a proportion of earnings for a one-earner family with two children on 75 per cent. average earnings in 1989-90; and what he estimates the proportion of income going to the poll tax will be for the same family in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 5 July, *Official Report*, column *699-708*.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Broadcasting

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Lord President of the Council when the current sound recording and amplification systems used both in the Chamber and for outside broadcasts were installed; and whether he has any plans to modernise them.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that the present sound system in the Chamber, including both the microphones and the amplifiers in the Benches, were originally installed in 1951, although significant modifications were made in 1970-71.

As regards any possible further modification or modernisation of the system, I refer my hon. Friend to the first report of the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House (HC 265-I), which was published on Wednesday 11 July. The report contains a section addressing directly the point raised by my hon. Friend.

House of Commons Passes

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the average length of time for a House of Commons pass to be approved for an hon. Member's secretary; what efforts are being made to reduce this time; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that the average length of time taken for the processing of all Members' staff applications for Palace of Westminster photo-identity passes is five working days.

The Pass Office gives precedence for processing applications for Members' staff over all other applications. The figure quoted refers to applications from United Kingdom nationals who have lived in this country for the past five years. In cases where the required clearances involve foreign nationals, or where the individual concerned has lived or worked overseas in the preceding five years, further delays are usually unavoidable.

HEALTH

Child Abuse

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those county councils which provide homes for children in care who have been sexually or physically abused separately from children who are in care for other reasons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities do not generally provide community homes for children who have been physically or sexually abused separately from children in their care for other reasons. It is for the authority to ensure that each child for whom it is responsible is appropriately placed, whether in one of its own children's homes or elsewhere.

Eye Tests

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of eye tests carried out in each region of England and Wales in 1989 and in 1987.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Statistics on the number of NHS sight tests paid for in each region in England and Wales for the financial year 1989-90 will be available shortly. The table gives the numbers of NHS sight tests paid for in each regional health authority for the periods April to September 1987 and April to September 1989. These figures are not directly comparable, as the figures since April 1989 exclude sight tests paid for privately.

Regional Health Authority	*Total sight tests—all National Health Service* *April-September 1987*	*National Health Service sight tests only—private tests excluded* *April-September 1989*
Northern	332,940	209,990
Yorkshire	400,000	261,850
Trent	517,850	329,140
East Anglia	220,730	114,740
North West Thames	448,510	253,140
North East Thames	486,800	300,170
South East Thames	421,660	248,280
South West Thames	344,990	184,260
Wessex	364,310	229,320
Oxford	290,090	126,390

Regional Health Authority	Total sight tests—all National Health Service April-September 1987	National Health Service sight tests only—private tests excluded April-September 1989
South Western	432,720	272,100
West Midlands	636,590	403,370
Mersey	249,520	169,420
North Western	434,300	277,720
Wales	325,470	170,070

NHS Reform

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many booklets, "The Health Service—The NHS Reforms and You", are to be distributed; and to whom;

(2) what the quoted cost of £2·75 million for the booklet, "The Health Service—The NHS Reforms and You", covers;

(3) when the final proof was cleared for the booklet, "The Health Service—The NHS Reforms and You";

(4) whether the booklet, "The Health Service—The NHS Reforms and You", is to be distributed throughout the United Kingdom;

(5) when the final text for the booklet, "The Health Service—The NHS Reforms and You", was approved.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 23 million copies of the booklet "The Health Service—The NHS Reforms and You", were printed. After distributing one copy to each household in England, the remaining 1·5 million copies will be used to supply requests from multiple occupancy households, advisors and other ad hoc requests.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be publishing their own information.

Versions of the booklet in nine ethnic minority languages are planned and will be available on request.

The final proof of the booklet was approved when it was clear that there was no reasonable prospect of changes to the Bill being considered by Parliament which affected the content of the booklet. Authorisation for the distribution of the booklet was not given until the Bill received Royal Assent. The text was approved, subject to any parliamentary changes, on 7 June.

The £2·7 million cost of the booklet includes the production, distribution and ethnic language versions.

Local Authorities (Default)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when was the latest occasion on which he or his predecessors made an order under section 36 of the National Assistance Act 1948 declaring a local authority to be in default.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As far as I am aware, the default powers in section 36 of the National Assistance Act 1948 have never been formally invoked.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which family practitioner committees were unable to pay their general practitioners in full under the new contract for the quarter April to June;

(2) what action he is intending to take to ensure all family practitioner committees pay their general practitioners in full and on time.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is the aim of every family practitioner committee to make due payments in full and on time, and there is no reason why this should not have been the case at the end of June quarter. Family practitioner committees have discretion to make advance payments when necessary. Some committees failed to achieve this aim at the end of June quarter, but this should have been rectified subsequently. We are making further inquiries about the exact position and I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Hostel Residents

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the annual care costs of those hostel residents, currently funded by the Department of Social Security, whose costs will be met by local authorities following the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no connection between the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act and the changes in funding arrangements for hostels.

NHS Costs

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are being made to ensure that all national health service costs, including central administrative costs, are included when comparing provider contracts between voluntary sector bids and community service bids.

Mr. Dorrell: National health service providers will be expected to price their services on the basis of their full costs, including overheads and costs of capital.

Family Planning

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take urgent steps to ensure that all health authorities establish family planning services for under-25s less formal and easier to obtain than those for mature people.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The day-to-day management of family planning services is a matter for individual health authorities since they can best judge local circumstances and priorities. The Government continue to regard family planning as an important preventive service. Guidance issued by the Department of Health makes it clear that health authorities should ensure that full use is made of family planning services and that a proper balance is struck between services provided by specialist clinics and those provided by GPs, bearing in mind in particular:

i. the need to give choice to encourage full take-up;
ii. the need for separate, less formal arrangements for young people;
iii. clinics' wider health role—for instance, in cervical cancer smear testing.

This guidance was recently reaffirmed in a letter EL(90)MB115, a copy of which is available in the Library, to regional general managers by the director of operations and planning on the national health service management executive.

A number of health authorities provide services for young people through Brook advisory centres which receive central funding towards their headquarters administrative costs.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to ensure that arrangements about family planning services by district health authorities are made after adequate previous consultations with residents in those districts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The level of local family planning provision, as with most national health service services, is a matter for individual health authorities to determine in the light of local needs and priorities and other competing demands on resources. The director of operations and planning on the NHS management executive recently reminded regional general managers, by EL(90)MB115, a copy of which is available in the Library, of current central guidance on family planning provision. That letter asked English health authorities, in making provision for delivery of co-ordinated clinic and GP family planning services, to ensure that they have given full weight to the advice of their director of public health in regard to the needs and views of people who already use or may want to use NHS family planning services.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are being made for the voluntary sector to bid for service provider contracts in the area of family planning.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for district health authorities (DHAs) to decide upon the pattern of services their residents need and to arrange contracts for the delivery from the most appropriate provider, which might be one of the authorities' own units, a unit managed by another district health authority, a national health service trust, or a voluntary body.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to take action to prevent local authorities from transferring their care homes to not-for-profit trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. As we said in the White Paper "Caring for People" we shall expect local authorities to make use, whenever possible, of services from voluntary, "not-for-profit" and private providers in so far as this represents a cost-effective care choice.

TRANSPORT

Car Insurance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals exist to ensure that cover provided by United Kingdom car insurance automatically incorporates cover for travel in the EC.

Mr. Atkins: All United Kingdom motor insurance policies already incorporate third party cover for travel in the EC.

British Rail (Investment)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the sources of investment currently allocated to British Rail for the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1007) set out plans for British Rail investment and financing over this financial year (1990-91) and the next two years. In 1990-91, BR plans fixed asset investment of £1,052 million, the highest real level for 25 years. This will be financed mainly from the sale of surplus assets, grant from central and local Government and borrowing (mostly from the National Loans Fund). The external finance limit, which covers central Government grant and borrowing, was set in the White Paper at £646 million.

Learner Drivers

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any conclusions have been reached about publishing an official syllabus for learner drivers and riders.

Mr. Atkins: The Department consulted last autumn on this proposal and the suggestion was widely welcomed. I have therefore decided that the Driving Standards Agency should produce a book containing the syllabus plus related information such as how to apply for a driving or motor cycling test. It is intended that the book will go on sale towards the end of this year.

Euroroute Designations

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Government to become a signatory to the agreement on Euroroute designations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: As part of a wider consultation exercise on traffic signs commenced in September 1988, this Department sought views on a proposal for E-route signs. Reactions were limited and ambivalent. In the absence of clear evidence of benefit to road users and in view of the potential for confusion from a second road numbering system, the Secretary of State decided against ratification of the relevant international agreement.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he offered any advice to British Rail about the employment of Transmark as a consultant for an evaluation of the alternative channel tunnel rail links; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has regarding the evaluation of alternative fast rail links from the North Downs to King's Cross via Stratford in connection with the channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement;

(3) pursuant to his statement of 14 June, *Official Report*, column 483, what criteria are to be used by the consultants appointed to assess the different schemes relating to the channel tunnel rail link; and if he will make a statement;

(4) pursuant to his statement of 14 June, *Official Report*, column 483, what information he has regarding the role to be played by local authorities in the evaluation of the different channel tunnel rail link proposals;

(5) pursuant to his statement of 14 June, *Official Report*, column 483, if the consultants' reports on their evaluation of the schemes relating to the channel tunnel rail link will be made public; and if he will make a statement;

(6) pursuant to his statement of 14 June, *Official Report*, column 482, who British Rail has commissioned to carry out the evaluation of alternative routes in connection with the channel tunnel rail link; and what is the timetable for the study;

(7) pursuant to his statement of 14 June, *Official Report*, column 483, what are the terms of reference for British Rail's evaluation of alternative routes via Stratford in connection with the channel tunnel rail link;

(8) pursuant to his statement of 14 June, *Official Report*, column 482, if he will take steps to ensure that British Rail consults all interested parties in connection with the current evaluation of alternative channel tunnel rail links.

Mr. Freeman: It is the responsibility of British Rail to evaluate alternative options and to bring forward proposals. I am confident that Sir Bob Reid will ensure that this exercise will be properly carried out.

A1-M1 Route

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has of the increased volume of traffic flow resulting from the upgrading of the A1-M1 route to motorway standard.

Mr. Atkins: The existing A1 trunk road traffic is expected to use the upgraded road. We also estimate that there would be a small transfer of traffic from the M1 to the upgraded A1. General growth in traffic is estimated in the national road traffic forecast 1989.

British Rail (Emergency Liaison System)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the decision was taken to alter the existing emergency liaison system between West Yorkshire fire service and British Rail; what consultation took place; how long the consultation period was; and whether the railway inspectorate has approved the new system.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail tells me that a modification to its area manager organisation in West Yorkshire took place in January 1990, resulting in a division of responsibilities between its Leeds and Doncaster offices. BR did not consult either the West Yorkshire fire service or the railway inspectorate before carrying out this internal reorganisation. I understand that BR notified the WYFS of the new arrangements in March, and senior officials have visited WYFS to deal with any problems which may have arisen. BR will be ensuring that emergency services are consulted about communications before other reorganisations take place.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's usual practice in the making and publication of compulsory purchase orders and exchange land certificates; and what deviations from this practice were made in the case of *(a)* the M3 motorway, Bar End-Bassett section compulsory purchase order (No. CSE) 198 and *(b)* an application for a certificate in respect of public open space at Shawford Down.

Mr. Atkins: Compulsory purchase orders in relation to trunk roads and motorways are usually made and published in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Highways Act 1980 and of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. The M3 motorway (Bar End—Bassett section) compulsory purchase order was published in draft and in respect of the Compton-Bassett section has been made, in accordance with the relevant provisions of those Acts. The remaining part of the compulsory purchase order relating to the Bar End-Compton section has not yet been made.

Responsibility for the issue and publication of exchange land certificates in relation to the compulsory purchase of land forming part of a common, open space or fuel or field garden allotments, rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in accordance with the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. The Department of Transport's application for a certificate in respect of public open space at Shawford Down was made in accordance with the relevant provisions of that Act.

Accidents, A36

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Salisbury of 9 July, *Official Report*, column *88*, about accidents on the A36, how many people were killed or injured in each of the three categories listed and for each year given.

Mr. Atkins: The number of people killed or injured over the last five years are as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
(a) fatal injuries	2	2	2	1	5
(b) serious injuries	20	12	19	14	32
(c) slight injuries	125	84	79	76	116
	147	98	100	91	153

Learner Drivers

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now taken a decision on the regulations governing those who accompany learner drivers.

Mr. Atkins: I have today laid in the House regulations that require accompanying drivers to be at least 21 years old and to have held a full licence for three years.

In order to ensure that existing and future provisional licence holders are aware fully of the new requirements, they will come into force on 1 October 1990. I urge strongly all provisional licence holders to ensure that those who accompany them meet these requirements now, and not to wait until 1 October.

Night Flights (Gatwick)

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has now concluded his review of the quota for night flights at Gatwick and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: When the current restrictions on night flying at Heathrow and Gatwick were announced in Februrary 1988, an undertaking was given that if, after two years (that is, after the summer season 1989), it was apparent that disturbance from night flights at Gatwick was getting worse, the quotas would be revised accordingly.

Detailed monitoring of the night noise climate was carried out by the directorate of operational research and analysis at the Civil Aviation Authority. It found that the area within the night noise contours at Gatwick had become smaller during the period since the introduction of the new night restricitons, and that the quietest category of aircraft (referred to as night noise category C-NN/C) had proved, as expected, to be quieter on average than aircraft categorised as NN/B. This confirms that the overall night noise climate can be improve by switching to operations by the quieter, NN/C, types of aircraft.

Two conclusions may be drawn from the monitoring work. The first is that it would not be appropriate to reconsider the night quotas at Gatwick at this stage, a view that has been accepted by the Gatwick airport consultative committee. The second conclusion is that the newer, quieter models of aircraft do reduce the amount of disturbance from aircraft noise. Those benefits should continue to accrue as the older, noisier jets are increasingly replaced. We are encouraging that process through the agreement in Europe that chapter 2 aircraft will no longer be allowed to be added to national registers from November this year, and by the proposed agreement to phase out their operation completely by the early years of the next century.

The message for airlines from this work is that we will want to encourage as rapid a transition as possible to the use of quieter aircraft at night. I propose to pay particular attention to this when the night restrictions are reviewed.

The Gatwick airport consultative committee drew attention to three important points when commenting on the monitoring work. It noted the large number of aircraft movements that have been permitted above the quota under the dispensation arrangements, and this is an issue that will need to be considered when the night restrictions are reviewed.

The committee also drew attention to the fact that an integrated noise and track keeping system is not yet in operation at Gatwick. My Department is working closely with BAA plc with the aim of having such a system in operation by 1992. I attach great importance to securing the installation of this system as early as possible.

The committee also suggested that it might be helpful to carry out a survey of disturbance by aircraft noise at night among local people. It seems right to me that we should try to understand as well as we can how aircraft noise affects people's sleep. For that reason, my Department will be carrying out research into this topic over the next 18 months to two years. The findings should be available in time to contribute to the review of the night restrictions.

This research will be relevant to the formulation of new night restrictions at each of the three BAA London airports, and will be devised to cover them all. I believe it is important that those living near these airports should understand what is being done and have an opportunity to contribute to the oversight of the research. I therefore intend to invite the consultative committees of the airports concerned to nominate a representative to sit on a steering committee for this research. I would equally invite the airports to nominate a representative. I will also be inviting Manchester airport, the third largest in the United Kingdom, to participate.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the *(a)* total budget and *(b)* architectural budget for the east London river crossing.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The latest estimate of the total cost of the scheme, updated to mid-1989 prices, is £300 million. That estimate includes the services of architectural and landscape consultants. Estimates for the architectural elements of the scheme are not identified separately.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will put the architectural contract for the east London river crossing out to competition.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* No. A review of alternative designs for the Thames bridge has been undertaken, and the Department's consultants concluded that only a box girder bridge met the criteria for the site. The Secretary of State accepted their conclusion, and draft orders for a box girder bridge were published in January 1990. The proposed design of the bridge has been presented to the current public inquiries into the proposed design changes for the east London river crossing scheme. These inquiries opened on 3 July 1989 and will afford the opportunity for representations to be made on the Department's proposals.

PRIME MINISTER

European Court of Justice

Q17. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will invite the European Council to review the operation of the European Court of Justice in light of the legal actions initiated by Spanish fishermen and German lottery ticket salesmen against the operation of British laws in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. So far as the ruling of the European Court of Justice on interim relief is concerned, the Government's views have been made clear to the House on a number of occasions. In the case of the German lottery ticket salesmen, I understand that no proceedings have been instituted in any court.

Police (Wales)

Q124. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Prime Minister what has been the increase in police manpower in Clwyd and Wales since June 1987.

The Prime Minister: Since June 1987 the North Wales police, which includes Clwyd, has had 35 extra police posts approved by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. In the same period a total of 125 extra police posts have been approved for forces in Wales.

Consultants (Negligence)

Q176. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have any proposals to change or modify the procedures by which patients obtain suitable

redress of grievance or compensation against hospital consultants following negligence on the part of consultants in the hospital service.

The Prime Minister: There are no plans to change or modify current procedures. The basis for seeking compensation for injuries where medical negligence is alleged should continue to be through litigation in the courts.

Clean-up Scheme (Mr. Richard Branson)

Q223. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister what is Mr. Richard Branson's current involvement in the environmental clean-up scheme which she initiated; what progress has been made with the scheme; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: UK 2000 was set up in 1986 under the chairmanship of Richard Branson to bring together voluntary organisations, the private sector and Government to generate quality environmental improvement schemes and to raise business awareness of the environment. Mr. Branson is now the president of UK 2000. Through its valuable work, the voluntary sector is in a stronger position to take forward work on environmental improvement. So, in response to a request from UK 2000, the funding was streamlined on 1 April and Government grants are now paid direct to the six national voluntary organisations which are partners in the initiative. Grant has risen to over £1·9 million for 1990-91.

Engagements

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I returned from a meeting of the economic summit in Houston, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment is made of the energy efficiency of equipment and light bulbs procured for use at No. 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: Energy efficiency is not a significant factor in determining the selection of computer equipment for use in 10 Downing street. Other office machinery is normally obtained through Her Majesty's Stationery Office and includes the manufacturers' assessment of power consumption. On light bulbs, the aim is to use the most cost-effective and energy-efficient form appropriate to the circumstances.

Expenditure

Mr. Battle: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her oral reply of 3 July, *Official Report*, column 875, to the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) on expenditure by families on the national health service, if she will provide the figure on a comparable basis for expenditure by families on the Trident programme in the current financial year.

The Prime Minister: In this financial year, one of the peak spending years on Trident procurement, the expenditure per family on a comparable basis is assessed to be less than £1·40 per week.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister how it is proposed to introduce a parliamentary dimension based on the Council of Europe into the CSCE process under the proposals contained in the concluding statement of the recent NATO summit; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The NATO summit recommended an "Assembly of Europe" to include representatives of all CSCE member states. The details of this proposal, together with all other proposals for new CSCE institutions, will be negotiated during the preparatory committee in the run-up to the CSCE summit in November.

Science Policy

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will outline her responsibilities in relation to the co-ordination of science policy.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 July 1990]*: Collective ministerial consideration of science and technology priorities takes place under my leadership and I provide co-ordination in appropriate cases.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses are available for rent in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private sector in each district authority area in Wales; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Grist: The numbers of vacant local authority dwellings available for letting are given for 1987 to 1990 in the table. Similar information is not available in respect of housing association or private sector dwellings. For the corresponding figures for years 1979 to 1986, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 22 July 1987.

Local authority dwellings available for rent

	Local authority dwellings vacant and available for letting, at 1 April			
	[1]*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	[2]*1990*
Aberconwy	6	16	7	20
Alyn and Deeside	8	7	—	12
Arfon	—	27	20	—
Blaenau Gwent	—	12	6	8
Brecknock	12	—	—	—
Cardiff	85	116	91	115
Carmarthen	4	5	4	2
Ceredigion	9	5	2	7
Colwyn	—	7	6	15
Cynon Valley	19	20	32	10
Delyn	15	—	3	4
Dinefwr	—	—	—	13

	Local authority dwellings vacant and available for letting, at 1 April			
	[1]1987	1988	1989	[2]1990
Dwyfor	—	6	4	3
Glyndwr	8	10	12	14
Islwyn	16	21	3	8
Llanelli	10	71	49	55
Lliw Valley	6	3	4	3
Meirionnydd	2	3	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	10	15	10	20
Monmouth	20	17	23	36
Montgomeryshire	24	22	40	26
Neath	22	20	28	24
Newport	130	78	50	48
Ogwr	32	24	31	3
Port Talbot	25	19	10	50
Preseli Pembrokeshire	14	7	5	4
Radnorshire	9	1	6	9
Rhondda	20	21	23	22
Rhuddlan	15	15	9	28
Rhymney Valley	14	84	11	14
South Pembrokeshire	4	4	4	—
Swansea	47	91	100	110
Taff-Ely	8	4	5	7
Torfaen	39	44	23	48
Vale of Glamorgan	1	2	4	—
Wrexham Maelor	49	93	93	32
Ynys Mon	7	26	50	24
Wales	690	916	768	794

[1] Revised.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds he has allocated for 1990-91, and what allocations have been earmarked for future years, towards new housing and refurbishment of existing houses, by county and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Grist: For 1990-91, my right hon. Friend announced housing capital distribution for individual local authorities on 29 November 1989. The distribution is not hypothecated to individual housing services, and it is for local authorities themselves to formulate their spending plans within the total resources available to them. Additional resources will however be made available, if necessary this financial year, to meet all expenditure by Welsh local authorities on mandatory home renovation grants.

My right hon. Friend also announced at that time an allocation to Housing for Wales to support housing association activity in 1990-91. The actual distribution of these resources is a matter entirely for Housing for Wales.

For future years, my right hon. Friend has set out in the Welsh Office commentary "Public Expenditure in Wales, 1990-91 to 1992-93", planned provision for local authority housing and Housing for Wales. This is subject to review in the current PES round.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has issued for the procedures for the appointment of chief executives of the non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: No formal guidance has been issued. The appointment procedures for chief executives in the bodies for which I have responsibility vary in accordance with the body's constitution.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last convened a meeting of the chief executives of the non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The last meeting was on 13 February 1989. This year's meeting is to be held on 14 November 1990.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the public expenditure budget of each of the non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is contained in the Welsh Office commentary, a copy of which had been placed in the Library of the House.

National Curriculum

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will call a conference of local education authorities in Wales to discuss the impact of the national curriculum upon educational practice in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to do so. A national curriculum implementation working group was established last year under Welsh Office chairmanship. The group includes representatives from each local education authority and meets on a regular basis to discuss practical issues arising from implementation of the national curriculum in Wales.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local education authorities he has met in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 10 July 1990.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit *(a)* Clwyd, *(b)* Gwynedd, *(c)* Powys, *(d)* Gwent, *(e)* Mid Glamorgan, *(f)* South Glamorgan, *(g)* West Glamorgan and *(h)* Dyfed local authorities.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend expects to visit all local education authorities in Wales in due course.

Teacher Morale

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet teachers' unions in Wales to discuss the morale of teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We are always prepared to consider requests from teachers' unions for meetings to discuss educational issues in Wales.

Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy for the improvement of the fabric of schools in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 9 May 1990.

Councils and Health Authorities (Costs)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for the financial years 1985-86 to 1989-90, the level of inflation in costs falling on *(a)* district councils, *(b)* county councils and *(c)* health authorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 9 July 1990.

Rivers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the rivers in Wales whose classification according to the National Water Council grading system changed between 1987 and 1988 together with details of the change in each case.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 11 July 1990.

Rain Samples (Acidity)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the reasons for the reduction in the number of samples taken each year to measure the acidity of rain in Wales between 1982 and 1988 as shown in table 3.21 of "Environmental Digest for Wales" No. 4 1988-89.

Mr. Grist: The number of samples used to provide the data on the acidity of rainfall in table 3.21 of the "Environmental Deigest for Wales" was decided by the local authorities that provided the information.

A national monitoring programme is now carried out by the Warren Spring laboratory and the results of this survey are given in table 3.22 of that publication. It is intended that this series only will be published for future years.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. David Hunt: There are 321 Welsh Office staff at principal grade or equivalent and above. Ten are graduates of Oxford, 15 of Cambridge and 212 of other universities.

Health Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing, for each health authority in Wales, the capital expenditure for each year since 1960 that is taken into account in compiling the equalisation of capital stock element within the capital expenditure allocation formula which was used for the current financial year.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* The information requested is set out in the table:

Capital expenditure from 1960 taken into account in compiling the formula for the allocation of capital within the NHS in Wales in 1990-91

Year	*Clwyd*	*East Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Pembs*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
1960-61	0·747	3·343	3·466	0·739	3·994	0·478	0·616	1·402	1·533
1961-62	1·427	1·260	3·718	0·668	2·634	0·182	1·169	1·898	1·230
1962-63	1·054	1·456	3·822	0·982	2·574	0·208	1·104	0·889	2·481
1963-64	1·033	3·530	6·182	1·123	3·684	0·502	0·384	1·130	4·835
1964-65	1·766	4·443	6·753	0·883	3·845	0·632	0·340	9·437	5·082
1965-66	1·498	7·396	6·866	1·763	7·899	1·047	0·371	5·653	5·447
1966-67	1·155	4·213	7·340	0·855	7·430	0·594	0·134	5·955	1·545
1967-68	1·128	3·514	8·300	2·119	6·511	0·498	0·791	14·456	2·143
1968-69	1·607	2·443	5·367	4·832	2·846	0·349	0·752	23·105	2·870
1969-70	2·856	1·661	2·740	6·375	4·090	0·237	0·790	22·563	3·698
1970-71	4·178	1·448	3·281	3·854	4·123	0·204	1·773	25·818	3·837
1971-72	4·474	1·980	5·301	1·650	4·783	0·279	1·046	11·811	2·798
1972-73	5·918	2·403	7·668	1·431	7·363	0·343	0·558	8·828	3·309
1973-74	7·272	0·598	6·534	2·955	10·604	3·906	0·762	8·604	2·603
1974-75	7·348	1·568	5·183	2·758	12·887	5·661	0·778	8·073	4·017
1975-76	8·636	1·857	8·346	3·817	12·938	6·073	1·055	7·715	4·486
1976-77	6·137	0·890	7·050	4·758	6·858	4·407	0·994	3·875	3·515
1977-78	4·711	0·505	6·449	9·630	4·285	2·188	1·232	5·152	2·978
1978-79	4·228	1·487	4·902	11·314	5·144	1·157	1·434	5·521	4·417
1979-80	6·203	1·493	5·512	8·042	2·939	0·635	0·863	4·019	3·706
1980-81	6·027	1·667	5·214	6·062	2·909	0·342	0·727	7·276	4·170
1981-82	5·913	1·835	6·353	4·462	3·894	0·155	0·830	7·122	8·321
1982-83	9·326	3·757	5·225	4·956	8·825	0·386	0·620	7·290	9·184
1983-84	7·824	5·159	4·392	5·933	11·617	0·893	0·701	6·064	8·827
1984-85[1]	4·961	2·562	2·255	4·341	8·698	0·483	1·711	4·798	7·322
1985-86[1]	5·494	2·087	3·225	2·105	10·437	0·655	2·778	3·731	8·141
1986-87[1]	4·118	21·139	3·550	2·886	5·383	1·116	0·871	9·809	6·629
Teaching Allowance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	34·830	—
Total	117·039	85·694	145·057	101·293	169·144	33·610	25·184	187·164	119·124
Per Cent· Share	11·9	8·7	14·8	10·3	17·2	3·4	2·6	19·0	12·1

[1]Provisional and prospective outturn expenditure figures at the time the formula update was calculated in 1985-86.
Note: All figures at 1985-86 prices.

It should be noted, however, that the equalisation component of the capital formula takes account of capital expenditure since 1948. The figures in the table therefore do not represent all the capital expenditure that was taken into account when calculating the capital formula shares that were used for the current financial year.

It should also be noted that the capital formula shares used in this year's allocations to authorities were

determined in 1985-86 when the original capital formula was first updated. This reflects a decision taken prior to the introduction of the present capital allocation arrangements in 1984-85—on the recommendation of the working party which devised the new arrangements with the endorsement of health authority chairmen—that the initial capital formula shares should be "frozen" for a period of five years in the interests of stability in capital programme planning. Authorities thus have five years' notice of prospective changes in their shares of discretionary capital provision as a result of the annual capital formula updates which have been calculated each year since 1984-85 and can revise their capital programmes accordingly.

Finally, it should be noted that these capital allocation arrangements will need to be revised as a consequence of the "Working for Patients" reforms. Authorities will be consulted on proposals for new arrangements in the near future.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Social Fund

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what reasons were given for disallowing applications in respect of the social fund from 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990 at each of the social security offices in South Down.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Social fund budgeting and crisis loans and community care grants (CCGs)
Reasons for refusal as percentage of total applications processed (3 April 1989-30 March 1990)

Reasons for refusal	*Ballynahinch*		*Newry*		*Newcastle*		*Kilkeel*		*Downpatrick*		*Banbridge*	
	Loans	*CCGs*	*Loans*	*CCGs*	*Loans*	*CCGs*	*Loans*	*CCGs*	*Loans*	*CCGs*	*Loans*	*CCGs*
Savings over £500 sufficient to meet cost	—	1·09	0·03	0·19	—	1·63	—	—	0·06	0·49	—	0·27
Not in receipt of Income Support (IS)	1·35	—	1·64	—	1·42	—	0·31	—	2·63	—	2·09	—
Not in receipt of IS for 26 weeks	5·98	—	6·49	—	9·31	—	7·79	—	7·89	—	7·17	—
Not in receipt of IS at present and unlikely to qualify	—	2·92	—	2·84	—	4·90	—	1·20	—	3·35	—	5·21
Excluded items	1·74	0·73	0·55	0·80	2·46	3·81	0·93	0·80	1·12	0·87	1·04	1·23
Excluded persons	0·58	—	0·03	—	0·13	0·54	—	0·40	2·57	20·27	—	0·41
Amount less than £30, not travelling expenses	—	0·73	0·14	0·19	0·13	1·09	0·31	0·40	0·37	0·12	0·48	0·68
Adjusted amount less than £30, not travelling expenses	0·19	1·09	0·03	—	0·65	0·82	—	—	0·62	0·12	0·16	0·27
Total debt of £1,000	0·19	—	0·08	—	—	—	—	—	0·06	—	—	—
Previous application and SFO decision for this item	1·35	1·82	2·03	3·17	2·20	1·63	0·62	0·40	0·68	1·61	1·53	2·74
No serious damage or risk to health or safety	4·44	—	0·52	—	0·78	—	—	—	1·75	—	2·25	—
Inability to repay	1·93	—	2·66	—	1·03	—	1·25	—	2·19	—	2·65	—
Help available from another source	—	0·36	0·25	0·52	0·39	0·27	—	1·20	0·62	0·62	0·16	0·82
Priority too low to meet from the budget	8·11	20·07	0·79	5·73	5·95	19·62	5·61	11·24	8·77	10·19	4·19	20·60
Suitable alternative available	—	—	0·16	0·14	—	0·27	—	—	0·12	0·87	—	—
Loan refused—CCG awarded	0·39	—	0·96	—	0·13	—	0·62	—	0·37	—	1·85	—
Others	1·93	26·64	0·74	21·97	0·65	3·00	0·62	4·42	0·62	3·60	0·88	3·84
Enough money available to meet Crisis	—	—	0·03	—	—	—	—	—	0·06	—	0·40	—
Direction 4 not satisfied (CCG only)	—	8·76	—	8·85	—	6·54	—	2·81	—	11·69	—	7·82
Savings over £1,000: Applicant or partner aged 60 years or over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Road Safety, Comber

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of road safety precautions at High street, Comber; whether he will consider the provision of no waiting cones in the vicinity of the First Comber Presbyterian church; why he has rejected double yellow lines on this section of the High street; what is the present programme for the Comber bypass; and if he will make a statement about traffic conditions in Comber.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Roads service proposes to introduce double yellow lines along both sides of High street, Comber in the vicinity of the First Comber Presbyterian church. Enforcement of these restrictions and the 30 mph speed limit is by the RUC.

The second stage of the Comber bypass is scheduled to start in 1992-93. It will help alleviate the current traffic congestion in Comber.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malaysia

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *15-16*, if he will break down

the figures of United Kingdom bilateral aid to Malaysia for the years 1985 to 1988, including details of individual projects funded, amounts and dates of contracts and negotiations.

Mrs. Chalker: United Kingdom bilateral aid to Malaysia for the years requested was as follows:

Gross Bilateral Aid 1985-88

£ thousands

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
(a) Total Aid	7,454	55,494	9,779	10,057
(b) Total Financial Aid	4,892	53,396	7,106	3,736
(i) Aid and Trade Provision	1,660	50,128	5,801	1,944
(ii) Commonwealth Development Corporation Project Aid	3,232	3,268	1,305	1,792
(c) Technical Co-operation	2,562	2,098	2,673	6,321

Project	*Allocation (to 31 December 1988)*	*Expenditure 1985*	*Expenditure 1986*	*Expenditure 1987*	*Expenditure 1988*
The breakdown of expenditure under the Aid and Trade provision by project for the same period was:					
1984 Sungei Ahning dam	2,349	1,660	314	375	—
1986 Cross-braced bogies	1,205	—	1,205	—	—
1986 Rural water schemes	59,461	—	48,610	5,426	1,944
Commonwealth Development Corporation expenditure by project was as follows:					
Palong cocoa	99	99	—	—	—
Cold rolling mill complex	2,500	2,032	468	—	—
Aluminium industries	1,026	1,026	—	—	—
Darabif cattle ranch	75	75	—	—	—
Palong cocoa	600	—	—	500	100
Sarawak oil palms	305	—	—	305	—
Ladang Baturong oil palm estate	1,500	—	1,300	—	—
Beef cattle ranch and pastures	2,000	—	1,500	500	—
Sabah tea plantation rehabilitation and development	975	—	—	—	975
Desa tea Estate	717	—	—	—	717
Technical co-operation expenditure by type of activity was as follows:					
Personnel overseas	—	345	332	359	364
Students and trainees	—	1,031	814	887	1,531
Consultancies	—	351	20	64	33
Equipment and supplies	—	130	(−86)	29	36
Pensions	—	691	1,002	911	2,752

The personnel covered sectors such as geological surveys, demography, industrial development and English language teaching. The main fields covered by training were artificial limbs technology, road engineering, business management, foreign investment, demography and English language teaching.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Bowen Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Commonwealth Development Corporation to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that, under procedures agree by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 29 October to 2 November 1990.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has anything to add to the reply his Parliamentary Under-Secretary made to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras in the debate of 25 June, *Official Report*, column 68 about the appointment of advisers on privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend has written to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras making clear that in every case the appointment of advisers on privatisation followed a competitive process unless there were substantial and compelling reasons for departing from that norm.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Wakeham: I regret the information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND

Trees

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy in respect of the Scottish hardwood charter—Trees for 2000.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We support the Scottish hardwood charter in principle. I have written to the promoter of the charter giving support on the basis of our commitment to the concept of sustainable use of natural resources, but cautioning against the replacement of natural rain forests with plantations.

Health Boards (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what circumstances a health board may omit competitive tendering when undertaking contracts with the private sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Boards may decide not to proceed to competitive tendering where only one contractor is identified with the ability to provide the required service.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each health board for the last three years those contracts with the private sector which have not gone out to competitive tender.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Duvets, Hospitals

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to assure himself, and what information is available to him, that the replacement of blankets and sheets with duvets in hospitals would not increase the risk of infectious diseases.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The choice of bedding used in hospitals is a matter primarily for health boards. It is for the boards to satisfy themselves that the material is suitable to be cleaned or laundered to prevent the risk of any infection. Ayrshire and Arran health board has been using duvets for some time and has subjected them to regular microbiological testing over a five-year period. To date, these tests have shown that the duvets are clear of infection.

Roads, Greenock

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost and period of construction of the Baker street bypass in Greenock; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The question of the construction of a bypass at Baker street, Greenock is a matter for Strathclyde regional council as local roads authority. My Department has no information regarding its possible cost or period of construction.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of the construction of the proposed road roundabouts in Greenock *(a)* at the entrance to the James Watt dock, *(b)* at the eastern end of Cartsburn and *(c)* at the western end of Charing Cross; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: These proposed works will be funded by the Scottish Development Agency at an estimated cost of £1 million and will provide access to a 39-acre site at Cartsburn which forms part of the Inverclyde enterprise zone.

Toxic Waste Sites

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on cases of toxic waste sites being in close proximity to underground water supplies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My Department has no information on cases of toxic waste sites being in close proximity to underground water supplies. The quality of groundwater is safeguarded by the statutory requirement for any proposal to use land for the disposal of controlled waste to be referred to the river purification authority for the area concerned.

NHS Reform

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make it his policy that information circulated to citizens concerning the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act should include information and advice on problems that may arise in the course of its implementation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A booklet called "The NHS Reforms and You" will be distributed shortly to every household in Scotland, describing the changes in the NHS in Scotland following the introduction of the new contract for family doctors and the National Health Service and Community Care Act which received Royal Assent on 29 June. It contains a three-page section giving information about help which is available to citizens, and how to make complaints about the treatment provided by the NHS.

Elderly Citizens (Bus Passes)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many local authorities *(a)* issue free bus passes, *(b)* issue some form of assisted bus passes and *(c)* do not provide free or assisted travel for their elderly citizens.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that all regional and islands authorities in Scotland offer concessionary travel to the elderly, although in the case of Orkney islands council the concessions relate to inter-island ferry services only. My information is that Lothian and Fife regional councils and Shetland islands council provide free travel for the elderly.

Residential Homes

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken to ensure that private nursing homes and residential care homes include medical requisites and all necessary services in their fees.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The responsibility for ensuring that nursing homes and residential care homes provide the required level of services rests with the registration authorities, health boards and local authorities respectively. The level of fee is a private matter between the individual home and its clients.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether elderly people in private residential care are entitled to receive free national health service prescriptions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All people over retirement age are entitled to free NHS prescriptions regardless of their residential arrangements.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to initiate an inquiry into the level of fees charged by private nursing homes and residential care homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The level of fees charged is a private matter between the individual home and its clients.

Single European Market

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact of the completion of the single European market on economic growth and employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am chairing the single market committee of the Scottish Economic Council which is examining the impact of the single market on Scotland, and which has commissioned and published a number of reports. Further research into its possible effects are currently being undertaken.

Fire Risk Areas

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many A category fire risk areas there are in each fire brigade area; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally, but at 1 January 1990 the number of stations serving predominantly category A fire risk areas was as follows:

Fire brigade area	*Number*
Central	2
Dumfries and Galloway	—
Fife	—
Grampian	2
Highlands and Islands	1
Lothian and Borders	3
Strathclyde	8
Tayside	2

Following the issue of a report in 1985 containing guidance on the standards of fire cover, all fire brigades in Scotland have reviewed the categorisation of fire risks in their area.

GP Budgets

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many general practitioners will be equipped with the necessary software to enable them to be responsible for their budgets from 1 April 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Discussions with the computer companies are currently taking place. The details of these discussions are commercially sensitive, but the general objective is to ensure that the necessary software will be available to all the GPs wishing to take part in the practice funding scheme.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest estimated cost of developing and supplying the computer software systems for doctors eligible and electing to run their own budgets.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Development and supplying of the software package for practice funding is a matter for the GP computer suppliers. Without details of their development costs it is not possible to estimate the cost of supply.

Hospital Care (Costs)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the latest information he has on the cost of operations and hospital care in each hospital in Scotland; and when he expects all hospitals to publish a price list for all operations and treatments available for patients.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The range of information available on the costs of hospital services is set out in the annual publication "Scottish Health Service Costs", produced by the Common Services Agency of the NHS in Scotland. Copies are held in the Library. I expect increasingly detailed information on hospital prices to be developed as part of the system of NHS contracts which is being introduced next year.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department does not hold currently a comprehensive database of such information. The collation of information from individual records would be disproportionately costly.

Nurses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many state registered nurses are currently in their final year of study in national health service hospitals in Scotland; what percentage of that figure is expected to obtain immediate full-time employment within Scottish national health service hospitals on completion of their training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As at 31 March 1990—the latest date for which figures are available—2,838 student nurses in Scotland were in their final year of study for first-level registration. Information on how many of them might be expected to obtain immediate full-time employment within the national health service is not held centrally.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of state registered nurses *(a)* qualified in Scotland and *(b)* obtained full-time employment within national health service hospitals in Scotland during 1987-88 and 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not held centrally.

Carstairs Hospital

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the planned capital expenditure at Carstairs state hospital for the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Approval has been given for the construction of a new kitchen at the state hospital at a cost currently estimated at £1·54 million. The building work on this is expected to take about two years to complete. In

addition, the Government have agreed to the construction of two new 25-bed single storey wards at the hospital. The cost of these is presently estimated at £3·06 million with estimated completion in 1993.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints have been recorded by patients alleging violence by nursing staff; how many complaints have been recorded by nursing staff alleging violence by patients; and how many nursing staff have left Carstairs state hospital in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

	Complaints of violence		*Number of nursing staff leaving*
Year	*By patients*	*By staff*	
1979	1	42	14·0
1980	2	26	19·5
1981	1	52	25·0
1982	1	41	17·0
1983	1	47	16·0
1984	3	54	11·0
1985	5	51	17·0
1986	5	71	15·0
1987	1	122	20·0
1988	2	68	32·0
1989	7	83	35·0

The figures given for complaints by staff cover all incidents involving injury or possible injury. Not all proceed to a formal complaint. The increase since 1987 in part reflects a change in recording procedure.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of patients in Carstairs state hospital; and what percentage of patients are released each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As at 11 July 1990 there were 227 patients in the state hospital. The numbers discharged each year varies depending on the clinical condition of individual patients. During 1989 approximately 30 per cent. of the patients were discharged, as follows:

	Percentage of total patients as at 1 January 1989
Transferred to NHS hospital	13
Returned to penal establishment	11
Complete discharge	1·5
Conditional discharge	1·5
Leave of absence	3

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nursing staff employed at Carstairs state hospital are directly involved in patient care.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are at present 306 nursing staff at the state hospital, of whom 304 are directly involved in patient care; the remaining two are nurse tutors.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the numbers of mentally ill patients confined to Carstairs state hospital by the Scottish courts each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible to provide separate figures for mentally ill as distinct from mentally handicapped patients. The following figures relate to all admissions from the courts:

Year	*Number of patients*
1979	14
1980	17
1981	14
1982	13
1983	21
1984	17
1985	16
1986	19
1987	22
1988	24
1989	29

Crimes, Lanarkshire

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of reported crimes in *(a)* Larkhall, *(b)* Stonehouse, *(c)* Lanark, *(d)* Carluke, *(e)* Forth, *(f)* Biggar, *(g)* Lesmahagow, *(h)* Douglas, *(i)* Coalburn, *(j)* Kirkmuirhill and Blackwood, *(k)* Ashgill and Netherburn, *(l)* Law village, *(m)* Symington, near Biggar, *(n)* Crawford, *(o)* Kirkfieldbank, *(p)* Crossford, *(q)* Leadhills and *(r)* Glespin each year since 1979 and give details of the conviction rate in percentage terms to the crimes reported.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost to each local authority of sending reminder letters to late or non-payers of the community charge; and if he will express the cost per community charge payer to each authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Although local authorities make returns to my Department of the administrative cost of collecting the community charge, the returns do not show separately the cost of sending reminder letters.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those authorities with less than 95 per cent. collection of the community charge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The collection of community charges is the responsibility of individual local authorities and the information requested is not held centrally. However, the majority of authorities have based their budgets for 1990-91 on an assumed collection rate of at least 95 per cent.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the cost per person for the collection of the community charge in each local authority area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On the basis of local authorities' budget estimates, the cost per charge payer of collecting the community charge by levying authority is as follows:

	£ per charge payer
Regional Council	
Borders	12·14
Central	18·86
Dumfries and Galloway	19·64
Fife	12·95
Grampian	12·56
Highland	14·83
Lothian	15·99
Strathclyde	12·69
Tayside	12·82
Islands Council	
Orkney	8·03
Shetland	28·94
Western Isles	11·66

These figures include the cost of the registration work but exclude the cost of operating the rebate and transitional relief schemes.

Prisoners (HIV)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inmates in each Scottish prison are HIV positive; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 31 March 1990, the latest date for which complete records are available, the following number of prisoners were confirmed as being HIV positive.

	Number
Aberdeen	1
Barlinnie	2
Cornton Vale	1
Dungavel	2
Edinburgh	21
Friarton	1
Glenochil	3
Greenock	0
Low Moss	0
Noranside	0
Penninghame	0
Perth	14
Peterhead	1
Shotts	4

In addition, three young offenders on that date were confirmed as being HIV positive.

The grand total of 53 for 31 March 1990 compares with figures of 61 for 30 June 1989, 64 for 30 September 1989 and 40 for 31 December 1989. Before then figures were not regularly collected.

The number of prisoners in Scottish prisons at any one time who are confirmed as being HIV positive naturally fluctuates, but normally it is between about 40 and 70. This trend has not altered over the past three years.

Prison Officers

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scottish Prison Officers Union; and what matters were discussed.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend last met representatives of the Scottish Prison Officers Association on 16 October 1989 at the state hospital, Carstairs.

The dissolution of the central Whitley council at Carstairs from 1 October 1989 was discussed, together with the transfer of the finance department from the state hospital to Lanarkshire health board.

School Meals

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school children received free school meals in *(a)* Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland during 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Lang: The information requested, taken from annual school meals census returns, is as follows:

Number of pupils receiving free meals

	Glasgow	Strathclyde	Scotland
1986	34,059	84,659	136,627
1987	34,671	87,362	143,194
1988	35,337	87,147	145,219
1989	27,053	63,905	105,232

Prisoners (AIDS)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inmates in each Scottish prison have AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The one Scottish inmate who has AIDS is located in Perth prison. The care and treatment of prison inmates with AIDS is the responsibility of the prison medical officer who will consult outside specialists as appropriate. Where any treatment required is unavailable within the prison the inmate will be temporarily transferred to an outside facility.

Police Manpower

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of police manshifts, annually, in attending courts to give evidence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Female Prisoners (Strip Searches)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Scottish prison establishments in 1989; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely, making a remand appearance at court, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics on strip searches carried out on female prisoners are kept only at Her Majesty's institution Cornton Vale. During 1989, 2,206 strip searches were carried out. The reasons for these searches are given in the table:

On admission	Routine room search	Special room search	After open Visit search	Total
1,218	384	158	446	2,206

The other information requested could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the numbers of inmates at each Scottish prison and young offenders institution for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the table.

Average daily population in Scottish penal establishments 1979-1989[1]

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Prisons											
Aberdeen	162	172	163	181	182	179	173	180	175	162	140
Barlinnie[2]	914	913	829	984	1,117	1,132	1,327	1,270	1,052	997	870
Cornton Vale	88	93	95	97	100	109	151	166	157	145	127
Dumfries[3 4]	21	22	27	28	21	26	128	144	154	—	—
Dungavel	111	118	122	115	111	115	130	135	140	125	114
Edinburgh	579	659	677	717	709	696	754	776	683	599	587
Friarton[5]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	70	72	74	66
Glenochil[6]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	391	402	307
Greenock[7 8]	27	25	21	—	—	—	—	146	200	—	166
Inverness	92	95	90	95	97	88	115	109	105	94	91
Low Moss	222	313	280	343	353	351	368	345	352	345	344
Noranside[9]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	92	99	99
Penninghame	47	54	52	56	55	66	68	69	69	70	67
Perth	525	545	529	513	511	491	516	578	508	429	450
Peterhead	274	231	213	197	196	185	188	182	152	123	124
Shotts[10]	51	59	59	59	59	59	59	60	219	414	473
Young Offenders Institutions											
Castle Huntly[11]	—	—	—	—	112	88	94	103	120	117	115
Cornton Vale	19	15	9	11	15	18	21	22	26	23	17
Dumfries[4]	116	112	109	106	111	77	—	—	122	129	127
Edinburgh[12]	40	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Friarton[13]	63	73	72	67	63	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glenochil[9 14]	379	430	356	401	380	212	287	365	407	42	106
Greenock[7 6]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	157	167	146
Noranside[9 11]	—	—	—	—	107	81	72	74	62	—	—
Polmont[11]	—	—	—	—	344	295	327	378	410	388	394
Borstal Institutions (prior to November 1983)											
Castle Huntly[11]	87	94	80	91	109	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cornton Vale[11]	41	34	26	22	18	—	—	—	—	—	—
Noranside[11]	67	65	61	82	102	—	—	—	—	—	—
Polmont[11]	305	322	279	294	347	—	—	—	—	—	—
Detention Centres (prior to November 1988)											
Friarton[13 5]	—	—	—	—	47	61	58	35	—	—	—
Glenochil[14]	99	140	122	142	130	156	153	146	143	125	—
Remand Institution											
Longriggend	250	268	241	285	265	267	286	280	266	228	209

Notes:

[1] Where an establishment changed use (eg from prison to YOI) during the year the average daily population for each use has been calculated over the relevant time period.
[2] Includes special unit.
[3] Closed as a YOI from December 1984.
[4] Changed use from prison to YOI in June 1987.
[5] Changed use from detention centre to prison in May 1986.
[6] Changed use from YOI to prison in June 1987.
[7] Under redevelopment as male adult establishment until March 1986.
[8] Changed use from YOI to prison in June 1989.
[9] Changed use from YOI to prison in May 1987.
[10] Phase II of Shotts opened in June 1987.
[11] Changed use from borstal to YOI in November 1983.
[12] Closed as YOI in February 1979.
[13] Changed use from YOI to detention centre in November 1983.
[14] Changed use from detention centre to YOI in November 1988.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Payments

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase social security payments to levels equivalent to those paid by the countries in the northern zone of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are fundamental differences between the social security schemes of the EC countries so that rates for individuals may be higher or lower than in the United Kingdom—for example in earnings-related schemes low earners receive low benefits and high earners receive high benefits, while additions for dependants are not normally payable. There are no proposals for the alignment of these schemes—indeed alignment would mean increasing some benefits but also reducing or abolishing others, for example, family credit.

War Pensions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply of 20 March, *Official Report*, column *593*, what factors account for the further delay in resolving Mr. Davies's claim for a war pension.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the consultant's report received on 18 May 1990 was inconclusive. A further consultant's examination is necessary, and it is hoped that this can be arranged as soon as possible. If a war pension is awarded it will commence from the date of claim.

Local Office Closures

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number and location of Department of Social Security offices to close in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland under his networking arrangements; when these closures will take place; and if he will present the full details of these changes in the *Official Report*.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no plans to close any local social security offices in Strathclyde or more generally Scotland. Details about the networking review to which the hon. Member refers were given in a reply to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) on 11 July.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of Department of Social Security offices to close in *(a)* Merseyside and *(b)* north-west England under his networking arrangement; when these closures will occur; and if he will present the full details of the changes in the *Official Report*.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no plans to close any social security offices in Merseyside or more generally the north-west of England. Details about the networking review to which the hon. Member refers were given in a reply to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) on 11 July. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will also be writing to the hon. Member shortly in response to his recent letter on this subject.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he will calculate the housing benefit entitlement of claimants who enter care homes after April 1991.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have consulted the local authority associations on this subject and are considering their views. An announcement will be made in due course.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish for each standard region the numbers *(a)* making applications for poll tax rebates and *(b)* being awarded rebates.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information about the total number of claims for community charge benefit is being collected by local authorities for the whole of the financial year 1990-91. It is expected that the details will be available for publication around the middle of 1991. Information about the community charge benefit case load at 31 May 1990 will be available in the autumn.

Maintenance Payments

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the scheme to deduct maintenance at source will be implemented; and what steps he intends to take to ensure that single parents receive prompt payment of the full amount of maintenance owed.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Government are concerned that so few lone-parent families receive regular payments of maintenance and are taking a number of steps to improve the position.

The Home Office has recently announced proposals to improve enforcement of maintenance orders in England and Wales by increasing the courts' powers to prescribe the method of payment. Under these proposals an attachment of earnings order could be made at the same time as a court makes an order for maintenance without waiting for the absent parent to default.

The procedure to collect maintenance by attachment of earnings orders will be as it is now. Courts will also be able to order maintenance payments to be made by, for example, standing order, direct to the maintenance creditor. This method would be appropriate for the self-employed absent parent. The Department of Social Security has already taken steps to improve the effectiveness of its action under the present system. Measures in the Social Security Bill include power for the Secretary of State to enforce a claimant's private maintenance order if it falls into default while she is receiving income support.

We are proceeding with urgency on the wide-ranging review of the maintenance system examining where changes need to be made in the longer term.

EMPLOYMENT

Maternity Leave

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will bring forward proposals to change the rules governing the right to return to work after statutory maternity leave, to make them less complex.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Publicity

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the guidelines used by his Department concerning publicity and advertising for departmental policy and programmes.

Mr. Nicholls: The Department uses the guidelines concerning publicity and advertising issued by the Cabinet Office. Copies are available in the Library of the House of Commons.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Eggar: There are 125 graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, and there are 843 graduates of other universities.

Female Employees

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to give incentives to companies to increase their numbers of full-time female employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government have no plans to introduce such legislation.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce measures to improve the pay of British female employees relative to that in other European Community countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No, pay is for employers and employees to determine through negotiation and any measures directly to raise women's pay without any corresponding increase in output would add to employer's costs, and reduce competitiveness and the number of women employed.

Pay comparisons with other European Community countries are of no real value given the very different economic and industrial situations in other member states.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to impose further penalties on any company which deliberately deflates the salaries paid to female employees with superior qualifications to those of their male counterparts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The Equal Pay Act 1970 provides a full and effective legislative framework for combatting unjustifiable sex discrimination in pay.

Job Clubs

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many job clubs had been established by his Department up to the end of the last financial year; and how many more, or less, it is anticipated will be in operation by the end of the current financial year;

(2) what was the total funding for job clubs for each of the years of their operation; and what is anticipated for the next three years, in real terms;

(3) how many people it is estimated use the job clubs in any one year.

Mr. Nicholls: The employment service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Gentleman.

Small Businesses

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for 1989 the number of value added tax registrations and deregistrations upon which the net figure for the weekly increase in small businesses established was calculated in his answer to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), *Official Report*, 5 June, column *458*.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1989, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise processed approximately 262,000 registrations and 177,000 deregistrations. Although these are not fully comparable with the estimates published by my Department, they provided an early indication that the net rate of increase in 1989 was at least 1,500 a week.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Law Centres

60. **Mr. French:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the total number of law centres in the United Kingdom; and how many have been established within the last 12 months.

The Attorney-General: There is no central Government register of law centres; nor is information held centrally on how many have been established within the last 12 months. However, there are 61 members of the Law Centres Federation.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Hind: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has received the Director of Public Prosecution's report on the Crown prosecution service for the year 1989-90; and when the report will be laid before Parliament.

The Attorney-General: I have received the annual report from the Director of Public Prosecutions today, and have placed a copy in the Libraries of both Houses.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

The Attorney-General: In the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, four civil servants at grade 7 or its equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford or Cambridge, and six are graduates of other universities. In the Serious Fraud Office, five are graduates of Oxford or Cambridge and 13 are graduates of other universities. In the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the Crown prosecution service, this information is not separately recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Korea

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government are proposing to recognise the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and if they will be taking steps through the United Nations to improve relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no plans to recognise North Korea as a state. We actively support all steps towards peace on the Korean peninsula, including those pursued through the United Nations, but we believe that progress can be achieved only through direct contacts between North and South Korea. We welcome the resumption of contacts on 3 July.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government have any plans to establish diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions with the Government of Sri Lanka have been held in respect of *(a)* the reported use of napalm in northern Sri Lanka and *(b)* the lack of access accorded to relief agencies in northern Sri Lanka; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. We have seen no evidence to support press reports alleging the use of napalm. We are in regular contact with relief agencies in Sri Lanka but have received no specific complaints about obstruction of their activities.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Sainsbury: Out of a total of 1,219, 489 officers in the relevant ranks in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (diplomatic and aid wings) are graduates of Oxford or Cambridge. Graduates of other universities total 346.

Cyprus

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy to the recently submitted application by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus to join the European Community.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Cyprus's application to join the European Community.

Mr. Maude: The handling of the Cyprus application may be discussed at the 16 July General Affairs Council. In considering the application, the Council will need to take into account the unresolved inter-communal dispute. In any event, we share the consensus in the Community that there should be no decisions on enlargement until at least 1993.

Malta

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Malta's application to join the European Community.

Mr. Maude: Malta intends to submit an EC membership application on 16 July. We expect the Council to refer the application to the European Commission for its opinion in the normal way. We share the consensus in the Community that there should be no decisions on enlargement until at least 1993.

My right hon. Friend and I shall be meeting the Maltese Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Professor de Marco, later today.

Agricultural Support

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the information on which he based his statement at the Group of Seven conference in Houston, Texas, that the European Economic Community supports its agriculture to a lesser extent than the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary told the press in Houston that the European Community gives less support to its agriculture than previously, because of changes made to the CAP. These include controls introduced in 1988, for example stabiliser mechanisms, which automatically cut prices when Community production exceeds preset limits.

CIVIL SERVICE

Agencies (Management Consultants)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what moneys have been spent by the Government on management consultants since the inauguration of the "next steps" programme.

Mr. Luce: The information requested by the hon. Member is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Total expenditure on management consultants by my own Department for work relating to the "next steps" programme since its launch in February 1988 up to 30 June 1990 was £90,100.

ENVIRONMENT

London Residuary Body

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of 35 Brownhill road from the London residuary body to the London borough of Lewisham; what consideration was paid with respect to this property; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included;

(2) what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of 35-43 Bondway from the London residuary body to the London borough of Lambeth; what consideration was paid with respect to each of these properties; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included;

(3) what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of *(a)* Russell Chambers, *(b)* 142 Charing Cross road, *(c)* St. Vincent's *(d)* 100 Shaftesbury avenue, *(e)* 35 Wellington street, *(f)* Hungerford house, Victoria embankment and *(g)* Torquay house, 217-221 Harrow road, from the London residuary body to the London borough of Westminster; what consideration was paid with respect to each of these properties; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included;

(4) what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of 116 Ladbroke grove from the London residuary body to

the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea; what consideration was paid with respect to this property; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included;

(5) what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of 76-82 Salusbury road from the London residuary body to the London borough of Brent; what consideration was paid with respect to each of these properties; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included;

(6) what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of *(a)* 311 Plumstead high street, *(b)* 16 Askew crescent and *(c)* 22 Stuart crescent from the London residuary body to the London borough of Greenwich; what consideration was paid with respect to each of these properties; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included;

(7) what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of 745 Barking road from the London residuary body to the London borough of Newham; what consideration was paid with respect to this property; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included;

(8) what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of 3 Allington road and 2 Stanhope road from the London residuary body to the London borough of Barnet; what consideration was paid with respect to each of these properties; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of 38 Mount Pleasant and Wesley house from the London residuary body to the London borough of Camden; what consideration was paid with respect to each of these properties; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None for 38 Mount Pleasant. Wesley house was sold by the London residuary body to the London borough of Camden for £1·8 million without clawback conditions or restrictive covenants.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements were instituted for the transfer of The Beormund, 177 Abbey street and Tress House, 3 Stamford street, from the London residuary body to the London borough of Southwark; what consideration was paid with respect to each of these properties; and what clawback conditions and restrictive covenants were included.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None for Tress house, 3 Stamford street. The Beormund, 177 Abbey street, was sold by the London residuary body to the London borough of Southwark for £225,000 subject to an existing lease to the Beormund centre without clawback conditions or restrictive covenants.

Community Charge Rebates

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which categories of mature students are not eligible for community charge rebates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Students who undertake a full-time course of education are liable to pay the community charge at the reduced rate of 20 per cent. and are not therefore eligible for community charge benefit. The age of an individual is not addressed in the definition of a full-time student as defined in the Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989.

Building Regulations

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has had from the National Association of Fire Officers to his Department's proposed changes to part B of the Building Regulations 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The National Association of Fire Officers considers that the proposals in the Department's consultation paper would lead to a reduction in standards for means of escape in case of fire, and the detailed points that it has made in this connection will be carefully considered. It has also expressed concern about the proposals for relaxations in the requirements relating to the use of fire-resisting and non-combustible materials and for increases in the permissible size of compartments, and suggests that the use of sprinkler systems is not a satisfactory alternative. The association has welcomed the proposals relating to access and facilities for the fire service, and for the provision of smoke alarms in domestic premises.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the representations received on his Department's proposed changes to certain sections of part B of the Building Regulations 1985 concerning fire.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A consultation paper setting out proposals for amendments to part B, "Safety in Fire", of the Building Regulations 1985 was issued on 19 March, and comments were invited by 30 June. There has been a considerable number of responses, and these will now be considered in detail by the Building Regulations Advisory Committee, and by the Department's fire advisory panel. While it will not be practicable to send an individual reply to each person who has responded, officials are meeting a number of those concerned to discuss their views. I hope that final decisions on these and other proposals for amendments to the regulations can be taken in the first half of next year.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses there have been to the Department's proposed changes to part B of the Building Regulations 1985, relating to reduction of fire resistance periods, increased compartment sizes, and relaxation of non-combustibility requirements; and if he would indicate the proportion in favour of these proposals, and against.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department has so far received 169 responses to the consultation paper setting out proposals for amendments to part B, "Safety in Fire," of the Building Regulations 1985. The number of responses on the particular aspects referred to have been:

	Number
Reductions in fire resistance periods	
In favour	16
Against	76

	Number
No view expressed	77
Increases in permitted compartment sizes.	
In favour	25
Against	50
No view expressed	94
Relaxation of non combustibility requirements	
In favour	22
Against	42
No view expressed	105

Rochester-upon-Medway Council

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give details of the financial and other proposals made to him by Rochester-upon-Medway city council concerning the transfer of its housing stock; and what decisions or advice he has given.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The consent given by the Secretary of State to Rochester-upon-Medway city council to dispose of its housing was conditional on the disposal taking place on or before 30 June, and the city council has not made an application for a renewal of that consent.

Without prejudice to any decision which he may be called upon to make on such an application, the Secretary of State has indicated that, exceptionally, he may in principle be prepared to countenance a deferred payment of part of the purchase price by the city council, if the council wishes to pursue that option. However, I understand that the city council has not yet decided how or whether to proceed.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Chris Patten: In my Department, of the total of 1,217 staff in the ranks in question, 761 have degrees. Of the degrees obtained by these staff, 252 were awarded by Oxford and Cambridge, and 931 by other universities or higher education bodies. Some staff in the ranks in question have more than one degree.

Falconers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licences have been issued by his Department for falconers to set (1) sparrowhawks on to *(a)* blackbirds and *(b)* other birds; and (2) other birds of prey on to *(a)* blackbirds and *(b)* other birds.

Mr. Trippier: In 1989, 60 licences were issued to falconers to fly birds of prey at specified quarry species as follows:

	Number
Sparrowhawk at blackbirds	25
Sparrowhawk at other species	1
Other birds of prey at blackbirds	1
Other birds of prey at other species	33

RECHAR

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that revenue implications for local authorities which arise from expenditure under the RECHAR programme will not result in eligible local authorities being subjected to community charge capping.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* I am not willing to speculate on how any scheme of charge capping might operate were my right hon. Friend to consider it necessary to use the powers available to him in future years.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy that letters and papers referred to in parliamentary replies shall be provided directly to the hon. Member asking the question and placed in the Library on or before the afternoon on which the answer falls due.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* It is already my policy that, wherever possible, enclosures referred to in replies are provided directly to the Member (and placed in the Library) on the same day as the question is answered.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GCSE (English Literature)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will call for a report from the School Examinations and Assessment Council on the standard of marking of GCSE English literature, external school, by the Midland examining group in 1989 and 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Officials are investigating the matter, and I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Grant-maintained Schools

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money is allocated to grant-maintained schools in their annual maintenance grants as arising from their share of their former local education authority budget provision for inspection and advisory services.

Mrs. Rumbold: Annual maintenance grant is calculated to include a per-pupil proportion of the planned spending on such services by each grant-mantained school's former maintaining local education authority. The amount of money allocated will therefore vary between schools in different authorities.

For example, in 1989-90 the full-year amount attributable to such services in Lincolnshire, the authority formerly responsible for maintaining three of the first 18 grant-maintained schools, was £9·36 per pupil; and in Barnet, where there are two grant-maintained schools, the amount was £12·21 per pupil.

School Inspections

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* grant-maintained schools, *(b)* independent schools and *(c)* local education authority controlled schools in England have been visited by Her Majesty's inspectorate since September 1989.

Mrs. Rumbold: I give below the figures for the number of institutions in each category visited between 1 September and the end of the autumn term 1989. This is the latest period for which the information is available:

	Number
Grant-maintained schools	31
Independent schools	185
Local authority maintained schools	2,434

Adult Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be in a position to make a decision about the future of REPLAN; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend hopes to make a decision on the future of REPLAN in the autumn. Proposals for a new programme from the further education unit and from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education are being considered.

Education Reform Act

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on his review of the charging regulations issued under the Education Reform Act.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department is at present collecting evidence, through a sample survey of schools and from other sources, of the pattern of out-of-school activities since 1989 and the reasons for any changes. Results will be available later this year. We shall consider, in the light of all the evidence, whether there is a case for further advice to schools or other action.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

School Closures

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table listing the number of proposals for school closure or reorganisation made to him, following objection or call-in, since May 1987, with a table showing the numbers where the time taken between first submission or notification to him and decision by him has been *(a)* up to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to 12 months, *(d)* 12 to 18 months and *(e)* over 18 months, and the numbers where a decision is outstanding.

Mr. MacGregor: The answer can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will update the table in the answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn, *Official Report*, 29 June 1989, columns *535-36* and 26 March, column *33*, to give the latest information available for 1990, and his estimate of the total numbers of places likely to be taken out of use as a result of approved proposals during the course of 1990.

Mr. MacGregor: The information on school closures is in the following updated table. It is not possible to estimate the number of places likely to be taken out of use as a result of approved proposals during the course of 1990.

Calendar Year	*No. of proposals decided*	*No. of places to be taken out of use by proposals in col. 2*	*No. of proposals in col. 2 approved*	*No. of surplus places to be taken out of use as a result of approved proposals*
(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*
1983	366	104,174	330	85,606
1984	292	85,862	270	77,590
1985	205	101,097	185	88,218
1986	172	81,663	147	62,828
1987	159	55,116	134	45,326
1988	145	64,256	116	27,170
1989	140	59,527	114	41,831
[1]1990	56	21,492	46	21,073

[1](1 January 1990—31 May 1990).

Science Budget

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the effect on expenditure covered by the science budget as a result of actual inflation in 1990-91 as against that allowed for in the science budget announced on 15 November 1989.

Mr. Jackson: The value of the science budget announced on 15 November 1989 represented at that time a 4·8 per cent. increase in real terms; this has been reduced to a real terms increase of 3·3 per cent. according to the latest published GDP deflator.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice the Secretary of State has received from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils this year with respect to the funding requirements of the science base; and when it will be published.

Mr. MacGregor: The ABRC, which was reconstituted and given new terms of reference in April, submitted its advice on this year's public expenditure survey on 22 May. I intend to treat the advice on a confidential basis, in common with the corresponding advice from the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council. I recognise that the board may wish to make its views on some matters, including priorities for United Kingdom science, more widely known, and I will be considering with the board's chairman the appropriate form of an ABRC publication for this purpose.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the year in which the data were

collected on which was based the survey of academic research equipment in the United Kingdom commissioned by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils which was published in November 1989; and what plans the Advisory Board for the Research Councils has to update the survey.

Mr. Jackson: The data were collected in 1988. The Advisory Board for the Research Councils was reconstituted in April, and the new board has yet to consider what policy studies should be undertaken.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made by his Department in establishing an index to take into account inflation for scientific equipment rather than that indicated by the retail prices index.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend is at present considering whether it is feasible to construct an index of recurrent scientific costs. If he concludes that such an index can be produced he will then consider the feasibility of an index of scientific equipment costs.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much per head the Government are spending on equipment for scientific research in higher education institutions; and what information he has on the comparable sums spent in the United States of America, West Germany, Japan, France and Italy.

Mr. Jackson: The allocation of block grant to individual higher education institutions is the responsibility of the funding councils, with funding for specific research projects provided by the research councils. Allocations for research equipment are not separately identified. The Department does not hold the requested international comparisons.

Surplus School Places

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will update the information given in answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), *Official Report*, 12 March, column *25*, on surplus school places.

Mr. MacGregor: The premises-related costs at current prices of retaining a surplus primary and secondary place are now estimated to be £150 and £240 a year respectively. There are also opportunity costs arising from inefficient retention of buildings and land.

The latest estimate is that, in January 1989, there were approximately 830,000 surplus primary school places and 950,000 surplus secondary school places in England.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table in respect of surplus school places giving the targets for every year shown in each public expenditure White Paper, or elsewhere, from and including 1985, and the number taken out of use in each year from and including 1985, with an estimate for 1990, broken down by the number taken out as *(a)* a result of approved proposals and *(b)* by other means, to be specified.

Mr. MacGregor: The available information is in the following table. It is not possible to distinguish which surplus places were taken out of use in a given year as a result of approved proposals and which were removed by other means. Nor is it possible to estimate how many will be removed in 1990.

Cost places 000s

	Targets	*Actual removals*
1985-86	[1]168	128
1986-87	167	106
1987-88	139	109
1988-89	137	118
1989-90	133	[2]76
1990-91	110	—

[1] From the report of the Joint Working Group on falling rolls and size of schools, 1986.
[2] Provisional estimate.

Richmond College

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library copies of all correspondence from and to the Middle States Association in respect of the proposed MBA course at Richmond college, or from third parties relating thereto.

Mr. MacGregor: Subject to the agreement of the two sides concerned, I will send a copy of the relevant letter to the hon. Member.

The hon. Member's concern about this correspondence arises, I believe, from a misunderstanding of the significance of designation of this MBA as an award recognised for the purpose of the relevant section of the Education Reform Act 1988. That purpose is to end the trade in "bogus" United Kingdom degrees. Richmond college's MBA is an American degree. It has been designated because the college, which is based solely in this country, is a United Kingdom institution. Its MBA could thus be taken to be a United Kingdom degree: it could therefore innocently fall foul of the unrecognised degree legislation, and run the risk of prosecution under Section 214(1)) of the Education Reform Act 1988. The college could not seek accreditation of the MBA through the Council for National Academic Awards or a United Kingdom university, which would have given it protection by making it a United Kingdom degree, because it would then have lost its accreditation from the American Commission of Higher Education of Middle States Schools and Colleges.

City Technology College

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, in determining the capital costs of a city technology college under the terms of paragraph 7 of the model funding agreement, he will take into account only such costs of a type specified in that paragraph which are those to be incurred by the parties to that agreement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes.

Teachers (Vetting)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that the same vetting procedure applies to United Kingdom and non-United Kingdom applicants for teaching posts after 1992.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend gave to him on Tuesday 10 July at columns 160-61.

Recruitment of teachers including vetting their suitability is a matter for LEAs and school governors as employers. Since 1984, arrangements have existed for local authorities to check against police records for any criminal convictions, but the information available does not extend to convictions incurred outside the United Kingdom. This facility, however, is not intended to replace effective recruitment procedures including taking up references with previous employers. LEAs have for many years successfully recruited and employed teachers from outside the United Kingdom, but I shall consider whether there is any practicable way to strengthen the procedures relating to overseas teachers.

Secondary Education (Management)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action has been taken by him to implement each of the recommendations of the Audit Commission contained in pages 2 to 4 of the summary of its report, "Towards Better Management in Secondary Education,"—May 1986, and its August 1988 report.

Mr. MacGregor: A range of Government initiatives has addressed the issues raised in the Audit Commission's 1986 report. Local management of schools is enabling school governors to determine staffing profiles, and to deploy available resources, in line with each school's needs and priorities. The national curriculum and its associated assessment procedures will provide a better basis for measuring pupil and school performance. Since the abolition of the Burnham committee in 1987, teachers' pay and conditions have been determined on the basis of recommendations from the Interim Advisory Committee; I am currently considering what permanent arrangements should replace the IAC. On surplus school places, which are also the subject of the August 1988 Audit Commission paper, the Government continue to encourage LEAs to take effective action to remove them.

School Premises

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the dates for and progress towards the implementation of the 1981 school premises regulations.

Mr. MacGregor: The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 applied to new school buildings with effect from 1 August 1981. The regulations provide a transition period for existing schools in respect of specific requirements which represent a marked changed from those in the 1972 regulations and require work to be undertaken. The date when the full regulations will apply to all schools is 1 September 1991. Under section 10 (2) of the Education Act 1944, as amended, the responsibility for meeting the requirements of the regulations rests with local education authorities and school governors.

Country Sports

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the use in schools of "Finding Out About Country Sports" published by Hobsons publishers for the Countryside Foundation.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about the publication "Finding Out About Country Sports". The representations claim that the publication is biased in favour of hunting. The Government are very much opposed to indoctrination of any kind in schools. Local education authorities, school governing bodies and head teachers are under a statutory duty to secure that where controversial issues are brought to the attention of pupils, they are presented in a balanced manner. (Section 45 of the 1986 Education (No. 2) Act). Anyone who has evidence that the use of this publication in a particular school does not conform with section 45 may make a complaint to the local education authority by which the school is maintained.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Terrorism

11. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider removing the right to parole for any individual convicted of a crime related to terrorist activity.

Mr. Waddington: Our proposals for reform to the parole system are set out in the White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" and are intended to ensure that the time served by all prisoners is much more closely related to the sentence passed.

As we made clear in the White Paper the proposed criteria for parole and the associated risk assessment which will give greater weight to violent crimes will make it likely that most offenders convicted of terrorist offences will not be released on parole.

Sunday Trading

12. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning amendment of the Shops Act 1950.

Mr. Mellor: Since answering a similar question from my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on 14 June, 223 written representations broadly in favour of Sunday trading and 38 against have been received.

40. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to find a compromise solution to the problem of the trading hours of small local shops, following recent decisions on Sunday trading by the European Court and courts in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: We continue to encourage the interested parties to try to reach agreement on a way forward which is likely to command parliamentary support.

Special Constables

14. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take to improve the training of special constables.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are already reviewing the training needs of special constables with the intention of producing a national training package. This will include training in

basic policing skills and knowledge, such as powers of arrest, classification of offences, stop and search powers, traffic law and community involvement, with management training for those in supervisory roles.

Religious Movements

17. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the funding of groups monitoring new religious movements.

Mr. John Patten: We are at present considering the case for further Government funding in this area when the start-up grant for INFORM runs out later this year.

Domestic Employees (Work Permits)

18. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases foreign domestics have been found to be employed without a work permit in the last period of 12 months for which statistics are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Work permits are not issued for domestic work, but as a concession outside the immigration rules a domestic servant may be allowed to come to the United Kingdom as part of the household of an employer for whom he or she has worked abroad. The statistics about people found to be here in breach of their conditions of stay do not identify domestics as a separate category.

National Identity Card

21. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans for legislation to introduce a national identity card.

Mr. John Patten: No. When the introduction of a compulsory system of identity cards was proposed last year by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), the Government's response was that the advantages of such a system would be insufficient to justify the costs, both financially and in terms of the possible adverse effect on relations between the police and the public. We remain unpersuaded that a compulsory system of identity cards should be introduced. The arguments relating to a voluntary system are somewhat different. The possibility of the Government introducing a voluntary card is kept under review.

Newspapers

23. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received concerning the findings of the Calcutt committee.

Mr. Mellor: I have received four written representations, and two requests for meetings, on aspects of the Calcutt recommendations.

Deaths (Police Procedures)

26. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedure is followed by the police in cases when persons are found dead in circumstances where there are no other persons present to notify their next of kin.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to his written questions last week.

Rehabilitation

27. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many schemes he funds for the rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office gives grants to some 412 schemes dealing with the resettlement of ex-offenders.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what was discussed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the Commissioner at a social function on 21 June when they discussed a number of matters.

Children (Legal Education)

30. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives he is considering to encourage parents to develop a knowledge of the law in their children.

Mr. John Patten: The proposals in the White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" for involving parents when their children offend will promote a better understanding of the effect of the criminal law and the criminal justice process and make parents aware of their responsibilities.

Young Offenders

31. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any experimental work is going on into alternative prison regimes for young offenders.

Mr. Mellor: Young offender institutions seek to help offenders sentenced to custody to prepare for their return to the community by providing a programme of activities, including education, training and work, designed to develop personal responsibility and self-discipline and to assist offenders to obtain suitable employment after release. There are also many examples of constructive and innovative work to help inmates to confront their offending behaviour. Since the enactment of the relevant provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, the number of sentenced male young offenders in custody has fallen by 24 per cent.

Prison Population

33. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current ratio of prisoners to prison officers; and what it was in 1979.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 December 1979 there were 13,974 prison officers in post. The daily average of prisoners in 1979 was 42,220, giving an officer to inmate ratio of 1:3·02. On 1 June 1990 the number of inmates (including those in police cells) was 3,088 higher at 45,308 and the number of officers 6,612 higher at 20,586 giving an officer to inmate ratio of 1:2·01.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the size of the prison population at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: On Wednesday 11 July 1990 there were 44,611 prisoners held in prison service establishments in England and Wales. In addition, a further 882 were held in police cells.

Video Evidence

34. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will make a statement on the report of the advisory group on video evidence.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 20 June at column *570*.

European Council of Ministers

35. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the last three meetings he attended of the Council of Ministers; what subjects were discussed; and which Ministers were in attendance.

56. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the last three meetings he attended of the Council of Ministers; what subjects were discussed; and which Ministers were in attendance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the question from the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh).

Vehicle Watch Scheme

36. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to support the vehicle watch scheme.

Mr. John Patten: I am aware that a pilot vehicle watch scheme is currently in operation in Southend, and that similar schemes are in existence in a number of areas around the country. These are imaginative schemes and I look forward to hearing of the results they achieve. I have asked my officials to make arrangements for the crime prevention centre to disseminate information about the existing schemes to all police forces, and have referred the issue to Crime Concern.

Under-age Drinking

37. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the problem of under-age drinking.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Eight letters specifically on the subject of under-age drinking have been received to date in 1990.

Winson Green Prison

39. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers of sentenced and remand prisoners currently being held in Winson Green prison, Birmingham.

Mr. Mellor: On Friday 6 July there were 565 sentenced prisoners and 418 remand prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Birmingham.

Hampshire Constabulary

43. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give further consideration to the need to increase the establishment of the Hampshire constabulary.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Hampshire police authority has applied for approval for 69 extra police officers in 1991-92. My right hon. and learned Friend will consider this, with the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, in the coming months together with applications from the other police authorities. The aim is to announce decisions before the end of the year.

Missing Persons Register

44. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to establish a national computerised missing persons register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today to a question from the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes).

Mr. Kevin Taylor

45. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will order an independent inquiry into the prosecution of Mr. Kevin Taylor.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Lockerbie Bomb

46. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with whom he has discussed the Lockerbie bombing in the last six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The investigation into the Lockerbie attack is the responsibility of the Dumfries and Galloway police, overseen by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate; but I have discussed the wider implications of this attack from time to time with ministerial colleagues and with representatives of other Governments.

Crime Prevention

49. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's crime prevention measures.

Mr. John Patten: The Government's crime prevention measures are kept under constant review through the Home Office's research and development programme, and the results of particular evaluation exercises are regularly published and placed in the Library. In addition, all major elements of the crime prevention advertising campaign are subjected to market research for both development and monitoring purposes. Implementation of the recent inter-departmental circular "Crime Prevention—the success of the partnership approach" is being monitored by an independent working group of the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention.

Race Relations

50. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the implications for race relations of the development of strongly separated ethnic cultural traditions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: The United Kingdom has long accommodated many diverse cultural traditions. Our guiding aim is that people of all races should participate fully in the mainstream of British society. Modern Britain has plenty of room for cultural and religious diversity, but there cannot be room for separation or segregation.

Isle of Man

51. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to visit the Isle of Man to discuss human rights.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit the Isle of Man for this specific purpose. The island is fully aware of its obligations and these are brought to its attention if necessary. On the outstanding matter of amending Manx law to conform with European Court judgments concerning homosexuality, a Select Committee of the House of Keys was seen by a Minister of State at the Home Office on 11 June.

55. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken or intends to take in respect of financial scandals on the Isle of Man; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The control and regulation of the finance sector in the Isle of Man is a domestic matter for the island authorities. We are aware that they have introduced stringent new requirements since the collapse of the Savings Investment Bank in 1982.

Maintenance Orders

52. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to bring forward his legislative proposals to give the courts new powers to enforce maintenance orders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We intend to bring forward legislative proposals at an early legislative opportunity.

Prison Workshops

53. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to increase the amount of work available for prisoners to carry out in prison workshops.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Drug Trafficking

54. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the present extent of information exchange between the United Kingdom and other members of the European Community in order to combat most effectively trafficking in illegal drugs.

Mr. Mellor: Officers of the police and Customs services regularly exchange information about individual cases with their counterparts in other Community countries. In addition, the national drugs intelligence unit exchanges such information with other national units where these exist. These exchanges have proved highly effective and we should like to build on them. We therefore welcome the endorsement by the Dublin European Council of the United Kingdom proposal to speed up work on the establishment of a European central drugs intelligence unit.

These are regular exchanges about operational aspects of the fight against illicit drug trafficking within the framework of the Trevi and Customs mutual legal assistance groups. More generally, the recently formed European committee to combat drugs and the Council of Europe's Pompidou group have shown themselves to be useful fora for sharing national information about the problem and for the development of new measures designed to strengthen European co-operation against such trafficking.

Crime (Clear-up Rate)

57. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the clear-up rate for notifiable criminal offences committed in the north-west of England during the last 12 months for which figures are available and in the previous 12 months.

Mr. John Patten: Information on clear-up rates by police force area is published in table 10 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 10/90, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Football Matches

58. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the scheduling of Saturday night Football League matches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has received one which was from the right hon. Member.

Football Licensing Authority

59. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who will be the next chairman of the Football Licensing Authority.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has today announced that he is to appoint Mr. Norman Jacobs as chairman of the Football Licensing Authority.

Drugs

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the type and quantity of drugs which were seized during the drugs raid on Broadwater Farm estate on 29 September 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the police made 31 seizures of herbal cannabis amounting to 315 grammes; 32 seizures of cannabis resin amounting to 592 grammes; and two seizures of cocaine amounting to nearly 5 grammes.

Magistrates Courts (Fines)

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount of fines imposed in magistrates courts in England and Wales in each of the years 1987, 1988 and 1989;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount of unpaid fines imposed in magistrates courts in England and Wales for each of the years 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. John Patten: In 1987 the amount of fines imposed in magistrates courts in England and Wales was £108·7 million. In 1988 the figure rose to £120·9 million. Data for 1989 will not be available until the autumn.

Information is not collected centrally on the amount of unpaid fines imposed in magistrates courts.

Wormhoudt Massacre

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding facilities provided by the Metropolitan police for the West German prosecuting authorities to take witness statements from survivors of the Wormhoudt massacre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Facilities were provided by the Metropolitan police for the West German prosecutor to interview survivors of the Wormhoudt massacre on 5 October 1989.

Further statements were taken at the prosecutor's request in May this year and forwarded to him through diplomatic channels on 20 June.

Immigration

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Norwegians have visited the United Kingdom through Scotland's ports and airports since the latest immigration rules were introduced.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest statement of changes in immigration rules (HC 251) has effect from 1 May 1990. The available information relates to May when 1,740 Norwegian visitors were admitted to the United Kingdom at Scottish ports of entry.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will outline the immigration rules which apply to Norwegian girls who are betrothed to Scots living and working in Scotland;

(2) if he will give details of the immigration rules which apply to Norwegians who wish to enter the United Kingdom through Scotland's ports and airports.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current immigration rules are set out in the statement of changes in immigration rules (HC 251) which was laid before Parliament on 23 March 1990. A copy is in the Library. Paragraphs 47 and 48 of the rules relate to the admission of fiancés and fiancées.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Norwegians have been refused entry into the United Kingdom by immigration officials at Scotland's airports and ports since the latest immigration rules were introduced;

(2) how many Norwegians have had their passports held by immigration officials and been instructed to return to Norway at *(a)* Edinburgh airport and *(b)* Dyce airport under the latest immigration rules.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest statement of changes in immigration rules (HC 251) took effect on 1 May 1990. Since that date the number of Norwegians refused entry and removed to Norway at *(a)* Edinburgh airport is nil and *(b)* Aberdeen airport is four. The number for Scotland's other ports and airports during the same period is nil.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Norwegians were refused entry into the United Kingdom at Scotland's ports and airports in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is available only from 1985 and is as follows:

Norwegian citizens refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom at Scottish ports of entry, 1985 to 1989.

Year	Total
1985	2
1986	1
1987	4
1988	1
1989	6

Prison Service

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 9 July, on what criteria Nottingham was eliminated from the shortlist of potential locations for the headquarters of the prison service.

Mr. Mellor: Following an assessment by consultants Nottingham was one of the six cities which were identified as meriting further consideration for the location of prison service headquarters, subject to the availability of suitable sites. Until a firm decision is taken to proceed at a specific location all options remain open, but work is currently focused on Birmingham, Coventry and Derby which contain the most promising of the available sites. The relocation of a large number of Inland Revenue staff to a particularly favourable site in the centre of Nottingham over the next two to three years and the lack of a comparable site for the prison service are the two main reasons why Nottingham is not currently one of the front-runners.

Tote

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce the findings of the Lloyd's report on the privatisation of the Tote.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The report by Lloyd's Merchant bank will not be published because it was made in confidence and contains commercially and managerially sensitive information. The report is still under consideration and the Government's conclusions will be made known in due course.

Homicide

Mr. Tebbit: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons convicted of *(a)* murder and *(b)* other acts of homicide since the ending of capital punishment have committed a further act of homicide subsequent to their release from imprisonment.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 11 July 1990]*: The total number of persons convicted of murder or manslaughter, including those who committed their second offence before release from prison or hospital, is published annually in table 4.10 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which are available in the Library.

The information requested is: *(a)* 6; *(b)* 22.

Pub Bombings

15. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has discussed the Guildford and Woolwich or Maguire cases with *(a)* the Lord Chief Justice or *(b)* the Master of the Rolls.

19. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has discussed the Guildford and Woolwich or the Maguire cases with *(a)* the Lord Chief Justice or *(b)* the Master of the Rolls.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes).

16. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider establishing a public inquiry into the conviction of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: Important aspects of this case are now being investigated by the Devon and Cornwall police. It is not possible at this stage to say when the Devon and Cornwall constabulary will be able to report on the results of its inquiries, but I know that the police are fully aware of the need to complete those inquiries as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. My right hon. and learned Friend will decide, in the light of the outcome of those inquiries, whether any further action is called for on his part.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the original notes of the police interviews with the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings have been recovered; and if they have been made available to the Devon and Cornwall police inquiry.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that officers from the Devon and Cornwall constabulary obtained police pocketbooks and original notes of interviews during their inquiries into certain aspects of this case in 1987.

48. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the nine Surrey police officers who were in Birmingham at the time of the pub bombings have been identified.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon).

38. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received seeking a public inquiry into the conviction of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: Since the beginning of this year, my right hon. and learned Friend has received approximately 1,100 representations about the safety of the convictions of the Birmingham Six, some of which have included calls for a public inquiry into the case.

32. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to *(a)* recover the original notes and *(b)* identify the authors of Criminal Records Office file 10368/74.

42. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to *(a)* review the original notes and *(b)* identify the authors of Criminal Records Office file number 10368/74.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on Friday 6 July, column 748.

28. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received to date this year about the Birmingham Six; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. John Patten: Since the beginning of this year, my right hon. and learned Friend has received approximately 1,100 representations about the safety of the convictions of the Birmingham Six. When my right hon. and learned Friend has received a report of the outcome of inquiries being conducted into certain aspects of this case by the Devon and Cornwall constabulary, he will consider whether further action is called for.

24. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations have been received from members of the prison service regarding the safety of the convictions of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

25. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations have been received from members of the prison service regarding the safety of the convictions of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: We are not aware of having received any representations about this case from members of the prison service. If any member of the prison service wishes to make representations about the safety of the convictions of the Birmingham Six, my right hon. and learned Friend will of course give them the most careful consideration.

22. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the inquiry by the Devon and Cornwall police into the Birmingham pub bombings case to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider establishing a public inquiry into the conviction of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier to the hon. Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall).

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Cruelty

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions for cruelty to animals on farms have been taken out by the state veterinary service in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean: Records relating to prosecutions by the Department for breaches of animal welfare legislation on the farm are available only from 1983. They are:

Year	*Number*
1983	4
1984	0
1985	3
1986	8
1987	6
1988	10
1989	8

Game Conservancy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the research projects undertaken during the last two years in collaboration with

the Game Conservancy, indicating, in each case, the amounts paid by his Department and the percentage of each project's total cost this represented.

Mr. Curry: Over the last two years my Department has provided funding for three research projects which are being carried out by the Game Conservancy. Under the co-operative awards in science and engineering (CASE) scheme it has also funded five studentships in collaboration with the Game Conservancy at two universities. The detailed information is as follows:

	[1] *Amount £'000*	[2] *Percentage*
Relating field and crop management characters to insect populations in cereals	24	100
Pilot study of grazing by hares and deer on double low oilseed rape	4	100
The feeding behaviour of wild vertebrates in relation to the glucosinolate and S-methyl cysteine sulphoxide (SMCO) content of oilseed rape. (In collaboration with the Scottish Crop Research Institute)	11	100
The impact of autumn insecticide applications on the natural enemies of cereal aphids. Consequences for barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV) spread and summer aphid attack. (University—Southampton)	3	100
Hedgerows as reservoirs of beneficial insects: creation, modification and manipulation of field boundaries to enhance their contributions to pest suppression in cereals. (University Southampton)	10	80
Spatial and temporal consequences of the effects of insecticides on the non-target invertebrate fauna of winter wheat. (University—Southampton)	9	78
Movements of insects across field margins and hedgerows. (University—East Anglia)	1	75
Evaluating the potential hazard of synthetic pyrethroids to non-target invertebrates under realistic conditions of exposure in cereal fields. (University—Southampton)	3	83

[1] Of MAFF funding over the last 2 years (1988-89 and 1989-90).
[2] Of MAFF funding in relation to total cost.

Badger Tuberculosis

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the relationship between badgers and bovine tuberculosis in other member states of the EEC; and what proposals he has to restrict the import of tuberculosis-positive animals post 1992.

Mr. Maclean: A report on badgers and bovine tuberculosis in Ireland was published by the eradication of animal disease board in February 1989, and a copy is available in the Library of the House. As for post-1992 import arrangements, we shall seek to ensure that the Community rules which are expected to be in place by then contain the same safeguards against the introduction of bovine tuberculosis as currently apply.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of all cattle known to have contracted BSE have been *(a)* Friesian cattle, *(b)* Holstein cattle and *(c)* Jersey cattle.

Mr. Maclean: Up to 6 July 1990, the information for pure-bred cattle is as follows:

(a) 79·0 per cent.
(b) 1·9 per cent.
(c) 0·8 per cent.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of cattle known to have contracted BSE have been *(a)* cattle from dairy herds and *(b)* cattle from beef herds.

Mr. Maclean: Up to 6 July 1990, the information is as follows:

(a) 94·1 per cent.
(b) 5·9 per cent.

Geographic Information

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has made any changes in its information-gathering and data base programme following the recommendations of the 1987 report on the handling of geographic information by the committee chaired by Lord Chorley.

Mr. Curry: The Department is investigating and developing the use of digital mapping and geographic information technology with the aim of improving the handling of spatial information. Developments to date include the computerisation of environmental data for environmentally sensitive areas and support for the United Kingdom digital marine atlas programme.

Surplus Beef and Butter

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to change the arrangements for the distribution of surplus beef and butter in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 28 June, *Official Report*, column *339*. I have no plans to change the arrangements for the current year announced on that date.

Spongiform Encephalopathies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the original terms of reference of the Tyrrell committee on research into spongiform encephalopathies; and whether they have been altered in any respect.

Mr. Gummer: The terms of reference of the consultative committee on research into spongiform encephalopathies were to advise the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health on research on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. On 3 April this

year I announced to the House, *Official Report*, column *542*, that the committee was being reconstituted, under the continued chairmanship of Dr. David Tyrrell, as the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee. Its terms of reference are to advise the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health on matters relating to spongiform encephalopathies.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action the Government are taking on the Tyrell committee report on research into spongiform encephalopathies.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to the reply, 9 January, Official Report, c. 572]*: I have today received the spongiform encephalopathy advisory (Tyrrell) committee's paper on the control of BSE in cattle. This paper discusses the scientific background to the opinion which the committee offered on 17 May to the effect that there is no scientific evidence currently available to support official advice against the use for breeding of the offspring of cows suffering from BSE and that some possible consequences might even be unhelpful.

Copies of the document have been placed in the Vote Office and the House Libraries and the paper will be available from my Ministry's press office.

Head Meat

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions there are on the use of head meat of cattle in meat products, including sausages and meat pies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984 allow head muscle meat to be used in the manufacture of meat products. As with all foodstuffs the general provisions of the Food Act 1984 and the Food Labelling Regulations 1984 also apply.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Curry: The number of civil servants in this Department of the rank of principal (grade 7) or equivalent and above who are graduates of Oxford or Cambridge is 131. At the same levels 791 officers are graduates of other universities.

Food Safety Act

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what funds he will earmark for local authorities in England to implement the Food Safety Act in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have made it clear from the time that the Food Safety Bill was published that an extra £30 million a year will be provided through the revenue support grant for food law enforcement in Great Britain from 1991-92. This overall amount was calculated following consultation with local authority associations. The England share, calculated according to the usual formula, will be approximately £25 million.

Beef

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve stability in the beef market.

Mr. Curry: The European Community beef regime contains provision for special safety net intervention arrangements which apply when the market is particularly depressed. These measures are now in operation and the European Commission has so far agreed to buy into intervention over 11,000 tonnes of steer beef at a purchase cost of some £25 million in the United Kingdom. This, coupled with the recent extension of intervention coverage in Great Britain by the addition of sub-class 03 steer beef, is helping to sustain the market.

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to extend intervention in the beef market to include 03 graded beef.

Mr. Curry: At our request, at the beef management committee on 15 June 1990 a proposal was adopted adding steer beef sub-class 03 to intervention coverage in Great Britain. As a result this grade of beef is now eligible for intervention.

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to extend intervention buying in the beef market to include maiden heifer beef.

Mr. Curry: There is no provision in the Community regime to purchase heifer beef into intervention in any circumstances.

Sheep Variable Premium

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has reached a decision on the future of the sheep variable premium scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The reformed EC sheepmeat regime agreed last year by EC Agriculture Ministers makes provision for the phasing-out of the sheep variable premium scheme by the end of the 1992 marketing year at the latest. In the negotiations we secured the right to end the scheme before that date, or accelerate the rate of phasing-out if we wished.

My right hon. Friends and I have now reviewed the timetable for phasing out the variable premium, taking account of the views of interested parties. We have concluded that the sheep variable premium scheme should continue to operate during the 1991 marketing year, with payments made at 55 per cent. of the full rate. We shall review the arrangements to apply for the 1992 marketing year early in 1991.

I am also pleased to announce that following the commitment we obtained in the price fixing this year, EC Agriculture Ministers have recently agreed the seasonal scale of prices for the variable premium scheme. The scale will retain the same form in 1991 as in previous years. It was one of our outstanding objectives from this year's price-fixing package to reach an agreement on the scale on satisfactory terms and sufficiently early to enable producers to work towards a smooth phase-out of the sheep variable premium scheme. We have achieved that

objective. This, together with the decision on the variable premium arrangements for 1991, will enable producers to plan ahead for the coming marketing year.

DEFENCE

Swimming Pool, Rowner

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the swimming pool at Rowner, Gosport, which is currently leased from his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Rowner swimming pool in Gosport is part of a privately funded naval recreation centre. I understand that it is due to close in March 1991.

Wormhoudt Massacre

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on facilities provided by his Department for the West German prosecuting authorities to study the closed British file on the Wormhoudt massacre; and if he has yet been informed what use is to be made of the information.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As the hon. Member is aware, the public prosecutor from Lubeck has visited this country and examined all the relevant material in our records: I have not heard what use he may wish to make of information gained from them.

Service Personnel, Northern Ireland

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total expenditure on deploying British service personnel in Northern Ireland for each year between 1969 and 1989; and what this expenditure was as a percentage of the total defence budget during the same period.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not possible to make a precise estimate of the total expenditure on maintaining forces in Northern Ireland as no detailed records are maintained for this particular purpose. However, since financial year 1981-82 we have undertaken an annual costing of the resources required to fulfil those tasks which relate directly to the emergency. The information is as follows:

Financial Year	*Extra costs at outturn prices*	*Extra costs as percentage of the Defence Budget*
	£ million	
1981-82	149	1·2
1982-83	143	1·0
1983-84	141	0·9
1984-85	121	0·7
1985-86	135	0·8
1986-87	144	0·8
1987-88	168	0·9
1988-89	225	1·1
1989-90	201	1·0

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the number of British service personnel deployed in Northern Ireland at 31 December, for each year between 1969 and 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of British service personnel deployed in Northern Ireland in each year from 1969 to 1989 are as follows:

	Regular Forces Total	*RN/RM*	*Army*	*RAF*	*UDR*
1969	4,902	515	2,926	1,461	—
1970	8,816	259	7,245	1,312	3,326
1971	11,100	128	10,410	562	4,151
1972	15,323	1,661	12,949	713	6,741
1973	18,382	302	17,250	830	9,098
1974	16,991	266	15,827	898	7,816
1975	15,732	287	14,564	881	7,676
1976	15,627	302	14,454	871	7,793
1977	15,427	221	14,262	944	7,616
1978	15,287	198	14,159	930	7,812
1979	13,704	143	12,727	834	7,761
1980	13,389	797	11,970	622	7,425
1981	12,143	124	11,114	905	7,431
1982	11,799	118	10,885	796	7,350
1983	11,357	135	10,375	847	7,026
1984	10,260	131	9,294	835	6,929
1985	10,222	162	9,180	880	6,468
1986	10,090	184	8,912	994	6,508
1987	11,158	191	9,920	1,047	6,535
1988	10,887	163	9,645	1,079	6,364
1989	10,975	139	9,695	1,141	6,312
1990	10,977	234	9,578	1,165	6,208

The manpower numbers in the table are for 1 January, except for 1969, 1970 and 1971 which are as at 1 July. Recruitment to the UDR was authorised to commence on 1 January 1970.

Scottish Regiments

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Scottish regiments have been disbanded or amalgamated with others in the past 25 years; if he has any proposals to disband or amalgamate any existing Scottish regiments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Two regular Scottish cavalry and infantry regiments have been disbanded or amalgamated since 1965: the last regular battalion of the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) was disbanded in 1968; and the Royal Scots Greys were amalgamated with the 3rd Carabiniers (Prince of Wales Dragoon Guards)—a Welsh regiment—to form the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers and Greys) in 1971.

I cannot comment on the future of any particular regiments at this stage. Work on options for change is continuing.

Local Government Finance

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to providing further financial assistance to service personnel to pay the community charge beyond the arrangements that have already been made.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no plans to alter the present arrangements for assistance to personnel in service accommodation who face high community charges. Service personnel will, however, benefit from any changes which apply to other members of the population in similar circumstances.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to exempting service personnel from the community charge.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It was decided at a very early stage that service personnel would in general be liable for the community charge in the same way as other members of the community.

United States Bases

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of United States bases in the United Kingdom; and if he will list them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following 67 bases and facilities have been made available for use by United States forces in the United Kingdom:

Main Operating Bases
RAF Alconbury
RAF Bentwaters
RAF Fairford[1]
RAF Lakenheath
RAF Mildenhall
RAF Upper Heyford
RAF Woodbridge

Cruise Missile Bases
RAF Greenham Common

Standby Deployment Bases
RAF Sculthorpe
RAF Wethersfield[2]

Storage/Support Facilities
RAF Bicester
RAF Brawdy
RAF Burtonwood
RAF Caerwent
RAF Chelveston
RAF Chilwell
Eastcote
Felixstowe
RAF Feltwell
Framlington
High Wycombe Air Station (Daws Hill)
Holy Loch
RAF Hullavington
RAF Hythe
RAF Kemble
London USN Europe HQ
RAF Machrihanish
Marchwood
RAF Molesworth
Oakington
RAF Ruislip
RAF Spadeadam
RAF St. Mawgan
RAF Upwood
RAF Welford
RAF Watton

Contingency Wartime Hospitals
RAF Chessington
RAF Arbroath
RAF Kirknewton
RAF Lanark
RAF Little Rissington
RAF Locking
RAF Nocton Hall

Communications Facilities
Aberdeen
RAF Barford St. John
RAF Barkway
Botley Hill
Bovingdon
RAF Chicksands
Coldblow
Christmas Common
RAF Croughton
Daventry
Dunkirk
RAF Edzell
Great Bromley
RAF Inverbervie
RAF Kinnabeer
Latherton
Martlesham
Mormond Hill
Fork Murkle
RAF Swingate
RAF Thurso
RAF Uxbridge

NATO Armaments Depots
Broughton Moor
Glen Douglas

The following Royal Air Force and Procurement Executive airfields, all of which have sufficient operating facilities to enable them to fulfil their role, are allocated for use as collocated operating bases by United States forces:

Collocated Operating Bases
Abingdon
Benson
Boscombe Down
Brawdy
Coltishall
Cottesmore
Finninglay
Odiham
Scampton
Waddington
Wittering

Notes
(1) RAF Fairford will become a Standby Deployment Base on 7 August 1990
(2) RAF Wethersfield will be returned to MOD control on 1 October 1990.

Moray Firth

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether a maritime exclusion zone has been declared in or near the Moray firth in the last month.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Menwith Hill

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the allocation of expenditure for Menwith Hill development in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Menwith Hill is operated by the United States Department of Defense. I am unable to comment on its expenditure plans for the site.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Alan Clark: Of the 4,073 civil servants holding the rank of principal—(grade 7) and above, 509 are graduates of Oxford or Cambridge and 2,348 are graduates of other universities.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Chambers of Commerce

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies he has conducted on the roles and influence of chambers of commerce in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other countries of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does, however, take a close interest in the activities of chambers of commerce in this country. In particular, he has been kept informed by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce over recent months of its plans to strengthen the existing chambers movement in the United Kingdom and to place its operations on a sounder, more coherent footing. He and I welcome the positive moves by the chambers to improve and extend the services they provide their members. We are sure that they can do and are doing much valuable work.

Investment

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has to improve the input of large institutional investors into limited companies.

Mr. Redwood: I assume that the question refers to the influence which large shareholders can have over company management. It is for them to use as they see fit, and my right hon. Friend welcomes the current public debate on ways in which shareholders can generally make constructive use of their influence, particularly in giving weight to longer-term performance.

European Trade

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet his European counterparts to discuss Britain's trade with the rest of Europe.

Mr. Redwood: Ministers meet their European counterparts on a regular basis to discuss a range of issues of common interest.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on his policy towards the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement in the context of the textile industry.

Mr. Redwood: Negotiations concerning the MFA are being handled by the EC. The United Kingdom Government have set out in several debates the EC's preferred method of phasing out the multi-fibre arrangement over a transitional period and the need in parallel to strengthen GATT rules and disciplines. The negotiating group on textiles and clothing (in which the Commission speaks on behalf of the Community) is charged with reaching a draft framework agreement by the end of this month.

Iraq

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table of United Kingdom trade and overseas aid figures with Iraq for the years 1983 to 1989 inclusive.

Mr. Redwood: Visible United Kingdom exports to and imports from Iraq for the years 1983 to 1989 inclusive were as follows:

£ million

	Exports	*Imports*[1]
1983	400	96
1984	343	77
1985	445	293
1986	444	250
1987	272	324
1988	412	176
1989	450	93

[1] Country of origin.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

The United Kingdom does not give overseas aid to Iraq.

LINK Scheme

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the original budget for the LINK scheme; how much has so far been spent; how much higher education institutions were expected to generate from industrial contracts; and what their performance has been against such targets.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The orginal target for the LINK scheme was £420 million, with half the funding to be provided by industry and half by Government. To date 24 programme areas of research have been approved, committing a total expenditure from Government of £160 million, provided that industry comes forward with a matching £160 million for individual projects. Most of the 65 research projects currently under way have become active only within the last 12 months. Industrial grants are paid in arrears, after costs have been incurred, and claims might not be submitted for up to 12 months after the work has been done. Consequently, the actual expenditure to the end of March this year is only around £7 million, but this is expected to increase significantly during the current financial year.

Higher education institutions are involved in about 60 of the 65 active projects. The total value of these projects is over £37 million, and it is estimated that higher education institutions will get about half the total Government funding for these projects.

The LINK scheme was set up to encourage collaborative research between industry and the whole of the science base. While no specific targets were formulated for how much higher education institutions were expected to generate from industrial contracts, HEIs have secured the major share of support for science base partners in projects under LINK.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Forth: So far as is readily ascertainable, 201 and 701 respectively. The latter figure includes both other universities and institutions.

Engineering and the National Economy

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to engineering and the national economy to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 16 to 20 July.

Telecommunications Council

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Telecommunications Council on 28 June.

Mr. Forth: The main item for discussion was a proposed Council directive under article 100A of the treaty of Rome, aimed at establishing full mutual recognition between member states of type approval procedures for telecommunications terminal equipment.

The Council reached political agreement by qualified majority, on the basis of a compromise text promoted by the Irish presidency, to a common position on this directive. This was after difficult negotiations over the linked issues of the scope of the directive and procedures for determining requirements as to the interworking of equipment.

The Government supported this outcome as striking an acceptable balance between the regulation which is necessary to protect the public telecommunications network and further significant liberalisation of the Community market in telecommunications terminal equipment.

Other significant items discussed included the preliminary consideration given to the role of the Community in assisting the development of telecommunications in eastern Europe and to the work in progress within the Community in preparation for a Green Paper on developments in the postal sector.

Unlisted Securities

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to be able to publish proposals for changes in the law governing offers of unlisted securities.

Mr. Redwood: A consultative document is being published today outlining proposals for implementing part V of the Financial Services Act 1986 and European Community directive 89/298 concerning the prospectus to be published when transferable securities are offered to the public. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

The proposals are designed to reshape and simplify the arrangements for the issue of securities, while ensuring that investors continue to be sufficiently protected against deceptive, misleading and unscrupulous practices. The proposals will bring about a significant degree of deregulation by narrowing the range of offers which require the publication of a full prospectus. They will require prospectuses and other documents offering securities to be pertinent, and will enable companies based in the United Kingdom to secure mutual recognition of prospectuses, to be vetted by the International Stock Exchange, as well as of listing particulars. Where prospectuses are not required, approval of the offer documents by a person authorised under the Financial Services Act, subject to the rules of the SIB, will be needed. My aim is to simplify the arrangements, and then to ensure that they are rigorously enforced.

Cosmetics

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to compel manufacturers of cosmetics to list the ingredients contained in their skin care products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The European Commission will shortly be publishing proposals to amend the cosmetics directive and we understand that these will require full ingredient labelling of cosmetics. I shall consider these proposals when they are published.

Dunsdale Securities

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply of 26 June to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), *Official Report*, column *129*, on what dates the application and monitoring returns submitted by Dunsdale Securities were verified by an auditor.

Mr. Redwood: Auditors' reports accompanying licence applications were submitted to the Department on 28 July 1983, 6 August 1984, 30 July 1986 and 3 August 1987. Annual monitoring returns, giving information on the handling of clients' money and investments during the previous licence period, were verified by an auditor on 23 March 1984, 3 October 1984, 20 May 1985, 26 March 1986, 17 March 1987 and 20 April 1988.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps are being taken to ascertain how much of the investors' money apparently missing from the assets of Dunsdale Securities disappeared during the period that his Department was the supervisory regulatory body.

Mr. Redwood: The investigations being carried out by the Serious Fraud Office cover the whole period during which Dunsdale carried on business.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at what date his Department or any self-regulatory organisation had the first warning about possible problems at Dunsdale Securities.

Mr. Redwood: My Department was first aware of problems at Dunsdale Securities on 6 June this year. I understand that FIMBRA was alerted on the afternoon of 5 June.

Self-regulatory Organisations

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with the regulatory authorities as to whether previous convictions should be looked into by all self-regulatory organisations and recognised professional bodies.

Mr. Redwood: Appropriate arrangements exist for checking whether people seeking authorisation to carry on investment business have been convicted of any offence.

Auditors Panel

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to promote the development of a panel of auditors approved by the Securities and Investments Board or individual self-regulatory organisations.

Mr. Redwood: That is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board and the self-regulatory organisations. All auditors are subject to professional standards and their own regulatory requirements.

COCOM

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment has been made of the need to change the COCOM regulations;

(2) what changes have occurred in the COCOM regulations in the last 12 months.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Meriennydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 6 July, column 755.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding increased charges for export insurance by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* I have received a number of representations about possible increases to ECGD's premium rates for project insurance from exporters and other interested parties. Despite the fact that I have made no proposals, due consideration will be given to these in formulating future policy.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the provision against loss in (i) the short-term, (ii) the medium-term and (iii) the long-term business of the Export Credits Guarantee Department and of the main export credit insurers in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* West Germany, *(d)* France and *(e)* Italy, as shown in the 1988-89 financial year.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* ECGD's loss provisions are shown in its 1988-89 trading account (Cmnd 153). For reasons of commercial confidentiality these do not distinguish between categories of business. Comparable figures in respect of the other countries are not available.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 13 July 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

PE Teachers

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide details of the number of places for those seeking to train as physical education teachers following the major planning exercise announced in December 1989; and whether he has any plans to increase the number of places further.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend announced aggregate intake numbers for initial teacher training for the three-year period 1991-92 to 1993-94 in April this year. Aggregate intake numbers have been increased for physical education for the triennium and have been set at 750 for each year. There are no plans further to increase the number of places available.

School Meals

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the school meals census for autumn 1989 to be published.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information on school meal arrangements is now collected with the annual schools census each January. Information for January 1989 was published in "Statistics of Education Schools 1989", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Research

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision is made to cover the overheads of academic research projects funded by the research councils; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of these provisions in covering real overhead costs.

Mr. Jackson: Under the dual support system, the overhead costs of projects funded by the research councils at universities are met from the universities' general funds.

It is for the Universities Funding Council to advise Government on the adequacy of the public funding it receives and distributes to the universities in the form of block grants in support of research and teaching.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans there are to recruit and train more staff for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Most of the 60 extra staff requested by the chairman of the board and recommended by the Home Affairs Select Committee in January (Second Report: Session 1989-90—HC92) are in post and have completed their basic training. The rest are expected to be in post by the end of July.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when working conditions and staff accommodation in the offices of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board are to be reviewed and modernised.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the office in Glasgow, where most of the board's staff are based, is already decorated and furnished to a good standard. The board's London offices, which are modern and suit the board's needs, are to be redecorated shortly.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from organisations concerning the figures used to assess new allocations of staff to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: We have received no outside representations, but officials have discussed with the Home Office trade union side concerns about the level of output expected now that the board has been given more staff.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to allocate a larger percentage of the staff of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to London.

Mr. John Patten: The relocation of posts from London to Glasgow was based on our assessment that the board could work more economically and efficiently if as much of its administrative work was transferred to Glasgow as could practically and conveniently be done there. This remains our approach, which is why the 60 new staff have been recruited predominantly in Glasgow. The board, which is responsible for managing its own operations, keeps check of the balance of staff and work between the two offices.

Rape

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the trend in the number of reported rape cases in the last 10 years;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of rapes each year which are not reported.

Mr. John Patten: The numbers of offences of rape recorded by the police in England and Wales in the years 1979 to 1988 are published in table 2.9 of the "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1988" (Cm 847); the figure for 1989 is published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 10/90.

Information on reporting and recording of sexual offences is published in table A.2 of "The 1988 British Crime Survey" (Home Office research study 111) and on rape in Table 2 of "Concerns about rape" (Home Office research study 106). Copies of all these publications are available in the Library.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to protect the rights of the victim in rape cases in order to achieve a decrease in the number of unreported rape cases.

Mr. John Patten: We have already strengthened and extended the law against public identification of complainants in rape cases; and we have changed the rules of court to stop routine disclosure of the addresses of witnesses on their statements. We are considering with the Law Society what more can be done to prevent misuse of certain witness statements which must be given to the defendant.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the minimum sentence for rape at present; and whether there are any plans to change this.

Mr. John Patten: The maximum penalty for rape is life imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has given detailed guidance on sentencing for rape, which indicates that a sentence of five years imprisonment should be the starting point for an adult found guilty of rape, without any aggravating or mitigating features. We have no plans to introduce a minimum penalty.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Industrial Deaths

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General if, following the referral of the death of Paul Elvin at Euston station in 1988 to the Crown prosecution service, he will make a statement about his intentions with regard to other cases of industrial death where there is an alleged element of criminal negligence.

The Attorney-General: It is the responsibility of the investigating authority to determine whether the alleged element of criminal negligence is so serious that the Crown Prosecution Service should be invited to consider the eveidence. In the case of Paul Elvin no new inquiry was began but, exceptionally, I asked the Director of Public Prosecutions himself to consider the evidence that was prepared for the purposes of a prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act.

TRANSPORT

Northolt Airport

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to change current usage of Northolt airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: RAF Northolt is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. The airfield is also used by business aircraft, and the 1985 airports policy White Paper identified Northolt as having an important role to play in helping to meet demand for business aviation facilities in the London area. In line with that, we are seeking to establish a civil aviation enclave at Northolt, to serve the needs of the business aviation user more effectively.

Marine Surveyors

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* a summary of the results of the seven prosecutions initiated by his Department's marine surveyors, referred to in his reply to the hon. Member for Harborough on 26 April, *Official Report*, column *264*.

Mr. McLoughlin: The results of the seven prosecutions referred to in my reply to the hon. Member for Harborough on 26 April, *Official Report*, column *264*, were as follows:

(i) failure to supply master with a dangerous goods declaration for explosives, contravention of Classification and Labelling of Explosives Regulations 1983: shipper fined £1,000, owners fined £250, £150 and £100 on three counts;

(ii) failure to carry a valid load line certificates: owner fined £25;

(iii) defective lifeboats, and officers certificate lacking suitable dangerous cargo endorsements: master fined £7,500, with £3,000 costs;

(iv) defects identified by port state control inspection: case dropped;

(v) failure to comply with MS (Radio) (Fishing Vessel) Rules 1974: case dropped;

(vi) prosecution of master and owners under the Deck Officer Regulations and Load Line Act 1967: case still under consideration;

(vii) prosecution of master and owners for carrying more than 12 pasengers without a passenger certificate: case still under consideration.

United Kingdom Shipping

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of Transport, pursuant to his replies of 18 April, *Official Report*, columns *914-15*, what factors account for the reduction in the British fleet and in employment in the United Kingdom shipping industry being greater than the world average.

Mr. McLoughlin: The oversupply of ships on a world scale reduced the financial returns available from shipping, and British operators withdrew from the unprofitable sectors more rapidly than some of their foreign counterparts. Some other British operators have seen commercial advantage in flagging out to other registers. Changes in trading patterns have also had a particular effect on the British shipping industry, firstly because the availability of North sea oil reduced the need for imports from further afield, and secondly because a drop in oil prices resulted in a reduction in exploration related shipping activity from 1984-85.

The joint working party with the General Council of British Shipping announced by my right hon. Friend on 24 May at column 288 is including in its work an assessment of the competitive position of the British shipping industry and factors which may currently deter owners from placing their ships on the British register.

United Kingdom Shipping

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, columns *914-15*, if he will take steps to reduce the cost disadvantages facing United Kingdom shipping operators.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend announced, on 24 May, *Official Report*, column 288, the setting up of a joint working party with the General Council of British Shipping to take a wide look at the circumstances in which the British shipping industry operates, including the main obstacles to the use of the British flag.

When the working party has reported we will consider what action, if any, should be taken.

Runways, Heathrow

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to authorise mixed mode runway use at Heathrow airport; and whether he has commissioned any research or computer modelling on this matter.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have no plans to do so, but this is one of a number of issues that my officials are discussing with the CAA.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Per Capita Income

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the average per capita income of the low-income countries, excluding China and India, has been for each of the last 10 years; and what are the corresponding figures for the industrialised market economy countries.

Mrs. Chalker: The average gnp per capita for the years 1979-88 of (1) the countries classified by OECD as low-income countries (excluding China and India) and (2) the 17 members of the OECD's development assistance committee was:

Year	*Low income countries (excluding China and India) GNP per capita US dollars*	*Development Assistance Committee member countries GNP per capita US dollars*
1979	264	9,674
1980	391	10,694
1981	371	10,740
1982	348	10,643
1983	315	10,998
1984	237	11,551
1985	313	12,150
1986	323	14,771
1987	263	17,033
1988	344	18,911

Sources
OECD—DAC Chairman's Report, 1981-89
World Bank Atlas 1989

The low-income group has included different countries during the 10 years, both because of changes in individual countries' economic performance and because of revaluations in the per capita GNP threshhold for classification as a low-income country.

ENVIRONMENT

World Heritage Sites

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he is giving to the designation as World Heritage sites of *(a)* the Cairngorms area, and *(b)* other areas.

Mr. Trippier: It is in the first instance for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to consider whether application should be made for World Heritage listing for the Cairngorms area.

The Lake District has been nominated for inclusion on the list this year and will be considered by the World Heritage Committee in December. Other possible future nominations are currently being reviewed by a group of experts chaired by English Heritage.

National Rivers Authority

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the authorised staff establishment of the National Rivers Authority headquarters *(a)* at its formation, *(b)* currently and *(c)* projected.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government's view was originally that, at least for an initial period, the National Rivers Authority head office should not exceed 60 staff. Following further consideration we agreed that a study by consultants should be commissioned to review the optimum size of the head office, and that meanwhile an additional 21 staff could be recruited to meet particularly urgent needs. The authority is in the process of filling these additional posts, and the study is under way.

Commissioners for Local Administration

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he gives any guidance to commissioners for local adminstration about holding meetings at the request of a local authority, pursuant to a report into its activities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. Commissioners for Local Administration (local ombudsman) are entirely independent of Government in their handling of individual case.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what services are provided on behalf of the Government by local authorties at Heathrow airport.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No local authority acts as agent for the Government in providing services at Heathrow airport; such functions as they discharge there are their own responsibility.

Housing Associations

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will review the procedure for registering housing associations and particularly those that are friendly societies and have links with the development industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The registration of housing associations is the statutory responsibility of the Housing Corporation. Under the statute, the corporation has power to register only those associations, including those which are friendly societies, which do not trade for profit.

Construction Agreements

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list all construction agreements and contracts entered into by his Department in the years 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Chope: No. In the period referred to, my department placed in excess of 50,000 contracts for building and construction work.

Textile Finishers

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the problems arising in textile finishers' effluent from the presence of pentacholorophenol or its salts in imported grey fabric which is processed in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that his pollution inspectorate applies the same regulations on textile finishers' effluent as in other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has asked me to reply.

The EC Dangerous Substances Directive 86/280/EEC has, since 1 January 1988, required all surface waters to meet a quality standard in respect of pentachlorophenol (PCP) of 2 microgrammes per litre. The Commission will require uniform compliance with the directive across the Community.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, on behalf of the Secretary of State, is currently reviewing a number of trade effluent consents granted to companies where PCP may be present in their effluent. In reviewing these discharges, the Department is obliged to consider the representations of both the discharger and the statutory sewage undertaker as well as having regard to the need to ensure that the quality standard is met in the eventual receiving water before reaching his decision.

However, many existing waters already contain traces of PCP and this constrains further discharges, in some cases ruling out any further discharges from existing or proposed processes. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will therefore ensure that, as required by article 3 of the directive, the best technical means available are applied to the treatment of any discharge. For both existing and new discharges there are a number of practical measures and options available to enable the required discharge condition and therefore the quality standard in the relevant receiving water to be achieved.

Local Authorities (Accountability)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to introduce any proposals to allow local councils to be more accountable to the local people other than by local elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer, 9 July 1990]*. One of the principal aims of the changes in local government finance introduced in April was to increase local accountability.

PRIME MINISTER

Child Care

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Prime Minister which Government Departments made allocations for child care facilities in their 1989-90 public expenditure bids; and what proportion of each Department's bid this constituted.

The Prime Minister: Information on the extent to which departments made public expenditure provision in 1989-90 for child care facilities for their staff is not held centrally.

There are already four nurseries in operation in Departments and agencies with a further three planned to open later this year.

Parliamentary Committees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list those occasions since 1979 on which a Minister has refused to give evidence to departmental or other parliamentary committees.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally.

Advisers

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister how many of her advisers paid from public funds who are not career civil servants were appointed following employment in the public relations field immediately before their employment in her office.

The Prime Minister: None.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Birmingham Six

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last discussed the question of the Birmingham Six with the Irish Government.

Mr. Cope: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and is not within the ambit of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but the matter was referred to during a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 30 November 1989.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 2 July 1990]*. A total of 11,149 documents, in the form of individual files, was passed to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) in 1989 by Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office. The censoring of files is not permitted and they must be transferred in their entirety since it is not permitted to retain files in part. Files not passed to PRONI are retained by the Departments and filed judged by PRONI not to merit permanent preservation are destroyed. While our procedures provide that all records are accounted for, the percentage of documents retained or destroyed could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets were fired in Northern Ireland in 1989; in what circumstances and in what location the bullets were fired; and how many persons were injured as a result.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* A total of 937 plastic baton rounds were fired in 1989. I shall write to the hon. Member giving the detail requested and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Sexual Offences

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to what inquiries have been made into the suicides of two men in late 1989 following their arrest on charges related to their homosexual activities.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* The Chief Constable has advised me that in July 1989 two men committed suicide following police investigations into their involvement in offences of gross indecency. Inquiries were made by the police into the circumstances of these deaths and full reports were made to the appropriate coroner who at the inquest into each death concluded that death was by drowning.

CIVIL SERVICE

Government Forms

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list those recommendations of the review report on the forms Government send to business which have now been implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Departments have been encouraged to implement those recommendations of the review which apply to them and a full report on achievements will be included in the next progress report on forms to the Prime Minister in autumn 1991. More generally, since 1982, 171,309 forms have been reviewed of which 36,004 have been scrapped and 57,785 redesigned. This has resulted in savings of approximately £15 million.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Energy Bills (VAT)

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the expected yield from the imposition of value added tax on *(a)* gas and *(b)* electricity bills where supplies are made to domestic premises for business purposes.

Mr. Ryder: The revenue yield will be negligible. This is because many businesses operating from domestic premises will continue to receive zero-rated supplies under arrangements designed to simplify the administration of taxing fuel and power. VAT-registered businesses which are charged tax will be able to reclaim it under the input tax credit mechanism.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The Treasury has 130 graduates of Oxford or Cambridge and 103 from other universities or polytechnics.

Inland Revenue (Relocation)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the decision to relocate 1,800 Inland Revenue jobs from London and the south-east in 1992, what information he has regarding the projected number of vacancies in the network in London and the south-east at the time of the main move; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* It was announced on 24 July, at column *542*, and 22 November 1989 at columns *1-2*, that the work of 1,600 PAYE staff in London and the south-east would be moved gradually to other parts of the United Kingdom over the period November 1989 to mid-1992.

The programme was undertaken, in part, to tackle the effects of staff turnover rather than the level of vacancies, which in 1989 was low.

THE ARTS

Theatres, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Minister of the Arts whether he intends to meet the Merseyside Arts Association and the Arts Council to discuss the future funding of professional theatre in Liverpool.

Mr. Luce: This is a matter for the Arts Council and Merseyside Arts.

Regional Arts Associations

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the percentage by which grants from the Arts Council to the regional arts associations have increased since 1979.

Mr. Luce: Between 1979-80 and 1990-91 the Arts Council's grant to the regional arts associations increased from £6,362,017 to £33,146,000. This represents a cash increase of 521 per cent. and a real terms increase of 244 per cent.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about his proposals to enlarge the role of the regional arts associations.

Mr. Luce: My announcement on 13 March was welcomed by the House, the Arts Council and the regional arts associations. I have also received a number of other messages of support.

"Percent for Art" Schemes

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what sums the Arts Council has invested in "Percent for Art" schemes in each of the last three years; and how much is budgeted for each of the next three years;

(2) what sums the Arts Council has invested in the infrastructure necessary to develop "Percent for Art" schemes.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The Arts Council does not invest directly in individual "Percent for Art" schemes but encourages developers through education and example. It estimates that it has spent some £32,000 in this way since 1988. The success of its campaigning has created an increased demand for expertise and the council is now considering how best to meet this demand. It is already committed to spending £30,000 over the next three years to support the creation of new posts in four local authorities aimed at introducing the "Percent for Art" policy within the planning system. The council is meeting half the cost of these posts.

British Library

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the value of the land to be sold on the north side of the new British library site at St. Pancras.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The final value will depend on how much is surplus and the use to which the land can be put. A 5 acre area of land at the north end of the site was estimated in 1989 to be worth between £4·5 million and £6 million.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the estimated value of the Somers Town goods yard site at St. Pancras.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* It has not been necessary to obtain a valuation for the whole site.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the cost of site preparation of the land on the north side of the new British Library site at St. Pancras and its area in relation to the area to be occupied by the British Library.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The cost of removing the existing railway structures from the 2·7 acre strip at the northern end of the site totals £300,000. The remainder of the site, including the area to be occupied by the British library, comprises 9·8 acres.

EMPLOYMENT

Cobalt

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the extent to which employers are currently complying with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations in relation to control of cobalt exposure and provision of medical facilities to employees exposed to cobalt in the manufacture and use of tungsten carbide, and on the extent to which conditions have improved since the last Health and Safety Executive internal report on the matter.

Mr. Nicholls: Data available within the Health and Safety cover a special project national exercise on cobalt exposure in the hard metal industry for the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1990; it is not possible without disproportionate cost to give data covering just the second year.

During the overall period, 122 premises were visited where cobalt was used; some more than once. By the end of the two-year period, HSE inspectors considered control to be satisfactory and in full compliance with the COSHH Regulations at 106 premises. For seven premises results of atmospheric monitoring are not yet available. At nine premises, exposure was judged to be inadequately controlled; enforcement action is continuing at these premises to ensure compliance with COSHH.

HSE does not have comprehensive information on the provision of medical facilities at these premises.

Asbestos

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the workplaces known to his Department with sprayed asbestos on the structural steelwork.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed claimants in each month since 9 October 1989 have *(a)* been issued with warning letters for not actively seeking work, *(b)* had their claims referred to an adjudication officer for not actively seeking work and *(c)* had their claims (i) allowed and (ii) disallowed; where the claim has been disallowed, how many were (A) successful and (B) unsuccessful in claiming reduced income support; where an adjudication decision is pending, how many have been (1) successful and (2) unsuccessful in claiming reduced income support; how many have been referred to an adjudication officer for refusing employment; how many of those so referred had their benefit disqualified; and if he will provide the figures for Great Britain, each region and area adjudication sections in London.

Mr. Nicholls: The employment service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Gentleman regarding the number of claimants issued with warning letters for not actively seeking work. That part of the question asking for numbers of claimants who were successful unsuccessful in claiming reduced income support should be directed to the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of unemployed claimants in Great Britain, each region and the London employment service Areas, who were referred to an adjudication officer on grounds of voluntary unemployment, in the quarters ended December 1988, March 1989 and September 1989, categorised according to each reason for disqualification; and how many in each case have *(a)* been disqualified and *(b)* not been disqualified.

Mr. Nicholls: The Employment Service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Gentleman.

WALES

Computers (Schools)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the level of integration of computers on to the school timetable in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available. The level of integration of information technology across the curriculum varies with such factors as the age of pupils, the phase of education, and subjects timetabled as well as access to computer equipment, and is not statistically quantifiable.

Maternity Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Wales if he will list the hospitals in Wals which had consultant obstetric and/or general practitioner maternity beds in 1980, 1985 or the most recent year for which information is available and the numbers of beds of each type in each hospital in each year.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the table:

	1980		*1989-90*	
Hospital	*Obstetric*	*GP Maternity*	*Obstetric*	*GP Maternity*
Clwyd				
Catherine Gladstone	—	12·0	—	8·0
Chatsworth House	—	17·0	—	—
Chirk	—	8·0	—	—
Colwyn Bay Community	—	—	—	3·0
Colwyn Bay Maternity	—	13·1	—	—
HM Stanley	47·0	—	52·0	—
Llangollen	—	5·0	—	—
Ruthin	—	1·9	—	—
Ysbyty Maelor	66·0	—	62·9	—
East Dyfed				
Amman Valley	20·0	—	—	—
Bronglais	16·0	—	16·0	—
West Wales General	32·0	—	32·0	—
Gwent				
County	36·0	12·0	24·0	6·0
Nevill Hall	31·3	0·7	44·0	9·3
Royal Gwent	84·0	11·0	58·7	11·0
Gwynedd				
Bryn Beryl	—	5·9	—	5·0
Dolgellau and Barmouth	—	10·0	—	7·0
Gors Maternity	—	15·5	—	—
St. Davids	59·7	—	61·0	—
Towyn	—	3·0	—	3·0
Mid Glamorgan				
Aberdare	26·2	5·0	25·0	5·0
Bridgend General	50·0	—	—	—
Caerphilly Miners	38·0	—	38·8	—
East Glamorgan	50·0	—	45·3	—
Llwynypia	32·0	—	13·9	—
Maesteg	—	14·0	—	—
Merthyr General	12·1	—	25·0	—
Princess of Wales	—	—	51·0	—
St. Tydfils	13·3	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire				
Withybush	30·0	20·0	30·9	8·9
Powys				
Brecon War Memorial	—	6·0	—	6·0
Builth Cottage	—	4·0	—	3·0
Knighton	—	2·0	—	2·0
Llandrindod Wells	—	7·0	—	4·0
Llandiloes	—	6·0	—	5·0
Machynlleth and District	—	2·0	—	2·0
Montgomery Infirmary	—	6·0	—	5·7
Victoria Memorial	—	8·0	—	8·0
South Glamorgan				
St. David's	86·0	2·0	64·0	2·0
University Hospital of Wales	71·0	—	70·7	—
West Glamorgan				
Gorseinon	11·5	—	12·0	—
Mt. Pleasant	38·7	—	—	—
Morriston	39·4	—	75·6	—
Neath General	62·0	—	40·4	—

Cataract Treatment

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence collected and used by his Department underlay the decision to locate the specialist centre for the treatment of cataracts in Wales in Gwynedd health authority.

Mr. Grist: The ophthalmology treatment centre, while open to patients from the whole of Wales, is intended primarily to solve a particular waiting times problem in north Wales.

The decision to locate the treatment centre in Gwynedd was made on the basis of proposals received from health authorities and on the results of a special survey conducted in July 1989, which estimated that over 500 patients had been waiting more than four months for treatment for cataracts in Gwynedd and Clwyd at that date.

Financial Planning

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the financial years 1985-86 to 1989-90 the inflation figure his Department advised *(a)* district councils, *(b)* county councils and *(c)* health authorities in Wales to use in their advance planning and estimate making for each specific financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 9 July 1990.

Rivers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he intends to take to improve the classifications achieved by rivers in Wales in accordance with the National Water Council grading system.

Mr. Grist: We will be setting statutory water quality objectives for all rivers and estuaries in Wales in the light of the findings of the river quality survey presently being carried out by the National Rivers Authority and its subsequent advice.

Defence Installations

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria he uses for considering appeals from the decisions of local planning authorities where the proposals concern defence installations.

Mr. Grist: Each case is considered on its merits, having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations. All factors are carefully weighted before reaching a decision.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is now in a position to announce his decision on the future structure of community health councils in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes. Over 200 responses were received to the consultation paper which outlined our proposals for the reduction in the number of community health councils (CHCs) in Wales and other issues.

I have now completed my consideration of those responses and whilst recognising that support is evident for certain of the proposals I have taken full cognisance of the fact that the majority of those who replied were not in favour of the reduction in the number of CHCs to one per district health authority (DHA). In most cases it was felt that many DHAs in Wales covered too large an area, or had too large a population, to be adequately serviced by a single CHC.

I have therefore decided to retain 22 CHCs in Wales, comprised as they are at present. Nevertheless, I still feel that there are considerable advantages in CHCs coming together at times when dealing with DHAs on district-wide issues and will be suggesting that councils consider setting up joint committee systems such as that which is employed in Mid Glamorgan. It is also my intention to pursue certain of the other measures which were outlined in the paper and which I consider will be of benefit to the way in which CHCs operate. These measures will include the transfer of responsibility for the employment of all CHC staff from DHAs to the Welsh Health Common Services Authority and consideration of improved staff training; greater involvement in consumer attitudes and quality of care issues generally; production of forward plans of action; and the possible involvement of CHCs in the DHA and practitioner committee annual review procedures.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regulations

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many regulations his Department has introduced in each of the last three years.

Mr. Redwood: The number of statutory instruments (including regulations, rules and orders) made by my Department in each of the last three years was as follows:

	Number
1987	82
1988	120
1989	138

Some of these replace older regulations, and others have been necessary to fulfil our obligations to implement EC directives in connection with the single market programme.

Hi-tech Industries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what new initiatives he plans to encourage the growth of markets for British hi-tech industries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department encourages growth in all markets by promoting enterprise and by creating a climate in which industry can flourish. There are no plans at present for any specific new initiatives.

Research

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much of the money allocated to the Link research funding programme has had to be returned to the Exchequer due to lack of demand.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No money allocated to the Link research programme has had to be returned to the Exchequer. Once funding is committed to a Link project it will be made available as necessary.

The actual spend on Link projects lags significantly behind commitment. This is due to the time involved in industry and science based institutes concluding formal agreements to collaborate, together with the fact that industrial grants are paid in arrears. This situation is made worse by industry frequently taking up to 12 months after the work has taken place to submit claims.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criticisms of the Link funding rules have been received by his Department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Comments on Link, including its funding rules, have been made by the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, the Confederation of British Industry, the Engineering Council, and others. Their observations are currently being studied.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what changes are planned in the Link research funding rules.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None at present, although as with all such schemes, the rules are reviewed from time to time.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of the money allocated to the Link research funding research programme has been (*a*) spent and (*b*) committed, to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 24 programmes have been approved under the Link scheme targeting priority areas of research. £160 million has been committed by government to finance the research in these programmes providing industry comes forward with a matching £160 million for individual projects. To date 65 individual collaborative research projects have been agreed and are under way with a total commitment from government and industry of £37 million. Due to the time taken to establish collaborative projects and the delay in industry submitting claims for work undertaken the spend for the financial year 1989-90 was only around £7 million but this is expected to increase significantly during the course of the current financial year.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what factors account for the low take-up of the money allocated to the Link research funding project.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Whilst 24 Link programmes have been announced, most of the 65 current research projects under way have only become active within the last 12 months. For example, on 6 April 1989 there were only 12 active research projects, whereas by 29 May 1990 the number has risen to 65. In addition, on 29 May 1990 a further 57 were through all stages of technical approval and were awaiting final financial clearance or the Department was waiting for the industrial partners to satisfactorily conclude crucial collaborative agreements. The time delay between the approval of research programmes targeting a particular area and the conclusion of collaborative agreements between individual science based institutes and industry to proceed on a particular project is reflected in the actual Link spend being significantly behind the commitment. This is exacerbated by the fact that industrial grants are paid in arrears, that is after costs have been incurred and particularly in the early days of a project, claims may not be submitted for up to 12 months after the work has taken place. As a result the actual spend to date has been low but is expected to increase significantly during the course of this financial year.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for what proportion of projects funded under the European framework programme there is a United Kingdom academic partner and no United Kingdom industrial partner; and what are the reasons for this.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A fundamental objective of EC research and development collaboration is to encourage greater interaction between academic and industrial research in order to increase European competitiveness in world markets.

In general, United Kingdom industry has made considerable progress in participation in international collaboration and in winning funds from the EC research and development budget. With the greater emphasis in the 1990-94 framework programme on basic science, for example in biomedicine, health and the environment, United Kingdom universities and research establishments should be able to increase their already significant involvement in EC collaborative activities.

The split between United Kingdom industrial and academic involvement varies according to the content of individual research programmes and disproportionate effort would be required to extract this information on the 32 specific programmes under the 1987-91 framework programme.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the number of United Kingdom academics transferring their research ideas to the United Kingdom's competitors; and what factors account for this transfer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department makes no provision for the collection of information on the number of United Kingdom academics transferring their research ideas to the United Kingdom's competitors.

Dunsdale Securities

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what conclusions he has drawn about the quality of the flow of information between regulators and his Department in the light of the failure of Dunsdale Securities.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* Since the Securities and Investments Board and the self-regulating organisations took over responsibility for the regulation of investment businesses on 29 April 1988, there has been no requirement for them to keep the Department informed of their day-to-day dealings with particular firms. In cases where significant problems emerge, the regulators directly concerned of course keep my Department in close touch with developments, as has happened over Dunsdale Securities since 6 June 1990.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Deaf-Blind People

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how his Department is monitoring the extension of mobility allowance, on 9 April, to deaf-blind people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Apart from normal arrangements for monitoring mobility allowance claims, separate records are kept of the number of claims from people who are both deaf and blind, and of the outcome of these claims.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions, guidance and training has been given to examining doctors, members of medical boards and members of medical appeal tribunals on how to apply new regulations introduced on 9 April extending mobility allowance to deaf-blind people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 19 April at columns *1012-13*.

Autistic Children

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many autistic children have been granted mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available.

Pensioners

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the level of support for pensioners in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, taking into account other benefits which are applicable to pensioners.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the Department's publication, "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities (position at 1 January 1989)", a copy of which is in the Library. These tables set out the levels of benefit in the national currencies together with the sterling equivalent converted according to the OECD's purchasing power parity figure as explained in the introduction to the tables.

Income Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements have been made for an adjudication officer from his Department to assess whether an income support claimant should receive reduced income support under the hardship rules following a doubt over actively seeking work or availability on the basis of papers received from the employment service.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A hardship claim is automatically considered by an adjudication officer of the Department of Social Security when income support is suspended because of doubts as to whether a claimant is available for and actively seeking work. Such a claim is assessed on the individual's circumstances at the time, taking into account any other income and capital he has and any other relevant factors.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether an income support claimant appealing against a decision to suspend, disallow or disqualify on grounds of actively seeking work, refusal of employment or restricted availability, will have his or her case reviewed by his Department's or the Department of Employment's adjudication officers before submission to a social security appeals tribunal.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Any appeal received against an income support decision will lead to the case being re-examined by the income support adjudication officer before a submission is made to the social security appeals tribunal. However, a formal review will only be instigated if new information is provided which gives sufficient grounds for this course of action.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether income support claimants whose benefit has been suspended for two or more weeks as a result of actively seeking work or availability doubts who are in receipt of housing benefits are required to make a fresh claim for housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Where benefit is suspended and the local adjudication officer decides that hardship payments of income support are not appropriate, the claimant would be invited to make a fresh claim for housing benefit in order that entitlement can be determined in the light of the new circumstances.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has received any information on the operation of the rent officer arrangements within the housing benefit scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have today arranged for information on the operation of the rent officer procedures for housing benefit purposes to be made available in the Library. This information, which was produced by the Department of the Environment and covers England and Wales, is based on the period April 1989 (when the procedures were introduced) to December 1989 inclusive.

Youth Training

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether youth training is a training scheme approved by him for the purposes of section 20(1)(e) to (g) of the Social Security Act 1975.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 29 June 1990]* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has approved youth training, like its predecessor the youth training scheme, for the purposes of section 20(1)(e)-(g) of the Social Security Act 1975.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Assam Frontier Tea Ltd.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of India regarding the murder in Assam on 9 April of the chairman of the British-owned company, Assam Frontier Tea Ltd.

Mr. Sainsbury: We were saddened by the murder of Mr. Surendra Paul. British-owned tea companies have made their concerns about security in Assam known to us, and we have put these to the Indian Government. The Indian Government have confirmed publicly that they have asked the Assam authorities to take action.

Cyprus

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to the response by the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities to United Nations Security Council resolution 649 on the Cyprus problem; and whether he will urge both sides to resume intercommunal talks.

Mr. Maude: We will continue to give active support to the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus problem. We believe that the United Nations Security Council resolution 649 clearly maps out the way forward, and we maintain diplomatic contact with all parties in order to assist the United Nations' effort.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Newspapers

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make available a newspaper rack and daily newspapers for use of the staff and hon. Members on the Upper Committee Corridors.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Member knows newspapers are already provided in a number of general areas such as the Members' Tea Room, the Members' Smoking Room and the Library where Members can collectively make use of them. I will arrange for the hon. Member's suggestion to be considered.

SCOTLAND

Shop Premises

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to increase inspection of shop premises; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The food Safety Act 1990, which received Royal Assent on 29 June provides the necessary framework to enable inspections to be undertaken by local authority (district and islands councils) enforcement officials. The authorities will be required to have regard to codes of recommended practice issued by the Secretary of State for the execution and enforcement of the Act and of regulations and orders made under it.

Present measures will be further augmented and formalised next year by the EC Council directive on the official control of foodstuffs. Member states will require to operate a formal programme of inspections at all stages of food production, manufacture, processing, storage, transport, distribution and trade.

Strathclyde Police Authority

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civilian employees are employed by Strathclyde police authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* There were 1,941 civilians in post as at 1 April 1990 in Strathclyde police authority. This number includes nine and 63 civilians employed by the Scottish crime squad and the Scottish Criminal Record Office respectively.

Police Salaries

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the salaries of each police officer grade from constable to chief constable, giving details of incremental payments where applicable.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The following tables provide the current salary details of all police officer grades from constable to chief constable inclusive:

	Annual salary with effect from 1 September 1988	*Annual salary for new appointments between 1 September 1988 and 31 August 1989*	*Annual salary with effect from 1 September 1989*
	£	£	£
Constable			
On appointment	[2]9,063	[3]8,352	9,900
After 1 year	[2]9,690	—	10,587
[1]	11,406	[3]10,512	12,462
3	11,676	—	12,756
4	12,063	—	13,179
5	12,477	—	13,632
6	12,876	—	14,067
7	13,275	—	14,502
8	13,668	—	14,931
12	14,466	—	15,804
15	15,123	—	16,521

[1] Entry point for those aged 22 or over, who will move to the next point after three years' service.

[2] Only payable to those appointed prior to 1 September 1988—see next col. for rate payable to those appointed on or after 1 September 1988.

[3] Rate will cease to apply from 1 September 1989 when recipients will move to the appropriate main scale point in accordance with their length of service.

	Annual salary with effect from 1 September 1988		*Annual salary with effect from 1 September 1989*	
Sergeant				
On promotion	—	14,466	—	15,804
After 1 year	—	15,123	—	16,521
2	—	15,654	—	17,103
3	—	16,173	—	17,670
4	—	16,593	—	18,129
Inspector (London salaries in brackets)				
On promotion	16,593	(17,487)	18,129	(19,104)
After 1 year	17,112	(17,973)	18,696	(19,635)
2	17,784	(18,609)	19,428	(20,331)
3	18,309	(19,182)	20,004	(20,955)
4	18,840	(19,743)	20,583	(21,570)
Chief Inspector (London salaries in brackets)				
On promotion	18,840	(19,743)	20,583	(21,570)
After 1 year	19,368	(20,229)	21,159	(22,101)
2	19,896	(20,748)	21,735	(22,668)

	Annual salary with effect from 1 September 1988		Annual salary with effect from 1 September 1989	
3	20,424	(21,303)	22,314	(23,274)
4	20,958	(21,855)	22,896	(23,877)
Superintendent (London salaries in brackets)				
On promotion	25,629	(26,283)	27,999	(28,713)
After 1 year	26,283	(26,799)	28,713	(29,277)
2	26,934	(27,309)	29,424	(29,835)
3	27,831	(27,831)	30,405	(30,405)
Off-scale point	27,873	—	30,447	—
Chief Superintendent				
On promotion	—	28,494	—	31,131
After 1 year	—	28,902	—	31,575
2	—	29,550	—	32,283
3	—	30,255	—	33,054
Off-scale point	—	30,402	—	33,201
Assistant Chief Constables	—	33,591	—	36,699
Deputy Chief Constable				
Population band—				
up to 400,000	—	35,271	—	38,535
400,000- 500,000	—	35,271	—	38,535
500,000- 750,000	—	35,271	—	38,535
750,000-1,250,000	—	35,562	—	38,850
1,250,000-2,000,000	—	38,277	—	41,814
Over -2,000,000	—	40,722	—	44,487
Chief Constable				
Population band—				
up to 400,000	—	40,044	—	43,749
400,000- 500,000	—	41,058	—	44,856
500,000- 750,000	—	42,759	—	46,713
750,000-1,250,000	—	44,451	—	48,564
1,250,000-2,000,000	—	47,844	—	52,269
Over -2,000,000	—	50,901	—	55,608

Police Manpower

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the number of police employed in each Scottish police authority and the ratio of officers per head of population within each authority;

(2) if he will list the manpower strength in each police authority with a breakdown of male and female officers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* As at 31 March 1990 the figures were as follows:

Area	Male	Female	Total	Ratio of officers to population
Central	575	55	630	1:430
Dumfries and Galloway	319	29	348	1:425
Fife	688	67	755	1:457
Grampian	967	136	1,103	1:456
Lothian and Borders	2,249	233	2,482	1:341
Northern	581	50	631	1:434
Strathclyde	6,345	541	6,886	1:336
Tayside	936	76	1,012	1:388
SCOTLAND	12,660	1,187	13,847	1:368

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of police officers employed within the Hamilton division of Strathclyde police authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The total uniformed strength of Q division of Strathclyde police, within which Hamilton lies, is 413 officers. The number of officers on duty in particular areas at particular times varies according to the policing requirements.

Police Expenditure

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the total expenditure for each police authority in Scotland for each year since 1979, giving the ratio of expenditure per head of population.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The information is given in the table:

Police Expenditure

	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Lothian and Borders	Northern	Strathclyde	Tayside	All Scotland
1979-80 (1) £000	5,600	3,465	7,320	10,684	24,945	7,530	78,182	11,587	149,313
(2) £	21	24	22	23	29	29	32	29	29
1980-81 (1) £000	6,889	3,973	8,770	12,582	31,558	8,974	92,981	13,836	179,563
(2) £	25	28	26	27	37	34	38	35	35
1981-82 (1) £000	7,993	4,582	9,854	14,908	37,278	10,484	108,326	16,379	209,804
(2) £	29	32	29	31	44	39	45	41	41
1982-83 (1) £000	8,879	5,176	10,984	16,573	40,134	11,738	118,232	18,483	230,199
(2) £	33	35	32	34	47	43	49	47	45
1983-84 (1) £000	9,350	5,909	11,650	18,316	43,997	13,228	128,474	19,404	250,508
(2) £	35	40	34	37	52	49	54	49	49

	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Lothian and Borders	Northern	Strathclyde	Tayside	All Scotland
1984-85 (1) £000	10,668	6,108	13,709	19,521	49,243	13,826	138,631	21,178	272,884
(2) £	39	42	40	39	58	51	58	54	53
1985-86 (1) £000	10,686	6,810	13,602	21,467	50,208	14,041	140,161	22,025	279,000
(2) £	39	46	40	43	59	51	60	56	54
1986-87 (1) £000	11,775	7,320	15,657	23,385	54,106	15,444	150,319	24,520	302,526
(2) £	43	50	45	46	64	57	64	62	59
1987-88 (1) £000	13,486	8,344	16,784	25,865	56,230	16,936	168,722	26,273	332,640
(2) £	50	57	49	52	67	62	73	67	65
1988-89 (1) £000	15,459	9,377	18,728	28,865	61,996	18,406	177,442	28,169	358,442
(2) £	57	63	54	57	73	67	77	72	70
1989-90[1] (1) £000	17,314	10,101	20,795	32,686	72,564	21,338	200,604	31,070	406,472
(2) £	64	68	60	65	86	78	87	79	80

[1] (Estimated).
Row (1) = Net police grant earning expenditure—£000.
Row (2) = Net police grant earning expenditure per head of population—£.

ENERGY

Electricity Supply

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what instructions he has given to the Non-Fossil Fuel Purchasing Agency on the authorisation of contracts signed by public electricity suppliers with non-fossil non-nuclear generators at above pool price.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has given no such instructions. The commercial terms offered by the public electricity suppliers to generators seeking to contract within the non-fossil fuel obligation are a matter for the suppliers.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from potential producers of non-fossil non-nuclear electricity regarding the maximum length of power supply contract and price of electricity to be produced from those sources.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations. However, the legislation permits a fair degree of flexibility which can be used to secure bankable contracts and the public electricity suppliers have been able to take account of this in their negotiations with renewables generators.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with the European Commission regarding the length of contract and premium price above pool to be paid for electricity generating from renewable sources *(a)* before and *(b)* after 1 April 1998.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the "Note by the Department of Energy on the undertakings given by the Government in relation to the future of the fossil fuel levy", which has now been published as appendix 11 to volume 2 of the report by the Select Committee on Energy on "The cost of nuclear power".

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with *(a)* producers of renewable electricity and *(b)* the Non-Fossil Fuel Purchasing Agency regarding (i) intermittent renewables and (ii) continuous renewable electricity sources on the length of contracts and price to be paid by the public electricity suppliers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The commercial terms offered to projects seeking to contract within the non-fossil fuel obligation are a matter for the public electricity suppliers. The legislation provides them with the flexibilities they need in order to be able to offer bankable contracts, and I understand that they have taken account of those flexibilities where appropriate.

Energy Managers

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of the Secretary of State's letter of July 1986 recommending to Departments that they appoint energy managers on the basis of one per £1 million energy spend.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not customary to publish such inter-departmental correspondence. However, all Government Departments have now appointed energy managers.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to review the timetable for the Trident programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: It remains our intention to deploy the Trident system in the mid-1990s.

Disarmament

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution his Department is making to conferences on disarmament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom has a substantial arms control agenda. The Ministry of Defence makes a major contribution to all the current arms control negotiations which have a direct effect on British interests,

and has permanent representatives in Geneva at the conference on disarmament and in Vienna, at the CFE talks.

Tornado and Hawk

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his intention that British Aerospace will remain a major contractor for future developments of role and capability of the Tornado and that his Department will continue to pursue export opportunities for the Hawk.

Mr. Alan Clark: Responsibility for the selection of contractors for the Tornado programme rests with NAMMA, the contracting authority. However, British Aerospace has played a central role in the programme in the past and will, I trust, continue to do so.

We will continue to support the export prospects of the Hawk and the other products of the military and civil aircraft divisions of British Aerospace.

NATO Strategy

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department still sees a requirement for a mix of nuclear and conventional forces for NATO's strategy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. As alliance heads of state and Government made clear in their declaration issued after the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in London last week to keep the peace, the alliance must maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces, based in Europe, and kept up to date where necessary.

Fetes

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military personnel were involved on official duties at the fete organised by the West of Scotland Conservative and Unionist Association on 9 June; and if he will list them by rank.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Four Royal Navy personnel were involved: three lieutenants and one petty officer aircrewman.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many times in the last five years a naval helicopter has been used at fetes organised by the West of Scotland Conservative and Unionist Association; if he will list the events and times when they were used; and at what level the decision to allow the helicopter to be used was taken;

(2) how many times in the last five years a military helicopter has been used at fetes organised by political parties in the United Kingdom; and if he will list the events, the dates and the political parties involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Records are not maintained but the Department has no recollection of any instances of participation in such events other than that to which the hon. Gentleman has already referred.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines are followed in considering requests from political parties for the services of armed forces personnel and equipment at fetes organised by them to raise charitable funds.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Queen's regulations prohibit service participation in events whose purpose is to further the interests of political organisations. There is, however, no prohibition of service participation in events the purpose of which is to raise funds for local charities, where this can be done at no additional cost to the defence budget. In the instance to which the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention, Royal Navy participation was both beneficial to helicopter training and designed to assist in fund raising for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the Erskine hospital. A total of £12,000 was raised for these charities.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much fuel was used at the fete organised by the West of Scotland Conservative and Unionist Association to fly the naval helicopter at the White House, Renfrewshire on 9 June; and how much it costs to run a helicopter of that type, including crew, for one day.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Approximately 10 gallons of fuel were used while the helicopter was at the fete. The full operating cost of a Sea King helicopter, including fuel, crew and wear and tear, is some £4,800 per flying hour. In this instance, however, the helicopter was carrying out a routine training mission that would have been undertaken even if the fete had not been held. No additional costs were therefore incurred.

Construction Agreements

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list all construction agreements and contracts entered into by his Department in the years 1987, 1988 and 1989, respectively.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. In the period referred to all construction agreements and contracts relating to defence requirements, with the exception of a very small number concerned with nuclear work, were entered into on the Ministry of Defence's behalf by the Department of the Environment.

Over-the-horizon Radar

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the distance between ROTHR installations in Virginia and in the Aleutians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The transmit and receive facilities of the ROTHR installation in Virginia (which is not currently operational) are separated by 71 nautical miles; and those of the installation in the Aleutians are separated by 23 nautical miles. This distance is well below the theoretical minimum in open country, and operation of the Aleutians system is effective only because there exists a high mountain range between the transmit and receive sites.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the proposed over-the-horizon radar installation at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire is a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation project or a US/UK project.

Mr. Alan Clark: The proposed two-year trial of an over-the-horizon radar in the United Kingdom is a joint US/UK project.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the environmental impact assessments

being undertaken as part of the planning application for an over-the-horizon radar installation at St. David's airfield will be published in their entirety when completed; and how much time will be available for consultation before the national park planning committee considers the planning applications.

Mr. Alan Clark: Copies of the environmental impact assessment to be submitted to the Pembrokeshire coast national park authority in support of our formal notice of proposed development will be made generally available. In accordance with the procedures set out in Welsh Office circular 23/88, the authority will have 16 weeks in which to consider the proposals, in consultation with all interested parties.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what experiments he proposes to conduct in order to verify the survivability of the proposed over-the-horizon radar installation at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire against electromagnetic interference, nuclear, biological and chemical warfare.

Mr. Alan Clark: We will be studying the design of the system and the detailed specifications of its hardware in order to determine the feasibility of introducing measures that may be needed to improve its survivability.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the terms of reference of the environmental impact assessments being undertaken by W. S. Atkins and the Robens institute on behalf of the Ministry of Defence in connection with proposed over-the-horizon radar at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are no such specific terms of reference, but W. S. Atkins has been commissioned to prepare an environmental impact assessment in accordance with the guidelines set out in Welsh Office circular 23/88.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Dairy Herd

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of the United Kindom's total dairy herd is comprised of *(a)* Friesian cattle and *(b)* Holstein cattle.

Mr. Maclean: Friesian and Holstein cattle together constitute 90 per cent. of the United Kingdom's total dairy herd. It is not possible to determine separate figures for each breed. Many dairy herds contain both breeds together with Friesian/Holstein crossbreeds.

Food Safety

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what resources he is making available to port health authorities in order to help them meet extra obligations imposed by the Food Safety Bill.

Mr. Gummer: We have agreed to provide an extra £30 million through the Revenue Support Grant to meet the costs falling to local authorities in Great Britain as a whole as a result of new food legislation. This sum was calculated following discussions with local authority associations including representatives of port health authorities.

The money will be distributed among port health authorities, along with other local authorities, in the usual way.

Fishing Quotas

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether quota entitlement will be transferred from any Scottish vessel found guilty of falsely declaring catches from area VII to that area's entitlement.

Mr. Gummer: Fisheries Departments will seek to apply appropriate penalties and compensation in the event of any successful prosecutions being brought for misreporting.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 16 July 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Curriculum

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table listing every document relating to the national curriculum published by his Department, whether on its own behalf or for others, the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council, since May 1987, with date and title of publication, its length in pages, and the numbers of copies printed, in every case.

Mr. MacGregor: It will take some time to prepare this, given that other organisations are involved. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as I am in a position to do so, and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Single-sex Schools

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will indicate how many local authorities provide single-sex schooling at secondary level.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In January 1989, of the 97 local education authorities in England, 66 had maintained, single-sex secondary schools.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the trend in the number of parents choosing to send their children to single-sex secondary schools in the public sector.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is not available centrally.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to ensure that local authorities provide sufficient single-sex schooling at secondary level to meet all parental preferences.

Mr. Alan Howarth: There are no plans of this nature, since it is not Government practice to impose particular organisational patterns for schools upon local authorities. My right hon. Friend always takes account of parental preference when considering proposals for change.

Science

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action is being taken to encourage girls and women to study science subjects.

Mrs. Rumbold: The national curriculum introduced into schools last September will ensure that all pupils will study a balanced science course from early years right up to GCSE level. Girls will not be able to drop physics and chemistry at age 14.

Introducing structured scientific study in primary schools will have a positive effect on the traditionally narrow view many girls and women have of school science.

The Government are helping to sponsor the Engineering Council's "Women in Science and Engineering" project aimed at persuading girls and women of both the possibility and attractions of careers in science and engineering.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much it has cost to send secondary head teachers copies of his recent speeches.

Mrs. Rumbold: The cost of printing and distributing to secondary schools copies of the Secretary of State's two most recent speeches was £10,430.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to reply to the letter sent on 11 June by the Reverend John L. Clegg of 77 Errwood road, Levenshulme, Manchester, to the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold).

Mr. Alan Howarth: A reply was sent to the Reverend Clegg on 10 July.

University Lecturers (Pay)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when his Department will ratify the pay settlement for university lecturers agreed between the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Association of University Teachers.

Mr. Jackson: A decision will be taken on this proposed settlement as soon as possible.

Schools (Local Management)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is now in a position to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Birkenhead dated 22 February about the local management of schools in Wirral.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. In my reply of 19 March to the hon. Member's letter of 22 February I promised to write again when the statutory approval of Wirral local education authority's scheme for the local management of schools had been completed; at present, we are in consultation with the authority over proposed modifications to its scheme submission.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Rover

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration he has given to the implications for any future advice which he will give to Government Departments of the ruling of the European Commission in respect of the British Aerospace purchase of Rover.

The Attorney-General: The legal implications of a decision of the European Commission are always carefully considered.

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide a table of the number of appeals to the immigration appeal tribunal allowed and dismissed in 1989 and the first quarter of 1990.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is set out in the table:

	Allowed	*Remitted for re-hearing before an Immigration Adjudicator*	*Dismissed*
Appeals heard 1989	194	198	291
Appeals heard January-March 1990	62	80	102

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide a table showing the number of appeals to immigration adjudicators allowed and dismissed in 1989 and the first quarter of 1990, broken down according to the nationality of the appellant and the type of decision appealed against.

The Attorney-General: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate costs. The number of appeals to immigration adjudicators allowed and dismissed in 1989 and the first quarter of 1990 is given in the table.

	Allowed	*Dismissed*
Appeals heard by Immigration Adjudicators 1989	3,060	8,149
Appeals heard by Immigration Adjudicators January-March 1990	794	2,380

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Attorney-General in what proportion of cases heard by social security commissioners in January to June, the claimant and the adjudication officer respectively were *(a)* represented by legally qualified persons, *(b)* represented by unqualified persons and *(c)* unrepresented.

The Attorney-General: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Attorney-General why it has been decided not to make legal aid available for representation at social security commissioners' hearings.

The Attorney-General: As my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor explained in another place on Tuesday 10 July, additional resources to extend the scope of legal aid cannot be provided at present and it may be possible to provide legal aid for matters such as hearings before social security commissioners only if savings can be made from elsewhere in the legal aid scheme.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Secondary Education

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy as to whether a representative of the board of governors of a grammar school which has not allocated a place to a student transferring from primary school should be available for questioning at any tribunal established to hear an appeal against the board's decision.

Dr. Mawhinney: The School Admissions (Appeal Tribunals) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1990 afford a representative of the board of governors of a school whose decision is under appeal to appear at an appeal hearing and to make oral representations. The regulations do not require the representative to be available for questioning.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many secondary and grammar schools in Northern Ireland have specified in their selection criteria for children transferring from primary schools a priority for children *(a)* with a brother or sister who attended that school, *(b)* with a parent who attended that school and *(c)* who were the first born to their parents.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

(a) 208
(b) 38
(c) 6

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether legal representation will be available to parents attending tribunals to appeal against the placement of their child in a secondary or grammar school.

Dr. Mawhinney: Legal representation will not be made available at appeals tribunals. It will be a matter for appeals tribunals, in conjunction with education and library boards, to decide if parents may be legally represented.

Illegal Dumping

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions prosecutions were taken to court by public health authorities in Northern Ireland for instances of apparent illicit dumping; and on how many occasions convictions were secured, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In Northern Ireland, each district council is responsible for enforcing the legislation on the disposal of waste in its area. Records of prosecutions are not held centrally.

The information is being sought from the various councils. I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Homelessness

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of *(a)* single people and *(b)* families who have presented themselves as homeless to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each district council area in each year since 1980.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive was given responsibility for dealing with the accommodation needs of all homeless people under the

Housing (NI) Order 1988 which came into effect on 1 April 1989. The information requested is therefore available only from that date. I am advised by the chairman of the Housing Executive that the number of single people and families who have presented themselves as homeless during the year 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990 in each district council area is as follows:

District council	*(a) Single people*	*(b) Families*
Antrim	18	29
Ards	168	167
Armagh	36	37
Ballymena	69	67
Ballymoney	54	33
Banbridge	57	66
Belfast	975	1,164
Carrick	60	36
Castlereagh	112	120
Coleraine	37	45
Cookstown	52	52
Craigavon	136	114
Derry City	189	309
Down	138	138
Dungannon	42	35
Fermanagh	71	59
Larne	126	58
Limavady	47	52
Lisburn	292	249
Magherafelt	21	30
Moyle	34	36
Newry and Mourne	158	155
Newtownabbey	85	105
North Down	107	121
Omagh	111	70
Strabane	29	47
Total	3,225	3,395

Sunday Trading

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions prosecutions were taken to court by district councils in Northern Ireland for instances of apparent illegal Sunday trading, and on how many occasions convictions were secured, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Needham: This information is not available centrally.

Unfit Dwellings

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of unfit dwellings in Northern Ireland, by district council area, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Housing Executive carried out a full house condition survey in 1984. The information for that year is as follows:

Number of unfit dwellings

District	*Number*
Antrim	821
Ards	1,703
Armagh	1,515
Ballymena	1,682
Ballymoney	870
Banbridge	1,925
Belfast	12,885
Carrickfergus	2,166
Castlereagh	290
Coleraine	1,785
Cookstown	1,323
Craigavon	2,120
Derry	1,697
Down	1,838
Dungannon	1,932
Fermanagh	4,209
Larne	1,682
Limavady	961
Lisburn	1,921
Magherafelt	1,475
Moyle	862
Newry and Mourne	2,675
Newtownabbey	561
North Down	762
Omagh	2,168
Strabane	1,201

Arthur Anderson and Company

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he is pursuing his action against Arthur Anderson and Company in the American courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Economic Development is continuing to pursue its legal action against Arthur Anderson and Company, former auditors of De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd., in the United States Federal Court.

Chief Electoral Officer (Report)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the report of the chief electoral officer for Northern Ireland for 1989-90 will be published.

Mr. Brooke: The chief electoral officer's report was laid before the House today and is published as House of Commons paper No. 526. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

PRIME MINISTER

Court Decisions (European Treaties)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will take steps to ensure that her Ministers issue guidelines to the general public and enforcement authorities in cases where United Kingdom laws are suspended or substantially amended in practice by court decisions related to the European treaties; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Where a court holds that national law conflicts with Community law its order will tell the parties before it what they are to do or not to do. If any question of interpretation of the decision were to arise it would be for the courts to determine, not the Government.

"Sterling in Danger"

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will obtain a copy of Sir Alan Walters' book "Sterling in Danger" for her Office's library.

The Prime Minister: We are doing so.

Political Donations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what changes the Government have introduced since 1979 affecting the way companies may make political donations.

The Prime Minister: Companies legislation has since 1967 contained a requirement that a company's directors should disclose in their report, which forms part of the accounts, any gifts of money for political purposes if the amount exceeds a specified sum. The specified sum was increased from £50 to £200 in 1980.

Right Hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Prime Minister if, in the light of his remarks on Germany and Germans on 12 July, she will dismiss the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) from his office as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend tendered his resignation on Saturday 14 July.

Nuclear Treaties (China)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her meeting with the Chinese ambassador on 3 July, she discussed the prospects of China joining *(a)* the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and *(b)* the partial nuclear test ban treaty before their forthcoming review conferences, respectively, in August and September and January 1991.

The Prime Minister: The discussion was confidential.

Rent-to-mortgage Schemes

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Prime Minister, further to her oral reply to the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on 12 July, if she will give details of the success of the Scottish and Welsh experiments with rent-to-mortgage schemes; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The trial rent-to-mortgage and flexi-ownership schemes in Scotland and Wales are making encouraging progress. The Scottish Homes rent-to-mortgage scheme, from its introduction in October 1989 until the end of June this year, has attracted more than 1,000 inquiries from eligible tenants, with 169 applications in process. Since its introduction in December 1989, the Welsh flexi-ownership scheme has attracted over 100 inquiries from the 800 tenants eligible to participate in the scheme with some 50 applications in process. The schemes are being monitored and any modifications which seem desirable will be introduced whenever appropriate. The evidence so far is that both schemes are enabling tenants who would not otherwise become owner-occupiers to do so.

Cabinet Ministers (Statements)

Mr. Bell: To ask the Prime Minister what directions are given to the Cabinet Office to review the statements of Cabinet Ministers prior to publication; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

ECGD

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has yet completed his review of the policy towards Export Credits Guarantee Department cover for exporters to India and Indonesia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I am not able to comment on ECGD's future policy towards cover for India and Indonesia as the review of the markets has not yet been completed.

Portfolio Management System

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the implementation of the portfolio management system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 19 June, at column *490*.

CBI

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss matters relating to the European Economic Community.

Mr. Redwood: In the last year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has met senior representatives of the Confederation of British Industry on five occasions to discuss a range of issues including the European Community.

Dunsdale Securities

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will review the operations of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association, in the light of the failure of Dunsdale Securities.

Mr. Redwood: The Securities and Investments Board is responsible for ensuring that the self-regulating organisations such as FIMBRA carry out their duties effectively.

Limited Companies (Boards)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what European Community proposals exist for two-tier boards for limited companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The draft fifth directive on company law contains proposals for the harmonisation of laws relating to the structure of the boards of public companies. It would enable national legislation to prescribe the use of a one-tier or a two-tier board system, or to provide for both. The proposal for a European company statute contains provisions that would enable a European company to choose between the two structures.

Auditors

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has to bring forward legislation to extend to company auditors duty of disclosure of confidential complaints and concerns to the regulatory authorities.

Mr. Redwood: I must ask the hon. Member to await the Government's response, which my right hon. Friend hopes to announce soon, to a recommendation on this topic made by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry in its report on company investigations.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is reviewing his powers to take action against auditors criticised in Companies Act inspectors' reports, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: No review is being undertaken. Under part II of the Companies Act 1989—the key provisions of which we expect to bring into force in early 1991—a recognised supervisory body must appear to the Secretary of State to have both adequate rules and practices designed to ensure that company auditors are fit and proper persons; and adequate arrangements and resources for the effective monitoring and enforcement of compliance with its rules.

Gaseous Fuels

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he proposes to make appointments of notified bodies under the terms of the European Community directive on the approximation of the laws of member states relating to appliances burning gaseous fuels.

Mr. Forth: I intend to make appointments of notified certification bodies under the gas appliance directive at the earliest possible date consistent with providing the appropriate legal safeguards for those seeking certification for their products. These are necessary given the mandatory nature of the certification requirements introduced by that directive.

Subsidiaries' Transactions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on identifying the price base of transactions between company subsidiaries.

Mr. Redwood: None that I know of.

Insurance Companies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all reports published following investigations under the Insurance Companies Acts; and how many unpublished investigations have been completed.

Mr. Redwood: It is not departmental policy to publish such reports.

EC Investment Services Directive

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he is holding in relation to the European Community investment services directive.

Mr. Redwood: I am publishing today a consultative document on the investment services directive which seeks views on this important single market measure. I have arranged for copies of the document to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

In the negotiations to date on the directive, the Department has sought the views of regulatory bodies, organisations representing the United Kingdom investment services industry and of consumer groups.

Office Searches (EC Inspectors)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what powers exist under European Economic Community related legislation for officials of the European Commission to enter and search the premises of United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* Article 213 of the EEC treaty permits the Commission to collect any information and carry out any checks required for the performance of its tasks within the limits laid down by the Council. In practice this provision is never used.

The following Community instruments covering matters within the Secretary of State's areas of responsibility grant the Commission powers to conduct investigations on the premises of United Kingdom companies for certain specified purposes:

- Council Regulation No. 17 (1962) implementing articles 85 and 86 of the Treaty.
- Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1017/68 applying rules of competition to transport by rail, road and inland waterway.
- Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4056/86 laying down detailed rules for the application of Articles 85 and 86 of the Treaty to maritime transport.
- Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3975/87 laying down the procedure for the application of the rules of competition of undertakings in the air transport sector.
- Council Regulation (EEC) 4253/88 concerning the co-ordination of the activities of the Structural Funds.
- Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4064/89 on the control of concentrations between undertakings. [Enters into effect on 21 September 1990].

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement setting out the powers which European Community inspectors have to enter business premises and to seize or study papers; and if he will publish a note of guidance on these to issue to British-based companies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* My reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) today sets out EC legislation within the Secretary of State's responsibility which gives the Commission power to inspect business premises. Companies should consult their legal advisers on Community powers in individual cases.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement setting out the difference in the powers of United Kingdom-based company inspectors and European Community inspectors in relation to the entering of business premises and the seizure of documents.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* In the competition area, where we can give a reasonable comparison, the main difference is that under both United Kingdom and EC law authorities can require the

production of documents and the giving of oral evidence, but only under EC law can authorities demand entry to premises.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who supervises office searches in the United Kingdom by European Community inspectors; and if any limits are in general placed on the extent of the papers and documents which may be seized or studied.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* Detailed working rules on office searches by European Community inspectors will be set by the Commission within the framework of the Community regulations which permit such searches. It is the practice for an official of the Office of Fair Trading to accompany Commission officials conducting investigations in the United Kingdom whenever possible.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the quotas covered by the multi-fibre arrangement and indicate the proportion of each quota used.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to his reply, 14 March 1990, c. 306]:* The Department of Trade and Industry is now able to provide a list of quotas covered by the multi-fibre arrangement together with relevant data on utilisation for 1988. This has been placed in the Library of the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Canteens

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what basis prices in prison canteens are calculated; and what progress has been made in reducing differences between prices in different prisons.

Mr. Mellor: To reduce differences in prices of goods sold in different prison canteens, governors will be reminded in a circular instruction to be issued on 26 July that selling prices should be at the manufacturer's recommended retail price. Where such a price is not set the selling price should be that which members of the public normally pay in retail transactions.

Elderly Prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what special rules or arrangements are made for prisoners over pensionable age.

Mr. Mellor: None formally, but prison staff naturally have regard to the age and physical condition of prisoners in their care.

Prison Clothing Supplies

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the scale holding of prisoners' pyjamas in each London prison.

Mr. Mellor: Pyjamas are an optional item, and the quantity held in any one establishment will vary depending on the number of prisoners wishing to wear them. Information on the total holding at each male London prison, including articles in use, could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Stocks currently held in store are as follows:

	pairs
HM Prison Brixton	1,000
HM Prison Pentonville	210
HM Prison Wandsworth	800
HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs	250

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for British citizenship under section 4(5) of the British Nationality Act 1981 have been *(a)* made, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused in each quarter since January 1989; and how many of those granted have been on the grounds of service in the armed forces.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The total number of applications to date in each category, with equivalent figures up to July 1989 in brackets, is as follows:

	Servicemen		*Others*		*Total*	
Received	57	(53)	540	(499)	597	(552)
Granted	56	(52)	11	(9)	67	(61)
Refused	—	(—)	487	(487)	487	(487)
Withdrawn	1	(1)	—	(—)	1	(1)
Still under consideration	—	(—)	42	(3)	42	(3)

Note:—The numbers in the first column are former service men in Hong Kong who served under the Government of that territory in its defence during the second world war.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance as *(a)* wives, *(b)* husbands, *(c)* fiancés and *(d)* fiancées in each British post in all countries apart from those of the Indian subcontinent were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused in each quarter since January 1989; how many such applications in each category, at each post and in each quarter were refused (1) wholly and (2) partly because of the primary purpose rule; what was the refusal rate at each post; and what percentage of those refusals were *(x)* wholly and *(y)* partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The only information requested which is available centrally is that on applications granted and refused in Hong Kong, and is given in the table.

Applications in Hong Kong for entry clearance to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications Granted[1]	*Refused initially*
Wives		
1989		
1st quarter	40	—
2nd quarter	60	—
3rd quarter	40	—
4th quarter	50	[3]—
1990		
1st quarter	60	[3]—
Husbands, fiancés[2]		
1989		
1st quarter	20	—
2nd quarter	20	[3]—
3rd quarter	30	[3]—
4th quarter	20	[3]—
1990		
1st quarter	20	[3]—
Fiancées		
1989		
1st quarter	10	—
2nd quarter	10	—
3rd quarter	10	—
4th quarter	[3]	—
1990		
1st quarter	10	—

[1]Granted initially or on appeal.
[2]Data for husbands and fiances separately are not available.
[3]5 or fewer.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of passengers detained overnight under Immigration Act powers during 1989, by nationality; and how many of these were under 18 years old;

(2) how many people, by nationality, were detained *(a)* overnight and *(b)* for a period of more than one month in (i) Harmondsworth detention centre, (ii) the Queen's building, Heathrow, (iii) the Beehive, Gatwick, and (iv) Her Majesty's prison, Haslar, during 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Most of the readily available information relates to the number of passengers whose detention spanned at least one night pending further examination of their application for admission to, or their removal from, the United Kingdom and is given in the tables. The remaining information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1—Passengers[1] *detained overnight, by nationality and geographical region, 1989*

Nationality/Geographical Region	*Number*[2]
European Community	
Belgium	2
Denmark	—
France	8
German Federal Republic	6
Greece	1
Italy	4
Luxembourg	—
Netherlands	8
Portugal	38
Spain	31
European Community	98
Western Europe	
Austria	19
Cyprus	80
Finland	14
Malta	14
Norway	26
Sweden	28
Switzerland	18
Turkey	1,515
Yugoslavia	304
Western Europe	2,018
Eastern Europe	
Bulgaria	3
Czechoslovakia	3
German Federal Republic	3
Hungary	2
Poland	95
Romania	2
USSR	9
Eastern Europe	117
Americas	
Argentina	7
Barbados	12
Brazil	160
Canada	24
Chile	30
Colombia	176
Cuba	—
Guyana	16
Jamaica	282
Mexico	64
Peru	23
Trinidad and Tobago	24
United States of America	185
Uruguay	4
Venezuela	6
Americas	1,013
Africa	
Algeria	1,276
Egypt	36
Ethiopia	149
Ghana	462
Kenya	69
Libya	21
Mauritius	50
Morocco	594
Nigeria	745
Sierra Leone	102
Somalia	848
South Africa	60
Sudan	24
Tanzania	57
Tunisia	103
Uganda	670
Zambia	32
Zimbabwe	35
Africa	5,333
Indian sub-continent	
Bangladesh	316
India	236
Pakistan	330
Indian sub-continent	882
Middle East	
Iran	156
Iraq	111
Israel	57
Jordan	15

Nationality/Geographical Region	Number[2]
Kuwait	4
Lebanon	61
Saudi Arabia	6
Syria	1
Middle East	411
Remainder of Asia	
China	28
Indonesia	8
Japan	39
Malaysia	109
Philippines	22
Singapore	17
Sri Lanka	409
Thailand	14
Hong Kong (BDTCs and BN(O)s	34
Remainder of Asia	680
Australasia	
Australia	18
New Zealand	14
Australasia	32
British Overseas Citizens	14
Other countries not elsewhere specified	549
Stateless	265
All Nationalities	11,412

[1] Some illegal entrants and deportees are included.
[2] The figures include a small amount of double counting when a person is detained at more than one location.

Table 2—Passengers[1] detained overnight in certain locations, 1989

Location	Number
Harmondsworth	[2]3,419
Queen's Building	2,574
Gatwick South (virtually all at the Beehive)	2,822
Haslar	547

[1] All figures, except for the Queen's Building and Haslar, exclude illegal entrants and deportees.
[2] Some passengers who were detained elsewhere prior to being detained at Harmondsworth are excluded.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the *(a)* passengers in total and *(b)* persons treated as illegal entrants who were granted temporary admission in 1989 subsequently absconded; and how many subsequently (i) contacted the immigration authorities themselves or (ii) were traced.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information relates to the number of persons who absconded, either from detention or by failing to respond to the terms of temporary admission/release, and is as follows:

Absconders in 1989

Category of person	Number
Passengers	[1]475
Illegal entrants	[2]184

[1] Includes some illegal entrants.
[2] Includes those illegal entrants included in "passenger absconders".

The distinction between those absconding from detention and those failing to respond to the terms of temporary admission/release as well as information regarding those who either contacted the immigration authorities or were traced is not recorded centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff were employed in the nationality division to process nationality applications in each month since April 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The numbers of staff in caseworking groups in the nationality division, including the Liverpool nationality office, involved in processing applications for citizenship were as follows:

	Numbers
1989	
April	268·5
May	266·5
June	283·5
July	281·5
August	284·0
September	277·0
October	284·0
November	280·5
December	280·5
1990	
January	273·0
February	262·0
March	261·5
April	240·0
May	221·0
June	212·0

Part-time staff are counted as 0·5.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what income the nationality division received in nationality fees, in each month from April 1989 to the nearest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Fees received for applications for citizenship, net of refunds to unsuccessful applicants, were as follows:

	Receipts £
1989	
April	223,717
May	230,949
June	246,146
July	158,471
August	207,716
September	283,920
October	200,794
November	245,589
December	135,075
1990	
January	181,841
February	207,181
March	245,521
April	148,912
May	151,211
June	142,463

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many notices have been issued to each airline under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 in each quarter since January 1989; how much money has accrued as a result; and how many such notices have been contested by each airline.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not the practice to disclose information on the record of individual airlines under the

Act. The total number of notices issued to carriers—airlines and sea operators—in each quarter since January 1989 was as follows:

Quarter Ending	Number of Notices
31 March 1989	1,345
30 June 1989	1,616
30 September 1989	2,208
31 December 1989	2,694
31 March 1990	1,912
TOTAL	9,775

A total of £2·476 million was received during this period and representations were made by carriers in 2,698 cases.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications from over-age reapplicants from the Indian subcontinent, by country, seeking to join a sponsor settled in the United Kingdom have been *(a)* made, *(b)* deferred, *(c)* refused and *(d)* granted since 1988; and how many such reapplicants in each category had undergone successful DNA tests.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The only available information is that a total of 142 applications to join parents in the United Kingdom made by reapplicants who have established their relationship by means of DNA evidence, but who do not qualify for admission under the immigration rules, have now been decided under the terms of the concession announced by my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary on 14 June 1989 at columns *461-62*. Entry clearance has been authorised in 38 of these cases.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many wives and dependent children applying for entry clearance in the Indian subcontinent in each quarter since January 1989 were refused *(a)* on first application and *(b)* on second or subsequent application.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Quarterly information up to the end of 1989 on the total numbers of wives and children in the Indian subcontinent refused entry clearance to the United Kingdom is published in table 24 of Cm 1124, "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 1989", a copy of which is in the Library. In the first quarter of 1990, 240 wives and 360 children were initially refused entry clearance. Separate information on first-time applicants and reapplicants is not available centrally.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for settlement by wives and children in (i) Dhaka, (ii) Islamabad and (iii) Karachi were *(a)* received, *(b)* granted, *(c)* refused, *(d)* deferred at first interview, *(e)* lapsed and *(f)* outstanding and awaiting first interview for each quarter since the beginning of 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is given in the table.

Wives and children applying for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom[1]

Number of persons

Post	Newly received[2]	Granted[3]	Applications Refused initially[4]	Referred or deferred[5]	Withdrawn or lapsed[4]	Awaiting first interview at end of quarter
Dhaka						
1989						
1st quarter	1,410	2,220	470	780	470	2,600
2nd quarter	1,390	2,070	450	620	420	2,200
3rd quarter	1,460	1,810	290	570	390	1,700
4th quarter	1,490	1,510	510	490	350	1,500
1990						
1st quarter	1,320	1,570	520	470	280	1,600
Islamabad						
1989						
1st quarter	1,200	1,110	90	840	170	2,100
2nd quarter	1,020	1,260	60	800	120	1,900
3rd quarter	1,010	1,020	60	710	100	1,800
4th quarter	920	790	50	530	90	1,800
1990						
1st quarter	1,190	990	250	640	100	1,700
Karachi						
1989						
1st quarter	90	60	[6]	20	[6]	100
2nd quarter	60	80	[6]	30	30	50
3rd quarter	60	80	10	40	—	10
4th quarter	40	40	10	10	[6]	30
1990						
1st quarter	100	60	10	10	[6]	70

[1] Including persons applying for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode in the United Kingdom.
[2] Data include some double counting in respect of applications recorded initially for entry clearance and then subsequently for a certificate of entitlement.
[3] Granted initially or on appeal.
[4] Since about the end of 1989, settlement applications have been refused in those circumstances where previously they would have been lapsed.
[5] Referred to the Home Office for decision or deferred for further inquiries.
[6] Five or fewer.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for registration under section 7(6)(a) of the British Nationality Act 1981 made after 31 December 1987 have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused; and what criteria he uses to decide on the special circumstances of a case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about the number of applications for registration under section 7 of the British Nationality Act 1981 made after 31 December 1987 which were received and granted is not available. Between January 1988 and June 1990, 454 applications made under section 7 of the Act are recorded as having been refused as late applications. During the passage of the 1981 Act it was made clear that the discretion to accept a late registration application would be used sparingly in cases of hardship where an applicant could show good reasons why he or she could not apply in time.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* adult registration, *(b)* registration of minors and *(c)* naturalisation were (i) received and (ii) granted by the nationality division, for each month from January 1989 to the nearest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The numbers of applications for citizenship received in caseworking groups are set out in table 1. The figures in the table do not include applications received but not yet recorded on the nationality division's computer, of which there were approximately 3,000 at the end of June 1990. The numbers of applications granted are set out in table 2.

Table 1

	Applications received		
	Adult registrations	*Minor registrations*	*Naturalisations*
1989			
January	7,838	1,086	3,177
February	10,252	1,530	4,033
March	9,562	1,569	5,094
April	8,916	1,400	4,432
May	7,381	1,656	3,427
June	3,313	3,658	7,963
July	1,563	2,928	9,777
August	872	2,158	7,160
September	380	524	1,452
October	345	539	1,625
November	349	584	1,622
December	325	276	849
1990			
January	255	575	1,515
February	315	657	1,586
March	251	592	1,485
April	184	356	629
May	232	535	1,589
June	434	842	1,457

Table 2

	Applications granted		
	Adult registrations	*Minor registrations*	*Naturalisations*
1989			
January	8,263	743	1,226
February	7,707	708	1,361
March	8,453	795	1,639
April	7,508	736	1,683
May	6,013	790	1,591
June	6,690	1,237	1,925
July	6,349	1,173	1,623
August	8,399	1,393	1,612
September	6,979	1,310	1,551
October	8,023	1,349	2,193
November	7,088	1,419	2,003
December	4,105	905	1,296
1990			
January	6,994	1,190	2,037
February	4,160	907	1,688
March	3,127	996	2,021
April	2,403	944	1,861
May	1,038	394	953
June	1,284	915	1,765

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* husbands, *(b)* wives and *(c)* dependent children have been refused (i) extension of stay and (ii) settlement in the United Kingdom on the grounds that he is not satisfied that they can be maintained and accommodated without recourse to public funds, in each quarter since January 1989 to the nearest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information relating to after-entry cases is given in the following table. Information on dependent children is not readily available.

Refusals, on grounds of maintenance and accommodation, of after-entry applications by husbands and wives

Number of persons

	Refusals to grant probationary year on grounds of:—			*Refusals of settlement*[1]
	Accommodation	*Maintenance*	*Maintenance and accommodation*	
1989				
Quarter 1				
Husbands	1	—	1	5
Wives	2	—	—	—
Quarter 2				
Husbands	—	2	2	8
Wives	—	—	—	3
Quarter 3				
Husbands	3	—	—	7
Wives	1	1	—	6
Quarter 4				

	Refusals to grant probationary year on grounds of:—			Refusals of settlement[1]
	Accommodation	Maintenance	Maintenance and accommodation	
Husbands	4	—	2	5
Wives	1	—	—	3
1990				
Quarter 1				
Husbands	1	—	—	3
Wives	—	—	1	4

[1] After probationary year on general considerations, including recourse to public funds.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* British nationals and *(b)* holders of certificates of identity from Hong Kong have been admitted to the United Kingdom in each quarter since January 1989 as (i) persons on independent means, (ii) self-employed persons, (iii) business people, (iv) visitors, (v) students, (vi) husbands and fiancés, (vii) wives and fiancées and (viii) other dependent relatives.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information for BDTCs and BN(O)s from Hong Kong is given in the table. Figures on admissions of holders of certificates of identity from Hong Kong are not available.

Admissions to the United Kingdom of British Dependent Territories Citizens and British Nationals (Overseas) from Hong Kong

Number of persons

Admission category	1989				Total 1989	[1]1990
	1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter		1st quarter
Visitors	6,260	7,740	13,700	6,040	33,800	5,980
Business visitors	1,400	1,320	1,450	1,250	5,420	1,430
Students	360	290	5,490	1,090	7,230	430
Husbands and fiancés	10	10	20	10	50	10
Wives and fiancées	30	40	40	30	150	40

[1] Provisional figures.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was (i) the budgeted cost and (ii) the actual cost of processing nationality applications in the nationality division during 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The budgeted cost of processing applications for citizenship during 1989-90 was £7,922,000. Final outturn costs are not yet available but are expected to be in the region of £7·1 million.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will produce a table to show, for 1989 and the first quarter of 1990, the number of settlement applications at the post in Dhaka which were *(a)* received, *(b)* granted, *(c)* refused, *(d)* deferred at first interview, *(e)* lapsed, *(f)* outstanding and *(g)* outstanding and awaiting first interview.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is given in the table.

Applications in Bangladesh for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom[1]

Number of persons

Applications	1989	1990 1st quarter
Newly received[2]	6,910	1,730
Granted[3]	7,960	1,640
Refused initially[4]	2,450	750
Referred or deferred[5]	2,920	580
Withdrawn or lapsed[4]	1,840	350
Outstanding at end of period	5,800	4,500
Of which, awaiting first interview	2,100	2,200

[1] Including applications for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode in the United Kingdom.
[2] Data include some double counting in respect of applications recorded initially for entry clearance and then subsequently for a certificate of entitlement.
[3] Granted initially or on appeal.
[4] Since about the end of 1989, settlement applications have been refused in those circumstances where previously they would have been lapsed.
[5] Referred to the Home Office for decision or deferred for further inquiries.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children were waiting in each queue at each post in the Indian subcontinent on 31 March.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the estimated total numbers in each queue is given in the table; separate information on men, women and children is not available centrally.

Estimated numbers of applicants in the Indian sub-continent on 31 March 1990 awaiting their first interview for entry to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

Post	Category[1]				
	Queue 1	Queue 2	Queue 3	Queue 4	Queue 5
Dhaka	370	900	130	830	—
New Delhi[2]	[3]—	250	170	60	160
Bombay	—	630	380	120	140
Calcutta	—	—	—	—	—

Post	Category[1]				
	Queue 1	Queue 2	Queue 3	Queue 4	Queue 5
Madras	—	50	10	—	10
Islamabad	100	2,200	440	320	890
Karachi	[3]—	100	20	10	[3]—
Total Indian sub-continent	480	4,100	1,100	1,300	1,200

[1] Queue 1: Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years old, and special compassionate cases (first-time applicants for settlement).
Queue 2: Spouses, and children under 18 years old (first-time applicants for settlement).
Queue 3: Fiance(e)s, and other applicants (first-time applicants for settlement).
Queue 4: Re-applicants for settlement.
Queue 5: Other applicants (not for settlement).
[2] Data exclude Afghans seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom.
[3] Five or fewer.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were waiting for special quota vouchers in (i) India and (ii) east Africa in *(a)* May 1989, *(b)* December 1989 and *(c)* May 1990; when those issued with vouchers on those dates had applied; how many vouchers were issued in (1) India and (2) east Africa in (i) 1989 and (ii) the first quarter of 1990; when those applying now can expect to receive vouchers; and how many applicants there were for vouchers in *(x)* India and *(y)* east Africa in *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* the first half of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information which is currently available is given in the tables.

Table 1: Persons applying for a special voucher for entry to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

Country	Applications newly received[1]		Vouchers issued		Applications awaiting a decision at end of month		
	1989	1990 1st quarter	1989	1990 1st quarter	May 1989	December 1989	March 1990
India	320	100	600	160	1,600	1,300	1,000
Kenya	350	70	290	70	590	570	560
Tanzania	40	10	30	[2]—	70	70	80
Malawi	10	[2]—	20	[2]—	20	20	10
Zambia	50	10	50	10	50	40	30
Elsewhere	20	[2]—	10	[2]—	10	10	[2]—
Total	810	200	990	260	2,300	2,000	1,700

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed.
[2] 5 or fewer.

Table 2: Waiting times for persons applying for a special voucher

Months

	Waiting time to main interview for: Persons interviewed at end of month			Persons applying at end of month[1]
	May 1989	December 1989	March 1990	March 1990
India[2]	72·0	48·0	36·0	[3]18·0
Kenya	2·0	1·5	[4]—	[4]—
Tanzania	1·5	1·5	1·5	1·5
Malawi	—	—	0·5	0·5
Zambia	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0

[1] Data relate to expected waiting time.
[2] Data relate to non-priority applicants. Priority applicants (ie. widows with a child in the United Kingdom, heads of household aged 65 or over, and special compassionate cases) are interviewed within three months.
[3] Provisional estimate.
[4]— within a week.

Correspondence

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a response to his communication of 26 April on behalf of Maria Giles of 74 Rosemellin, Camborne, Cornwall, on an issue involving experiments on animals.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I replied to my hon. Friend on 21 May.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde sent to his Department on 25 June regarding the establishment of the Football Licensing Authority.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and noble Friend replied to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde on 12 July.

AIDS Videos

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the showing of his Department's two videos on AIDS to *(a)* prison officers and *(b)* prisoners; and if he will make a statement on progress towards his objectives.

Mr. Mellor: The staff training film "AIDS Inside" is shown to all new entrant prison officers as part of their initial training. Since the film was introduced in August 1987 governors have been set annual training targets designed to enable all other operational staff to receive a showing of the film. We have recently asked governors to report the progress made towards meeting that objective.

"AIDS Inside and Out", a film for prisoners, was introduced in March 1989. Governors were set a target of showing the film at least once to every willing prisoner expected to be in custody for four weeks or longer. They were asked to include a progress report in their annual report for 1990-91. The target will be reviewed in the light of their reports.

Football Licensing Authority

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *360*, what stage has now been reached in making appointments to the Football Licensing Authority; and when he expects the authority to be in place.

Mr. John Patten: Following the appointment of Mr. Norman Jacobs as chairman of the Football Licensing Authority, announced on 12 July, the other members and staff of the authority will now be appointed as soon as possible. It will nevertheless be some months before the authority is fully operational.

Trafalgar Square (Incident)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of providing the answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, *Official Report*, 13 June, columns *191-94*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The reply given to the hon. Member on 13 June contained information which was readily available from police records. No estimate of the cost of the reply was therefore made.

Football Supporters Association

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet officials of the Football Supporters Association.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans at present.

Forensic Science

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to recruit extra staff to replace the 24 police liaison officers in the forensic science laboratories, who are being shed as a result of the current forensic science service reorganisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Police liaison officer attachments to the FSS will be phased out by April 1991 as part of the Government's programme of civilianisation of non-operational posts. Replacement is planned over this year and next.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated effect on *(a)* the existing backlog of case work and *(b)* in-house work in the forensic science service, of scientists being taken off existing work to participate in project work and implementation teams, for the current reorganisation of the service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am pleased to say that the staff of the forensic science service have been fully involved in all the work and changes necessary to introduce direct charging and become an executive agency in April 1991. This has been to the benefit of in-house work. The number of cases waiting to be examined has grown recently for a number of reasons including this one. We expect this position to be remedied with the changes now in place.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used by the Police Complaints Authority to determine which complaint cases will be supervised.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: These are set out in section 89(2) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

WALES

NHS Trusts

4. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met with the chairman of the Mid Glamorgan health authority to discuss the formation of hospital trusts.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has not discussed the formation of hospital trusts with the chairman of Mid Glamorgan health authority.

Inward Investment

14. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many inward investment projects have been received in Wales over the last five years for which figures are available; and what has been the total worth of such investment.

Mr. David Hunt: During the five years to 31 March, Wales secured a total of 488 inward investment projects —a rate of almost two every week. The companies involved estimated the capital investment at some £2·5 billion. Since March a further 32 projects have been secured with an estimated capital investment of £263 million.

Housing

15. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet district council leaders in Wales to discuss housing provision.

Mr. Grist: The Department regularly meets all housing authorities in Wales to discuss a wide range of issues.

19. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of owner-occupation in Wales.

Mr. Grist: It is estimated that at December 1989, a total of 71 per cent. of the housing stock in Wales was owner-occupied.

Welsh Language

16. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of consultations on the introduction of a new Welsh Language Act.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend awaits the formal outcome of the consultation exercise, which the Welsh Language Board has been conducting on its legislative proposals. The board is now considering the results of this. It will present its conclusion to my right hon. Friend in due course.

28. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the need for a new Welsh Language Act; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office has received a number of representations from individuals and organisations about Welsh language legislation. This issue is currently being considered by the Welsh Language Board. My right hon. Friend will consider very carefully any specific proposals it puts to him.

Eye Tests

17. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contact he has had with members of the West Glamorgan family practitioner committee about the effect of charges on eye tests.

Mr. Grist: Our officials discussed this matter at the annual review of West Glamorgan family practitioner committee in December 1989. More recently, the Department has received some papers on this subject via the family practitioner committee.

Environmental Policy

20. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the priorities of his Department in environmental policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Our priorities are to prevent undue risks to human life and health, to protect the natural environment and to improve public amenity, particularly in those areas with the worst environments.

Mid-Glamorgan Training and Enterprise Council

21. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet the board of the Mid-Glamorgan training and enterprise council to discuss the new budget for 1990-91.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The budget of the Mid-Glamorgan TEC for the current year has just been agreed. I am pleased to say that contracts for both the Mid-Glamorgan and West Wales TECs will be signed tomorrow. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will be meeting all the TEC chairmen in Wales very shortly.

Rail Services

22. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about train services in the Principality and the need for further investment.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I receive many representations about rail services and rail investment in Wales.

Brymbo Steelworks

23. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further plans he has to maintain steelworking jobs at the Brymbo steelworks.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Development Agency, with full support from me, is continuing to explore all possible options for the future of the works.

Roads

24. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of road developments in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Significant progress has been made since 1979, with 152 miles of motorway and trunk roads completed. Nine schemes, totalling 21 miles, are currently under construction, and a further five schemes, totalling 19 miles, are planned to start in the current financial year.

Welsh Assembly

25. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received in favour of setting up an assembly in Cardiff.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Beef

26. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the current state of the beef industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The December 1989 sample census figures showed that the Welsh beef breeding herd had increased by 6 per cent. compared with December 1988. Specialist beef producers have also benefited from last year's 42 per cent. increase in the rate of suckler cow premium which was worth some £8 million to producers in Wales in the 1989-90 scheme year; and hill livestock compensatory allowance payments on cattle in 1989 amounted to more than £8 million.

Following the devaluation of the green pound agreed at the 1990 price fixing, support prices have increased by 8·5 per cent. with the rate of beef special premium increasing from £29·19 to £31·80 a head from 14 May 1990.

Although the market is currently depressed, with numbers and prices down, the safety net measures for intervention together with the lifting of bans on our exports should help to sustain the market.

Less-favoured Areas

27. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the less-favoured area status farms in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Farmers in our less-favoured areas benefit directly from a number of special measures including the hill livestock compensatory allowances. I remain confident that less-favoured areas farmers will meet the challenges that face them in the future.

A470, Cardiff

29. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to *(a)* eliminating unnecessary junctions on the A470 in Cardiff, North or *(b)* other measures to improve the flow of traffic on this trunk road.

Sir Wyn Roberts: These are matters for South Glamorgan county council to consider as the responsible highway authority for the A470 to the south of the Coryton interchange. Measures to improve traffic flows on the A470 trunk road north of Coryton are being considered as part of the south Wales traffic study scheduled to be completed later this year.

Water Quality

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the causes of the increase in those sewage works serving a population band of 1,000 to 5,000 and failing to meet the Welsh water authority quality standards in 1988-89; and what action his Department has taken to reverse this trend.

Mr. Grist: The prospectus for the water share offers attributed the difficulties experienced in recent years mainly to undercapacity, inadequate maintenance, outmoded equipment or breakdowns. A new regulatory body, the National Rivers Authority, has now been established and an investment programme, totalling £395 million in the next five years alone, to improve the quality of Dwr Cymru's sewerage services, including its sewage treatment works, has been approved.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Development Board for Rural Wales to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 10 to 14 December 1990.

Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all members of non-departmental public bodies in Wales who are members of *(a)* two such bodies and *(b)* more than two such bodies.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

Executive non-departmental public bodies in Wales

(a) Members of two bodies

Mr. J. Allen CBE
Housing for Wales (Chairman)
Land Authority for Wales (Deputy Chairman)

Mr. A. G. Davies
Court of National Museum of Wales
Council of National Museum of Wales

Mr. J. H. Davies
Court of National Library of Wales
Council of National Library of Wales

Mr. H. Hudson-Davies
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
Welsh Development Agency

Mr. I. G. M. Hughes
Court of National Library of Wales
Council of National Library of Wales

Mr. G. D. Inkin OBE
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation (Chairman)
Land Authority for Wales (Chairman)

Mr. J. Morgan
Court of National Library of Wales
Development Board for Rural Wales

Miss M. Owen
Court of National Library of Wales
Council of National Library of Wales

Mr. P. G. Price
Court of National Library of Wales
Council of National Library of Wales

The right hon. Lord Rees
Court of National Museum of Wales
Council of National Museum of Wales

Mr. J. E. H. Rees
Court of National Museum of Wales
Council of National Museum of Wales

Mr. R. P. V. Rees
Land Authority for Wales
Welsh Development Agency

Mr. W. Elfed Roberts
Wales Tourist Board
Welsh Development Agency

Mr. J. Watkin
Court of National Library of Wales
Council of National Library of Wales

Cllr. R. F. Watkiss
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
Land Authority for Wales

Sir Donald Walters
Development Board for Rural Wales
Welsh Development Agency (Deputy Chairman)

(b) Members of more than two bodies

Mr. E. G. Davies
Development Board for Rural Wales (Chairman)
Welsh Development Agency
Wales Tourist Board

Health Authority Meetings

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy that public access to the meetings of health authorities in Wales and their committees and sub-committees should be required to be on the same basis as that required of local authorities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: No. District health authorities conduct their meetings in as open a manner as is reasonable. They will continue to be subject to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to announce the results of his consultation on the future of community health councils in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 13 July 1990 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

NHS Funds

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether any additional funds are to be made available to the NHS in Wales over and above those set out in the public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Grist: Additional funds were announced in the supplementary estimates presented to the House in June in respect of pay awards recommended in the reports of the review bodies. Future needs will be considered as part of the public expenditure survey in the normal way.

School Closures

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools in Wales of fewer than 50 pupils closed in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department does not maintain records of school closures by size of school.

Renewal Areas Scheme

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the actions taken by his Department to promote the renewal areas scheme in respect of older housing in Wales.

Mr. Grist: In addition to supplying very detailed guidance circulars, our officials have met representatives from all Welsh authorities to promote renewal area schemes.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money his Department is making available *(a)* in the present financial year and *(b)* in the 1991-92 financial year towards the renewal areas scheme for older housing in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Credit approvals of £1 million are being held by the Department to meet local authorities' proposals for renewal areas. This is in addition to £26 million provided for area-based renovation projects such as enveloping and group repair schemes. No decision has yet been made about resources for 1991-92.

Enveloping Schemes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was provided by his Department in each of the last 10 years on enveloping schemes *(a)* in Cardiff and *(b)* in Wales; and how much is being made available in the current year and in the 1991-92 financial year.

Mr. Grist: Since 1984-85 capital allocations totalling £75·7 million have been made available to local authorities in Wales for enveloping projects. Cardiff has been allocated over £9 million. Subsidy payments by the Department for the last two available years have been:

	Cardiff £	*All-Wales* £
1987-88	467,124	2,733,822
1988-89	583,420	4,131,189

The amounts paid in earlier years are not readily available; the amount for 1989-90 is not yet available. For the current financial year credit approvals of £26 million are available for area-based renovation projects. No decisions have yet been made about resources for 1991-92.

Tourism

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals to enable the Wales tourist board to market overseas the attractions of tourism in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The overseas marketing of Wales as a tourist destination is one of the responsibilities of the British Tourist Authority. However, the Wales tourist board, with the agreement of the BTA, can undertake overseas promotion of Wales on behalf of the authority.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total revenue from overseas tourism in Wales in 1989 and in the previous three years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Wales tourist board estimates that revenue from overseas tourism in Wales in 1989 on the basis of the returns for the first three quarters of the year will be around £100 million. Figures for the three previous years are as follows:

	£ million
1986	102
1987	119
1988	98

Source International Passenger Survey

The implementation of the recommendations of last year's tourist review of the British Tourist Authority, undertaken by the Secretary of State for Employment, is intended to improve the marketing of Britain as a whole, and should thus be of direct benefit to Wales. The Secretary of State and I shall be monitoring the effectiveness of these changes as they relate to the promotion of Wales.

HEALTH

Environmental Health and Food Safety Division

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the environmental health and food safety division of his Department was established.

Mr. Dorrell: The division was set up on 1 January 1990 following a reorganisation involving a number of existing divisions.

Maternity Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by national health service region the hospitals in England which had consultant obstetric and/or general practitioner maternity beds in 1980, 1985 or the most recent year for which information is available and the numbers of beds of each type in each hospital and each region in each year.

Mr. Dorrell: This information cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Residential Care

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women are in residential care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimated total number of women in local authority and registered private and voluntary residential care homes at 31 March 1988 was 190,000.

Housing

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's strategy for ensuring housing is available for those people covered by community care legislation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The housing aspects of the care in the community proposals are the subject of discussions between the Department of Health and the Department of the Environment, in consultation with the local authority associations.

Housing (Women)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women patients who are in need of housing are discharged annually from psychiatric hospitals; and how many are allocated housing by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations in England and Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not held centrally by the Department.

Abortions

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the numbers of abortions carried out on resident women from zero to 12 weeks, 12 to 24 weeks and over 24 weeks for each of the years 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 by regional health authority in England.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the tables.

Number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 by gestation weeks and Regional Health Authority (RHA) of usual residence in England, 1986

Area of residence	Gestation weeks 0 to 12	13 to 24	25 and over
England	122,964	17,879	24
Regional Health Authority			
Northern	5,581	681	1
Yorkshire	7,448	1,068	1
Trent	9,314	1,475	2
East Anglian	4,082	577	3
North West Thames	13,953	1,815	1
North East Thames	15,144	1,954	4
South East Thames	12,031	1,769	2
South West Thames	9,166	1,016	—
Wessex	5,754	1,188	—
Oxford	5,961	875	1
South Western	5,876	933	2
West Midlands	13,384	2,397	4
Mersey	6,029	796	—
North Western	9,241	1,335	3

Number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 by gestation weeks and Regional Health Authority (RHA) of usual residence in England, 1987

Area of residence	Gestation weeks 0 to 12	13 to 24	25 and over
England	130,021	19,331	23
Regional Health Authority			
Northern	5,699	740	1
Yorkshire	7,928	1,199	1
Trent	9,780	1,476	3
East Anglian	4,140	630	1
North West Thames	14,546	1,962	—
North East Thames	16,686	2,213	4
South East Thames	12,837	1,980	3
South West Thames	9,295	1,164	1
Wessex	5,897	1,255	1
Oxford	6,396	888	1
South Western	6,285	1,028	2
West Midlands	14,229	2,517	1
Mersey	6,222	840	2
North Western	10,081	1,439	2

Number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 by gestation weeks and Regional Health Authority (RHA) of usual residence in England, 1988

Area of residence	Gestation weeks 0 to 12	13 to 24	25 and over
England	139,734	21,151	22
Regional Health Authority			
Northern	6,240	832	2
Yorkshire	8,320	1,247	—
Trent	10,476	1,580	3
East Anglian	4,239	647	2
North West Thames	15,358	2,031	—
North East Thames	18,609	2,583	3
South East Thames	14,183	2,191	3
South West Thames	10,171	1,328	1
Wessex	6,599	1,211	1
Oxford	6,798	934	1
South Western	6,500	1,194	2
West Midlands	15,045	2,833	4
Mersey	6,458	919	
North Western	10,738	1,621	

Number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 by gestation weeks and Regional Health Authority (RHA) of usual residence in England, 1989[1]

Area of residence	Gestation weeks 0 to 12	13 to 24	25 and over
England	143,517	19,560	18
Regional Health Authority			
Northern	6,253	720	1
Yorkshire	8,702	1,238	3
Trent	10,888	1,600	1
East Anglian	4,357	573	—
North West Thames	16,000	1,818	1
North East Thames	19,395	2,500	1
South East Thames	14,409	2,045	2
South West Thames	10,288	1,171	3
Wessex	6,834	1,033	1
Oxford	7,098	951	—
South Western	6,434	929	1
West Midlands	15,687	2,705	—
Mersey	6,471	810	3
North Western	10,701	1,467	1

[1] Provisional.

Social Work

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's policy with regard to generic social work within local authority social service departments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for local authorities to decide which approaches to social work best meet the needs of the people they serve. While a generic approach to social work was generally adopted following the Seebohm report of 1968, we recognise that social workers who develop specialist skills equally have an important role to play.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what analysis is made by his Department of the ability of individual local authorities to undertake their statutory social work functions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department's social services inspectorate keeps the Department informed about the provision of personal social services by individual local authorities.

Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider introducing legislation to specify a maximum permitted number of beds in residential or nursing homes.

Mr. Dorrell: No. We see no need to specify in legislation the maximum number of beds in such homes. It is for local social services authorities and health authorities to specify the maximum number of people for which individual homes may cater, in the light of such factors as the premises, staffing levels and the quality of care which can be provided for residents.

Trees Park Village, Darlington

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department received any representations regarding the eligibility of Trees Park Village in Darlington for registration under the Registered Homes Act.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received no such representations. Registration of homes under the Registered Homes Act 1984 is a matter for the local registration authority.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a detailed breakdown of the specific elements included in his Department's estimate of community care costs proposed for inclusion in the revenue support grant for 1991-92.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government's provisional assessment of what local authorities need to spend on personal social services in 1991-92 will be announced in the autumn. There is no intention to identify specific elements within that overall assessment, as it is for local authorities to determine their own spending priorities.

Bedford (Population)

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the population of Bedford *(a)* north of the Great Ouse and *(b)* south of that river, including Kempston.

Mr. Dorrell: Annual population estimates are prepared by OPCS for the areas administered by local authorities and by health authorities, but not for smaller areas. The estimated resident population of the North Bedfordshire county district (including Bedford) at mid-1988 was 136,800 (compared with 133,400 at mid-1981). The numbers of usual residents of the continuously built-up urban areas of Bedford/Kempston and Bedford enumerated in the 1981 census were 91,086 and 75,632 respectively.

Project 2000

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is Her Majesty's Government's current policy in respect of the implementation of Project 2000; in how many schools of nursing it will be introduced during 1990-91; how many schools will remain thereafter without the Project 2000 system; and what are the constraints on bringing all nurse training within Project 2000 within a specified time scale.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 5 June at column 595.

General Practices

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has given to health authorities about the extent to which established cross-boundary flows of patients should be reflected in the contractual arrangements which will apply to non-budget holding general practices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: "Contracts for Health Services: Operating Principles" and "Contracts for Health Services: Operating Contracts", copies of which are available in the Library, give guidance to health authorities on all major contract issues. District health authorities will be expected to let contracts which secure the referral patterns their local general practitioners prefer whether they be inside or outside their district's boundary, unless there are compelling reasons for not doing so.

Wheelchairs (Tourists)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will set up a scheme to provide short-term wheelchair loans to aid elderly tourists while visiting tourist areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The provision of wheelchairs on short-term loan is a matter for local authority social service departments. I am advised that there are a number of such schemes in existence. The hon. Member may like to consult the local authority concerned.

Family Health Services Authorities

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will announce the names of the chairmen of the new family health services authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have placed in the Library a list of the appointments made with effect from 17 September 1990, the date on which the new authorities come into being.

Good quality primary health care is fundamental to the success of our health service. We attach great importance to the enhanced work and wider responsibilities of the

newly constituted family health services authorities. The chairman's role is a challenging one in implementing the national health service changes for the general benefit of patients.

Health Service Commissioner (Report)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to receive the annual report of the health service commissioner for 1989-90.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The health service commissioner has, as in previous years, made a report on the performance of his functions in England, Scotland and Wales.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I presented the report to the House on Wednesday 11 July. It was published on Thursday 12 July (House of Commons paper No. HC 538) and copies are available from the Vote Office.

Blood Transfusion Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the operating cost of the blood transfusion service for each year since 1979 by regional transfusion service;

(2) if operating costs of the blood transfusion service currently include an element for *(a)* capital costs and *(b)* research.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The revenue costs of operating the national blood transfusion service since 1979 are shown in the table.

In addition to identifiable revenue expenditure the national blood transfusion service will incur expenditure on both capital items and research, but this is not separately identified in the accounts of health authorities.

Figures are derived from the annual accounts of regional and district health authorities.

The figures in individual columns may not always add up to the totals shown because of rounding.

Revenue expenditure on blood transfusion service (£ million cash)

By region	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Northern	1·945	2·349	2·533	2·729	2·850	2·977	3·361	3·730	3·719	4·011
Yorkshire	1·896	2·423	2·661	3·377	3·497	3·646	4·207	5·070	5·571	5·627
Trent	2·256	2·847	3·199	3·476	3·878	4·256	4·758	5·518	5·910	6·454
East Anglia	1·366	1·645	1·743	1·903	2·012	2·179	2·388	2·553	2·846	2·991
North West Thames	2·119	2·654	2·970	3·163	3·377	3·726	4·683	5·357	5·671	6·483
North East Thames	2·062	2·761	2·816	2·982	3·115	3·224	3·638	3·836	4·255	5·043
South East Thames and South West Thames	3·581	4·435	4·983	5·339	5·423	6·102	6·991	7·283	7·831	9·150
Wessex	1·496	1·704	1·800	1·911	2·082	2·204	2·679	2·698	3·089	3·077
Oxford	1·655	2·080	2·294	2·511	2·562	2·759	2·886	3·238	3·253	3·332
South Western	2·106	2·436	2·825	3·057	3·307	3·461	4·134	4·373	4·610	4·934
West Midlands	2·345	2·900	3·207	3·436	3·690	4·098	4·885	5·579	6·449	6·664
Mersey	1·572	1·974	2·280	2·464	2·683	2·957	3·368	3·780	3·782	3·900
North Western	3·126	3·841	4·388	4·644	4·876	5·315	6·309	6·835	6·801	6·754
TOTAL	27·524	34·050	37·698	40·989	43·352	46·903	54·286	59·849	63·788	68·420

GPs (Prescribing)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines his Department has issued in the past 10 years in respect of *(a)* over-prescribing and *(b)* under-prescribing by general practitioners; and if he will place in the Library a copy of all such guidelines currently in force.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The Department spends around £2·2 million each year in providing free of charge to all national health service doctors a variety of professional publications which contain information about drugs and advice on prescribing. These include "British National Formulary", "Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin" and "Prescribers' Journal". In addition, from April 1990, family practitioner committees have taken over from the Department's regional medical service responsibility for giving advice to practices on prescribing.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rights of the Child

30. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will take to extend the effectiveness of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom signed the convention on the rights of the child on 19 April and intends to ratify it as soon as possible.

Soviet Union

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning Her Majesty's Government's policy towards economic assistance to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: We believe that it is in the interest of all concerned that the process of economic reform in the Soviet Union should continue and be successful. We are strongly committed to helping this process by providing the Russians with the skills and expertise needed to take advantage of their country's enormous potential.

We welcome the decisions of the Dublin European Council and the G7 in Houston to commission an analysis of the Soviet Union's economic problems and of ways in which the west might help. This should provide the essential basis on which to take decisions about possible future assistance.

UNESCO

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what ways and means are being employed by Her Majesty's Government to keep the

situtation at the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation under review over the next 12 months; what are the terms of reference for the United Kingdom's observer at the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation; and if he will make it his policy to report to the House, on a regular basis, the results of this monitoring and the progress made by the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation, leading to the further consideration in 1991 of a return by the United Kingdom to membership of the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Sainsbury: The British observer delegation to UNESCO at the British embassy in Paris closely monitors developments at UNESCO. The observer delegation also serves as a channel of communication for those activities of UNESCO in which we still participate. We keep our policy to UNESCO constantly under review in the light of any progress towards reform but do not believe that a specific timetable would be appropriate.

Professional Qualifications

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made and what issues remain unresolved concerning the acceptance between the United Kingdom and other nations of the European Community of each other's professional qualifications in each other's countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The higher education diplomas directive was adopted in December 1988 for implementation by 4 January 1991. In August 1989 the Commission proposed a further directive for a second general system for the recognition of professional education and training which is intended to complement the first. This proposal remains under discussion.

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the types of applications which entry clearance officers abroad are instructed must be referred to the Home Department; and if he will publish these instructions.

Mr. Sainsbury: Entry clearance officers—ECOs—are required to refer the following categories of application to the Home Office:

(i) applications for asylum;
(ii) applicants who do not qualify for entry under the Immigration Rules, but whose applications reveal special circumstances;
(iii) applicants wishing to establish themselves in business in the United Kingdom;
(iv) applications from children coming for adoption;
(v) applications from certain nationals and individuals.

It is not our policy to publish instructions to ECOs.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the maximum, minimum and average periods between the receipt of a first application for settlement at the post in Dhaka and the decision on whether or not to grant entry clearance.

Mr. Sainsbury: In Dhaka, as elsewhere, decisions on whether to grant entry clearance may in some cases be made immediately after interview; in others the applicant may be asked to submit documentary evidence, following which the ECO may have to make further inquiries, either locally or in the United Kingdom. As each case is sui generis, it is not possible to give the average time taken to reach a decision.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements are in force for dealing with entry clearance applications from Iranian citizens *(a)* in Iran and *(b)* outside Iran; and what delays can be expected by people applying for (i) settlement, (ii) visits and (iii) studies.

Mr. Sainsbury: Iranian nationals must apply for entry clearance at one of our visa-issuing posts outside Iran. There are no separate queuing arrangements for settlement, visits or studies in these posts.

Delays experienced by applicants in any of these categories vary from a few days for some posts in Europe to several months for certain posts in the Gulf and near east which attract large numbers of entry clearance applications from Iranian citizens.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for naturalisation as British dependent territories citizens on the basis of a connection with Hong Kong have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused, for each year since 1988 and to the nearest available date.

Mr. Maude: According to Hong Kong Government statistics, the number of applications for naturalisation as British dependent territories citizens, Hong Kong were:

	1988	*1989*	[1] *1990*
No. of applications received	1,016	3,098	3,491
No. of applications approved	1,074	1,098	579
No. of applications rejected	60	73	41

[1] Up to end of June

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British dependent territories citizens from Hong Kong have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* been granted the status of British national (overseas).

Mr. Maude: From 1 July 1987 to 30 June 1990, a total of 137,142 applications from Hong Kong British dependent territory citizens for the British national (overseas) passport were received, of which 131,628 were granted. The remaining applications are still being processed.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the present waiting times to first interview for all categories of applicant in each country and at each post in the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 26 June, *Official Report*, column *137*.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long a person applying for entry clearance on 31 March, or the latest convenient date, at each post in the Indian subcontinent could expect to wait, in each queue, for *(a)* first interview, *(b)* referral of the case to the Home Department and the requested information being received by the post, *(c)* decision after

first interview and *(d)* the explanatory statement prepared by the post in the case of appeal against any refusal to be dispatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: *(a)* I would refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 26 June; *(b)* and *(c)* this information is not available. Processing times vary according to the circumstances of individual cases. *(d)* Average dispatch times of explanatory statements from receipt of an appeal are, at 6 July:

	Settlement	*Non-settlement*
New Delhi	16 weeks	12 weeks
Madras	12 weeks	4 weeks
Bombay	12 weeks	8 weeks
Islamabad	6 weeks	4 weeks
Calcutta	same day	same day
Karachi	12 weeks	5 weeks
Dhaka	12 weeks	6 weeks

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long a person applying for entry clearance for settlement at the British post in *(a)* Manila, *(b)* Accra, *(c)* Lagos, *(d)* Kingston, *(e)* Nicosia, *(f)* Cairo, *(g)* Bangkok, *(h)* Ankara and *(i)* Istanbul on 31 March, or the latest convenient date, could expect to wait for (i) interview, (ii) referral of the case to the Home Department and the requested information being received by the post, (iii) decisions and (iv) an explanatory statement prepared by the post in the event of an appeal against a refusal to be dispatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information required at (ii) and (iii) is not available as processing times vary according to the circumstances of individual cases.

As to (i) and (iv) the position at 6 July was as follows:

	(i) interview	*(iv) referral*
Manila	12 weeks	3 to 5 months
Accra	3 days	within 2 months
Lagos	4 days	15 weeks
Kingston	16 weeks	within 2 months
Nicosia	day of application	1 week
Cairo	day of application	within 2 months
Bangkok	12 weeks	within 2 weeks
Ankara	2 to 3 days	within 3 months
Istanbul	2 to 3 days	within 3 months

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many explanatory statements related to entry clearance appeals were awaiting typing at each post in the Indian subcontinent and in Manila, Lagos and Accra, on the latest available date; how many staff are employed, both full-time and part-time, to type statements; and when he expects any backlogs to be cleared.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is given in the following table—as at 6 July.

	(a)	*(b)*
New Delhi	126	(5)
Madras	4	(1)
Bombay	28	1 and (8)
Islamabad	34	13
Karachi	3	(2)
Dhaka	74	5
Calcutta	12	(1)
Manila	76	(2)
Lagos	28	(3)
Accra	2	1

(a) number of explanatory statements awaiting typing.
(b) staff whose duties include typing explanatory statements (staff employed on other typing work shown in brackets).

It is expected that the backlog at New Delhi will be cleared by the employment of casual typists.

Cyprus

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current policy of Her Majesty's Government towards Cyprus's aspiration to join the European Community.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) on 12 July, *Official Report*, column *307*.

Antarctica

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received from the National Federation of Women's Institutes in respect of Antarctica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have received representations from four local groups of the women's institute drawing attention to a resolution passed at the annual general meeting of their national federation on 7 June.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department has on recent civil disturbances in Somalia and reports of deaths caused by actions by Government forces; and what representations have been made to the Government of Somalia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We understand that at least 50 people were killed and many more wounded when security forces guarding President Barré opened fire on an unruly crowd at Mogadishu football stadium on 6 July. Our charge d'affaires has been instructed to raise our strong concern with the Somali Government.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the reply given to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), *Official Report*, 2 July, column *402*, any matters regarding nuclear non-proliferation controls were discussed at the Turnberry meeting of the NATO Ministers.

Mr. Waldegrave: NATO Foreign Ministers did not discuss the issue of nuclear non-proliferation controls at the North Atlantic Council meeting at Turnberry.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on

the outcome of his most recent meeting with non-governmental organisations where the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was discussed; and if he will give details of any further plans he has for meetings with non-governmental organisations on nuclear non-proliferation before the start of the nuclear non-proliferation forum review conference on 20 August.

Mr. Waldegrave: I last met non-governmental organisations on 3 April, when a wide range of topics, including the non-proliferation treaty, was discussed. The next such biannual meeting will be held in the autumn after the NPT fourth review conference.

Brian Tristram

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for how long Brian Tristram has been in the Peruvian gaol San Pedro de Lurigancho without trial; whether it is possible to extradite him for trial in the United Kingdom; what is his current state of health; when British embassy staff last saw him in the gaol; and what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to ensure that proceedings in Peru against Brian Tristram are either expedited or discontinued.

Mr. Sainsbury: Mr. Tristram was arrested at Jorge Chavel airport, Lima on 6 December 1988, allegedly with a suitcase containing 772 grams of cocaine. On 27 December 1988 he was formally charged with illicit trafficking in drugs and remanded in custody to Lurigancho prison. His case has been submitted to the fifth Callao provincial court for trial. I am not aware that Mr. Tristram has committed any offence in the United Kingdom for which his extradition might be sought.

He was last seen by British consular officials on 22 June 1990. He was comparatively cheerful during that visit. He has no specific complaints about his health, other than that his epilepsy pills had earlier been stolen. They have since been replaced. The British embassy in Lima has made representations to the Peruvian authorities in an effort to have the case brought to trial.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the breakout recently from the maximum security prison, the Canto Grande, in Peru has had any effect upon the conditions in which Brian Tristram is held at San Pedro de Lurigancho gaol.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have consulted the British embassy at Lima, which has seen no evidence that conditions in Lurigancho prison have been affected by events at Canto Grande.

EC Relations

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has received from the Government of the Republic of France in the last two days concerning relations between the republic and the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received from the Federal Republic of Germany in the last two days concerning relations between the republic and the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: There has been comment, much of it public, from a number of sources on Britain's relations with her EC partners. But we have received no representations on the subject.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland in the last two days concerning relations between the republic and the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: There has been comment, much of it public, from a number of sources on Britain's relations with her EC partners. But I have received no representations on the subject.

Angola

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken to ensure that the Angolan peace corridors are put in place as soon as possible in order that international aid may reach the areas devastated by drought.

Mr. Waldegrave: The "corridors of peace" are a UNITA proposal which has not yet been accepted by the Angolan Government. But the International Committee of the Red Cross is discussing with the Angolan Government arrangements for supplying emergency famine relief to all drought-affected areas of Angola.

NATO (Japanese Delegation)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, *Official Report*, 21 June, column *650*, the meeting in Belgium between NATO officials and the Japanese political delegation discussed nuclear non-proliferation matters.

Mr. Waldegrave: Nuclear non-proliferation matters were not discussed at the meeting in Belgium between NATO officials and the Japanese political delegation on 17 to 19 June.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what agreements exist between Britain and the United States of America for the exchange of information about chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no formal bilateral agreements between the two Governments for the exchange of such information.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Running Cost Control

Mr. Rost: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those Government agencies and bodies which are exempted from gross running cost control; what conditions are imposed on such agencies as a result of the exemption; and what are the procedures whereby such exemption is granted.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The gross running costs control system was introduced in April 1986. As explained in paragraph 3.10 of Cm 1021, exemption from such control may be agreed for bodies whose costs are fully met by their receipts, provided suitably robust monitoring and management control systems apply. Such cases are considered in the annual public expenditure survey, and those approved have been identified in the relevant public expenditure White Paper and summary and guide to supply estimates. There are currently 19 bodies for which exemption has been approved. They are:

1. Building Research Establishment (DOE)
2. Central Office of Information
3. Civil Service College (OMCS)
4. Companies House (DTI)
5. Department of the Registers of Scotland
6. Driving Standards Agency (DTp)
7. Her Majesty's Land Registry
8. Historic Royal Palaces Agency (DOE)
9. Laboratory of the Government Chemist (DTI)
10. Medicines Control Agency (DH)
11. Natural Resources Institute (ODA)
12. Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (HSE)
13. PSA Services
14. QEII Conference Centre (DOE)
15. Radiocommunications Executive Agency (DTI)
16. Social Survey Division (OPCS)
17. Vehicle Certification Agency (DTp)
18. Vehicle Inspectorate (DTp)
19. Warren Springs Laboratory (DTI).

Manufacturing

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross domestic product, was accounted for by the manufacturing sector *(a)* currently, *(b)* at the highest level since 1979 and *(c)* at the highest level since 1960.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1988, the latest year for which data are available, the manufacturing sector accounted for 24 per cent. of gross domestic product, much the same level as in the preceding five years. The corresponding percentage shares in 1960 and 1979—36 and 28 per cent. respectively—were, in both cases, higher than in all subsequent years.

Exports

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of total United Kingdom exports for the most recent year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is available in table A3 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" which is available in the Library of the House, or on the Central Statistical Office database, which may be accessed through the Library.

Interest Rates

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his reply of 10 July, *Official Report*, column *112*, what are the other main domestic and international influences on United Kingdom long-term interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: Long-term interest rates are integrally bound up with monetary conditions generally. The factors bearing on monetary conditions are discussed in chapter 2 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Government Accountancy Service

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the heads of the Government accountancy service for the last 10 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Mr.—later Sir—Kenneth Sharp from 1975 to October 1983, Sir Anthony Wilson from October 1984 to December 1988, Mr. A. J. Hardcastle from January 1989 to date.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, column *729*, when he hopes to make a statement about whether and how changes will be made to the present arrangements for payment of value added tax on duty-free fuel by British fishing vessels.

Mr. Ryder: While the Government are considering whether and how changes to the present arrangements should be made, temporary measures have been introduced which broadly continue the VAT zero-rating of duty-free fuel supplied to British fishing vessels. A full review of the treatment of fuels supplied as stores to shipping and aircraft is to be undertaken. The trade will be consulted. My right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General hopes to make a statement on the subject by the end of the year.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church of England (Assembly) Powers Act

34. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what recent representations he has received about the operation of the procedures of the Church of England (Assembly) Powers Act 1919, as amended by the Synodical Government Measure 1969.

Mr. Alison: None.

St. Marks, North Audley Street

35. **Mr. Cormack:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what plans the Church Commissioners have for the future of St. Marks, North Audley street.

Mr. Alison: A proposal to use this redundant church for open-plan offices is at present under consideration.

TRANSPORT

Manchester Ship Canal

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of the Manchester Ship Canal Harbour Revision Order 1990.

Mr. McLoughlin: I made this order on 26 February 1990. Because opponents of the order gave notice that they maintained their opposition, the order became subject to special parliamentary procedure and it was laid before Parliament on 18 April. Petitions against it have been referred to the Chairman of Committees and the Chairman of Ways and Means.

Correspondence

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Minister for Aviation and Shipping will be writing to Mr. A. P. Lambert of Armor House, Carlidnack road, Mawnan Smith, Falmouth, Cornwall, in reply to that gentleman's letter to him of 3 April regarding retired staff travel facilities with Sealink UK Ltd.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend will be aware of the complicated background to this correspondence. We will be sending Mr. Lambert a reply to his latest letter very shortly.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new money, excluding money already committed, would have been required for the Eurorail proposal to have proceeded for the fast rail link from the channel tunnel to London.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail plans investment of over £1 billion to enable passenger services to commence in 1993. Under Eurorail's proposals this investment expenditure would not have been reimbursed at the time the assets transferred to the joint venture: instead a combination of leasing and a low interest deferred loan of £1 billion was proposed. The joint venture further required a capital grant of £500 million toward the use of the new line by commuter services and British Rail investment of up to £400 million, mainly in commuter terminals.

Disabled Travellers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to encourage major transport groups to pay more attention to the specific needs of disabled travellers.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Transport is in regular contact, both directly and through the disabled persons transport advisory committee, with transport authorities and operators throughout the country to promote a better understanding of the transport needs of people with disabilities and to provide practical advice and information on how best to meet them.

Railway Development

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any proposals for further development of the railway system north of Bedford.

Mr. Freeman: I have received a copy of the summary report of a study commissioned by the midland main line consortium of local authorities, advocating electrification north of Bedford, which I have read with interest. It is for British Rail to consider any worthwhile proposals that meet its normal investment criteria.

SCOTLAND

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many junior hospital doctors are currently working more than 72 hours per week;

(2) what is the average number of hours worked by junior hospital doctors;

(3) when he expects to reduce to 72 hours per week the average number of hours worked by junior hospital doctors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the number of hours actually worked by junior hospital doctors is not collected centrally. As at 30 September 1989 there were 2,567 junior hospital doctors in Scotland contracted for more than 72 hours per week. The average number of contracted hours for all junior doctors was 80·2. The objective is to reduce junior doctors' hours to 72 per week as soon as practicable.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to reduce the hours worked by junior hospital doctors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1989 we introduced measures aimed at eliminating junior doctors' rotas more onerous than one night and one weekend in three in Scotland. Health boards have forecast that this initiative will result in the number of juniors on such rotas being reduced to around 32 per cent. by September this year. Health boards have recently been requested to improve on their September 1990 targets.

Charities

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints of criminality have been made against an officer or committee member of a registered charity in Scotland since 1979; what was the nature of the complaints; what action was taken; and what convictions, if any, were obtained.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not centrally held and cannot be made available since hitherto such complaints have been dealt with no differently from other complaints of criminality and cannot be differentiated from them.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints have been made since 1979 of non-registered charities in Scotland holding themselves out to be charities; and what action was taken.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At present charities operating in Scotland are not required to become recognised as charities for the purposes of section 505 of Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. Where persons falsely and dishonestly hold themselves out to be acting as or on behalf of charities the ordinary criminal law applies and I would refer to my previous answer.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints of misconduct or mismanagement have been made against an officer or committee member of a registered charity in Scotland since 1979; what was the nature of the complaints; and what were the names of the charities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is at present no machinery for the receiving and investigation of complaints where the complaint or evidence available fall short of an inference of criminality. Such misconduct or mismanagement has from time to time been brought to the attention of the Secretary of State and other agencies but

these have not been recorded. In the absence of any investigative machinery actively seeking out misconduct or mismanagement, it is impossible to say how many complaints have been made since 1979.

Maternity Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the hospitals in Scotland which had consultant obstetric and/or general practitioner maternity beds in 1980, 1985 or the most recent year for which information is available and the numbers of beds of each type in each hospital in each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of average available staffed beds for specialist obstetrics and GP obstetrics by hospital in Scotland for the years ending 31 March 1980 and 31 March 1990—the latest available figures—are as follows:

	Average available staffed beds			
	year ending March 1980		*year ending March 1990 (provisional)*	
Hospital	*Specialist Obstetrics*	*GP Obstetrics*	*Specialist Obstetrics*	*GP Obstetrics*
Argyll and Clyde Health Board				
Carlton	—	8	—	8
Dunoon and District General	—	11	—	10
Islay	—	2	—	3
Mid Argyll	—	3	—	3
The Maternity Hospital, Oban	—	10	—	9
Victoria Hospital, Rothesay	—	3	—	3
Vale of Leven District General	54	—	37	—
Rankin Memorial	42	9	38	—
Paisley Maternity	99	—	80	—
Total	195	46	155	37
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board				
Isle of Arran War Memorial	—	4	—	4
Lady Margaret	—	2	—	—
Thornyflat Maternity	—	18	—	18
Davidson Cottage	—	4	—	2
Ayrshire Central	129	—	132	—
Kilmarnock Maternity	—	19	—	—
Buckredden Maternity	—	29	—	—
Lady Margaret	—	2	—	—
Total	129	76	132	24
Borders Health Board				
Coldstream Cottage	—	4	—	—
Knoll	—	—	—	—
Borders General	—	—	39	—
Galashiels	—	10	—	—
Kelso Cottage	—	5	—	—
Sister Margaret's Cottage	—	2	—	—
Haig Maternity	—	12	—	—
Total	—	33	39	—
Dumfries and Galloway Health Board				
Cresswell Maternity	70	—	46	—
Dalrymple	—	8	—	8
Total	70	8	46	8
Fife Health Board				
Craigtoun Maternity	12	—	—	—
Forth Park Maternity	66	17	87	1
Maternity Hospital, Dunfermline	50	—	44	—
Total	128	17	131	1
Forth Valley Health Board				
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	67	—	56	—
Stirling Royal Infirmary	80	—	54	—
Total	146	—	110	—
Grampian Health Board				
Aberdeen Maternity	94	—	92	—
Fonthill Maternity Home	17	—	16	—
Summerfield Maternity Home	30	—	30	—
Peterhead Cottage	—	11	—	10
Fraserburgh Hospital	—	12	—	8
Huntly Jubilee	—	10	—	7

Hospital	Average available staffed beds year ending March 1980		Average available staffed beds year ending March 1990 (provisional)	
	Specialist Obstetrics	GP Obstetrics	Specialist Obstetrics	GP Obstetrics
Chalmers Hospital, Banff	—	13	—	10
Seafield Hospital, Buckie	—	11	—	7
Turner Hospital, Keith	—	7	—	5
Inverurie	—	10	—	—
Leanchoil Hospital, Forres	—	12	—	9
Maryhill Hospital, Elgin	—	17	—	13
Kincardine O'Neill War Memorial	—	5	—	8
Insch War Memorial	—	4	—	4
Turriff Cottage	—	10	—	—
Arduthie	—	7	—	—
Stephen Hospital, Dufftown	—	2	—	—
Total	141	129	138	81
Greater Glasgow Health Board				
Glasgow Royal Maternity	148	—	99	—
Stobhill	75	—	52	—
Rutherglen Maternity	100	—	82	—
Southern General	99	13	83	—
The Queen Mother's	110	—	103	—
Total	532	13	419	—
Highland health board				
Belford Hospital, Fort William	—	8	—	8
Mackinnon Memorial Hospital, Broadford	—	1	—	1
Portree	—	2	—	1
Dunbar Hospital, Thurso	14	5	—	—
Caithness Central	—	—	15	—
Raigmore Hospital, Inverness	67	—	72	—
Town and County Hospital, Nairn	7	—	7	—
Ross Memorial Hospital, Dingwall	14	—	12	—
Ian Charles Hospital, Grantown	—	3	—	—
TOTAL	102	20	106	10
Lanarkshire health board				
Alexander	—	24	—	—
Bellshill Maternity	118	—	116	—
William Smellie Maternity	50	—	50	—
Lady Home	—	1	—	—
Lockhart	—	3	—	—
Motherwell Maternity	36	—	—	—
Hairmyres Hospital	—	24	—	—
TOTAL	204	51	166	—
Lothian health board				
Eastern General	50	—	50	—
Western General	46	—	47	—
Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion	177	—	126	—
Bangour General	56	—	27	—
St. John's Hospital at Howden	—	—	21	—
Elsie Inglis	68	—	—	—
TOTAL	397	—	271	—
Orkney health board				
Balfour	—	11	—	8
TOTAL	—	11	—	8
Shetland health board				
Gilbert	—	11	—	11
TOTAL	—	11	—	11
Tayside health board				
Ninewells Hospital, Dundee	115	14	99	4
Perth Royal Infirmary	52	—	41	—
Arbroath Infirmary	—	19	—	18
Fyfe Jamieson Maternity Home, Forfar	—	12	—	12
Montrose Royal Infirmary	—	—	—	9
Blairgowrie and Rattray Cottage	—	8	—	7

Hospital	Average available staffed beds year ending March 1980 Specialist Obstetrics	GP Obstetrics	year ending March 1990 (provisional) Specialist Obstetrics	GP Obstetrics
Aberfeldy Cottage	—	5	—	—
Charleton Maternity Home, Montrose	—	19	—	—
TOTAL	167	77	140	50
Western Isles Health Board				
Lewis Hospital, Stornoway	13	—	13	—
Daliburgh	—	4	—	3
TOTAL	13	4	13	3
SCOTLAND TOTAL	2,224	496	1,865	233

Heart Transplants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland where and when the Scottish heart transplant centre is to be developed; and for how many patients each year it is to have funding.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish heart transplant centre will be established during 1991-92 with a capacity, when fully operational, to undertake 50 transplants per year. The decision on the location of the centre may be expected in the autumn.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in which hospitals Scottish residents received heart transplants in each year since 1985; how many Scottish residents were treated in each hospital; and what transfers of revenue allocation were subsequently made to other national health service regions within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about the number of Scottish residents receiving heart transplants and hospitals where such treatment was provided is not held centrally. No transfers of revenue allocation were made from Scotland in respect of such treatment which is funded as as supra-regional service.

Orthopaedic Beds

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will intervene to prevent the 65 per cent. reduction in orthopaedic beds in the south-east district of Glasgow proposed by the Greater Glasgow health board's strategy review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* I understand that the board proposes to reduce the number of orthopaedic beds in the south-east of Glasgow from 188 to 68, to reflect reductions in both the population of the area and the number of patients transferred from other boards, along with improved efficiency in the service. The board reached this decision following extensive consultation over a four-month period.

Police Manpower

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Scottish police authorities, indicating if their manpower is up to the levels agreed with the chief constables and the police authorities, and indicating the shortfall where applicable.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* As at 31 March 1990 the information requested was as follows:

Force	Police Authorised Establishment	Police Actual Strength	Police Shortfall[1]	Civilian Staff (Traffic Wardens, Clerical and Technical Staff) Authorised Establishment	Civilian Staff (Traffic Wardens, Clerical and Technical Staff) Actual Strength	Civilian Staff (Traffic Wardens, Clerical and Technical Staff) Shortfall
Central	638	630	−8	139	126	−13
Dumfries and Galloway	344	348	+4	92	82	−10
Fife	754	755	+1	182	173	−9
Grampian	1,116	1,103	−13	335	325	−10
Lothian and Borders	2,441	2,482	+41	812	793	−19
Northern	631	631	—	199	183	−16
Strathclyde	6,954	6,886	−68	1,423	1,322	−101
Tayside	1,001	1,012	+11	258	253	−5
Scotland	13,879	13,847	−32	3,440	3,257	−183

[1] Authorities are permitted to recruit in excess of authorised establishment to replace officers on Scottish Crime Squad secondment etc.

Bypass Operation

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statistics he holds in respect of the number of patients who had been identified as requiring a coronary artery bypass operation but who died prior to receiving surgery.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 13 July 1990]:* In the year ending 31 March 1990 a total of 48 such deaths were recorded. Information on the actual cause of death is not recorded centrally.

NHS Hospitals

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to provide additional funding for the refurbishment of long-term wards in Scotland's national health service hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 13 July 1990]:* Each health board determines its capital expenditure priorities within the block capital allocation made annually by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of how cuts in national health service provision will affect the quality of patient care in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 13 July 1990]:* There have been no cuts in the provision for hospital and community health services.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Question Time

47. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what procedural proposals he expects to bring forward to extend the accountability of Ministers at Question Time.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Ministers are already fully accountable to Parliament. Implementation of the Procedure Committee's recommendations about oral questions will help to make Question Time more effective. As I told the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 25 June, I hope the recommendations can take effect from the start of the next Session.

Political Parties (Offices)

48. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will take steps to ensure that every recognised political party represented in the House shall have office space available to them within easy access of the Chamber.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that this matter is being considered by the relevant sub-committees of the Services Committee.

Members' Allowances

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Lord President of the Council for the last three years for which figures are available, what was the total cost of Members' *(a)* salaries, *(b)* office costs allowance, *(c)* travel to and from and within their constituencies, *(d)* second home allowances and *(e)* any other benefits-allowances claimed by hon. Members.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Expenditure under the various headings specified in the years ending 31 March 1988, 1989 and 1990 was as follows:

	1987-88 £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £
Salaries etc. of Members of Parliament	14,478,702·22	15,785,477·81	17,042,032·64
Office costs expenses	13,786,197·56	14,568,579·36	15,871,657·47
Travel by Members between home, Westminster and constituency and within constituencies	4,322,804·16	5,023,845·31	5,905,744·74
Additional costs incurred in living away from home	4,763,539·21	5,384,650·53	5,493,942·31

The total expenditure from the House of Commons: Members' salaries etc. vote for each of those years was £42,444,582·70 for 1987-88, £46,905,668·40 for 1988-89 and £48,205,324·76 for 1989-90. The difference between the total of the specified amounts and the overall expenditure from the vote is accounted for by other expenses claimed by Members together with Exchequer contributions to the parliamentary contributory pension fund and Members' fund and payments for financial assistance to Opposition parties.

Select Committee Reports

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many reports have been produced by departmental Select Committees since 1979; and now many have been the subject of debate on a substantive motion on the Floor of the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: From 1979 to 29 June 1990, 591 reports and 231 special reports have been published by departmentally related Select Committees. Of these, seven have been debated in the House on substantive motions.

Child Care

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *297*, on child care facilities, when he expects the feasibility study to be completed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is expected that the study will be completed in time to be considered by the Services Committee at a meeting early in the autumn.

Recycled Notepaper

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Lord President of the Council what recent inquiries he has made into the comparative cost of switching to the use of 100 per cent. recycled paper for the supplies of headed notepaper now made available to Members compared with continuing with that presently used.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 24 May 1990, column *297*. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee considered the comparative costs when approval was given for recycled writing paper and envelopes to be introduced on an experimental basis along with the existing range of stationery.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Surplus Food

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the arrangements for the distribution of surplus beef and butter in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The arrangements for the 1990 scheme follow closely those in successful operation over the last two years, while enhanced publicity this year has enabled the coverage of the country by the scheme to be improved.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the total numbers of cattle recorded as having BSE for each of the last 12 weeks.

Mr. Maclean: The number of BSE cases confirmed each week is as follows:

Week ending	*Number*
27 April 1990	326
4 May 1990	316
11 May 1990	271
18 May 1990	238
25 May 1990	297
1 June 1990	141
8 June 1990	238
15 June 1990	365
22 June 1990	301
29 June 1990	248
6 July 1990	229
13 July 1990	292

Lead in Cattle Order

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the reasons for imposing the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Lead in Cattle) (England) Order 1990, (S.I. No. 1391) on a farm in Hertfordshire, indicating the source of the contaminant, the number of cattle involved, the levels of lead in test tissues and milk and the date when his Department first discovered there was a problem.

Mr. Gummer: Following the death of five calves on one farm at the end of May, investigations were carried out by the royal veterinary college and the Ministry's veterinary investigation service which suggested lead poisoning. These animals were among a group of 88 animals grazing a particular field. Blood test results for these cattle, are in the range of 0·06 to 5·63 micromol/l. No milk is produced on this farm and tests carried out by the milk marketing board on general supplies from this area show no traces of lead. No animals have been taken for slaughter from this group during the period of these investigations. None the less, while further investigations are being undertaken to establish the cause of the problem, I have made a precautionary order under part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act to ensure that no meat from these animals is allowed to enter the food chain until it is shown to be safe for it to do so.

Tyrrell Committee

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now place his further advice from the Tyrrell committee in the Library.

Mr. Gummer: I did so on 12 July.

Agriculture (Assistance)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing in respect of the most recent year for which figures are available the assistance given to the agriculture industry in *(a)* European Economic Community aids, *(b)* national Government aids, *(c)* price enhancement caused by import levies and intervention, *(d)* export rebates and *(e)* other aids; and if he will also provide an indication of total aids of a comparable nature by the United States of America.

Mr. Curry: Estimates prepared by OECD, recomputed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on a per capita basis, of the transfers from taxpayers and consumers associated with agricultural policies in the European Community and the United States of America in 1989 are shown in the table. The estimates are based on many assumptions. The authors note that the estimates are static ones, taking no account of the effect that a reduction in assistance would have on world prices and thus on the magnitude of the transfers.

	Transfers from taxpayers	*Transfers from consumers*	*Budget revenues*	*Total transfers*
ECU per head of population				
European Community	125	150	2	273
United States	170	80	2	248

Raspberry Pulp

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the proposals within the European Community to prevent the dumping of raspberry pulp from eastern European countries.

Mr. Curry: Discussions are taking place between the European Commission and the Polish and Yugoslav authorities. The Commission has undertaken to introduce differential prices for different qualities of semi-processed soft fruit and to improve monitoring to ensure that agreed prices are respected. United Kingdom Ministers have been pressing hard for this issue to be resolved quickly and my right hon. Friend will strongly urge the Commission to make a satisfactory statement at the forthcoming Council of Agriculture Ministers.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the annual cost if there were no increase in national insurance contributions, if the age of retirement for men were reduced to 60 years; and by how much national insurance contributions would have to rise if there were no Exchequer payments to meet the increase in cost.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest estimates, based on 1985-86 benefit rates, of the gross and net costs to public funds of reducing state pension age for men to age 60 are £4,200 million and £3,000 million respectively. Because of the number of changes affecting benefits, contributions and the labour force in the intervening period, I regret that it is not possible without disproportionate cost to relate such figures to 1990-91 contribution rates. However, the gross 1985-86 cost was equivalent to 18 per cent. of the national insurance fund's outgoings in that year.

Mr. J. W. Davies

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list and date the representations received from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North regarding Mr. J. W. Davies, of 30 Aspley Park drive, Aspley, Nottingham, and his claim for a war pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Letters were received from the hon. Member regarding Mr. Davies' claim for war pension on 26 February 1990 and 12 July 1990. The hon. Member also gave notice on 13 March 1990 of a parliamentary question (PQ 1361) on the subject of Mr. Davies' claim and four other questions (PQs 1357-60) requesting background information on war pension claims. A further parliamentary question on Mr. Davies' claim (PQ 2434) was listed on 10 July 1990.

Housing Benefit

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women are in receipt of housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the extra cost of the housing benefit scheme in England only if the rate of withdrawal of housing benefit or rent taper was, respectively, reduced from 65 per cent. to *(a)* 55 per cent., *(b)* 50 per cent., *(c)* 45 per cent., *(d)* 40 per cent., *(e)* 33 per cent., and *(f)* 26 per cent. showing the division between rent rebates and rent allowances.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* It is not possible to provide reliable estimates for separate parts of the country. The table gives the estimated extra costs, in the current year and on a Great Britain basis, of altering the rate of withdrawal of housing benefit within the present structure of the scheme.

£ million

Taper (per cent.)	*Rent Rebate*	*Rent Allowance*	*Total Cost*
55	90	70	160
50	140	110	250
45	210	160	370
40	290	230	520
33	430	340	770
26	630	500	1,130

(*Source:* Modelled using data drawn from the 1985-6-7 Family Expenditure Surveys).

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the extra cost of the housing benefit scheme in England only, if the earnings disregards were increased to £10 for a single household, £25 for a couple and £35 for a single parent.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* It is not possible to provide reliable estimates for separate parts of the country. However, for Great Britain, assuming that single people whose applicable amount includes the disability premium retain the £15 earnings disregard to which they are currently entitled, the estimated cost in the current year of increasing the earnings disregards in housing benefit would be about £110 million.

(*Source:* Modelled using data drawn from the 1985-6-7 Family Expenditure Surveys).

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the extra cost of the housing benefit scheme in England only, if the applicable amount for a single person aged 18 to 24 years was the same as that for a single person aged over 25 years and the applicable amount for a single-parent family was the same as that for a two-parent family.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* It is not possible to provide reliable estimates for separate parts of the country. However, for Great Britain, assuming

(a) the increase in the personal allowance would apply also to 16 and 17-year-olds on housing benefit (the applicable amount for this age group has been set at the same level as that for 18 to 24-year-olds since July 1989); and

(b) the lone parent premium is subsumed into the increased personal allowance for lone parents, but the special earnings disregard is retained,

the extra estimated cost in the current year for housing benefit would be about £40 million.

Local Offices

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consultations he has undertaken regarding the future of the regional office of his Department at Gabalfa, Cardiff;

(2) what is his best estimate of the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net job loss arising from the proposed reorganisation of the regional tier of administration of his Department's local office network;

(3) what proposals he has to relocate the administration and management of the regional tier of his Department, currently located at Gabalfa, Cardiff.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The restructuring of social security operations, to improve service to the public under the benefits agency, will include the replacement of the present seven regions and two central offices by larger territorial directorates. Many of the functions at present

carried out by regional offices are likely to be devolved to local managers, as part of their increased accountability. The detailed implications of these changes will need to be worked out in the light of a study which we have commissioned to identify the continuing need for centralised regional services, and after discussion with the chief executive. The trade union side has been kept informed about this study and about management proposals for three territorial directorates, and it will continue to be consulted about the personnel aspects of the move to the benefits agency. Meanwhile, our concern is to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of the public and of our own staff in Wales to the fullest possible extent, and we have no plans to close the offices at Gabalfa, Cardiff.

Family Credit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost to his Department of the current advertisements to inform the public of their entitlement to family credit; what increase in applications has resulted from this; and how many additional staff have been employed to deal with this.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The cost of the current advertising campaign on television and in the press is £2·4 million. The campaign has not yet been running long enough for the full impact to be reflected in the level of claims. Overtime is being worked at the family credit unit, but otherwise, to date, only one additional member of the staff has been employed, to deal with the requests for claim forms prompted by the adverts.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give figures for each of the last 12 months of the number of people on family credit who have not received a replacement claim book before their current one expired.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Family credit awards are for a fixed period of 26 weeks, and a fresh renewal claim has to be made for entitlement to continue when each period ends.

Information is not available as to the number of cases where the new award is not received before the expiry of the previous book.

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements are made for representation of adjudication officers at commissioners' hearings; and whether he will make similar arrangements for representation of claimants who would otherwise be unrepresented.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Adjudication officers are represented at all oral hearings before a commissioner. The office of the chief adjudication officer arranges for representation by an adjudication officer from that office, from the central office in Scotland where the case is to be heard there, or by lawyers where complex legal issues are involved.

Responsibility for the administration of the social security commissioners lies with the Lord Chancellor's Department, to which the hon. Member may wish to refer the question of the provision of representation for claimants at commissioners' hearings.

Income Support

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the scheduled dates of publication for 1990 and 1991 of the information relating to income support referred to in his reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) of 9 July, *Official Report*, column *75*.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The data to which the hon. Member refers are collected as part of the Department's management information system. They are not published routinely but are available on request at quarterly intervals.

EMPLOYMENT

Messrs. Graham Brabyn Ltd.

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when former employees of Messrs. Graham Brabyn Ltd. of Redruth, Cornwall, may expect to receive their payments under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 redundancy payments scheme; for what reason payments have not yet been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My officials are dealing with claims for arrears of wages, holiday pay, notice pay and redundancy pay for around 70 employees. The need to undertake the usual check of the company's wage records, which has proved difficult in this case, and the pressure of current casework in redundancy payments offices has given rise to some delay. I hope, however, to be able to begin making payments to the employees shortly.

Employment Training

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the departmental scrutiny of drop-out rates of employment training, referred to by Sir Geoffrey Holland in his Department's evidence to the Select Committee on Employment concerning employment training, HC 394-i, Q 5-9.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) on 9 July, *Official Report*, column *97*.

Employment Service

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the guidelines used by his officials in deciding whether a question should be referred to the chief executive of the Employment Service.

Mr. Eggar: The criteria I use in deciding whether to refer a question to the chief executive of the Employment Service are set out in the Employment Service framework document published by my Department in March this year.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, 10 July, *Official Report*, column *146*, if he will arrange for the 57 replies from the Employment Service Agency's chief executive made between 1 April and 6 July to be printed in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Eggar: The chief executive of the Employment Service, when replying to questions referred to him, invites hon. Members to say whether they wish the reply to be placed in the Library of the House. The chief executive has informed me that, since 1 April, copies of 26 replies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Beaches

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has made of the cost of lost tourist trade to resorts that have failed to reach the European Economic Community blue flag safety levels on their beaches.

Mr. Nicholls: No such estimate has been made. Thanks to a major programme of remedial works, there has been a very marked improvement in bathing water quality in recent years, with 76 per cent. of identified waters now meeting European Community standards. Further planned capital investment of almost £3 billion should help to ensure that all bathing waters meet EC standards by the end of the century.

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what expenditure was incurred on the action for jobs campaign in 1987-88 in addition to printed material, television advertising, press advertising, radio advertising, outdoor advertising, regional campaigns, exhibition material and research.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure of £194,000 was incurred on presentations in the action for jobs campaign in 1987-88, in addition to printed material, television advertising, press advertising, radio advertising, outdoor advertising, regional campaigns, exhibition material and research.

Voluntary Organisations

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many final operational programme applications have been submitted to the European Commission from voluntary organisations in Wales.

Mr. Eggar: Operational programmes have not been submitted specifically by the voluntary sector in Wales. Operational programmes represent aggregated bids from all interested organisations to run groups of projects under particular European social fund priorities.

Wages Councils

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to ensure the continued existence of wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Secretary of State's reply of 6 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett), *Official Report*, column *543*.

Jobcentres

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will take action to prevent jobcentres from advertising vacancies at a rate of pay which is below the legal limit; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will take action to prevent jobcentres from advertising vacancies which do not specify the wages offered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Gentleman.

Training Centre, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 9 July from the Secretary of State for Wales, what terms and conditions he has discussed, with Astra Training Services for building a new industrial training centre at Western avenue, Cardiff.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* No discussions have been held with Astra Training Services Ltd. on this subject. My Department is selling the freehold of the site, most of which is held by Astra on a three-year lease.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 9 July, if he has instructed King and Co. to convey any interest, leasehold or freehold, in any land at Western avenue to Astra Training Services for an industrial training centre.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The leasehold interest in the site at Western avenue, Cardiff, was conveyed to Astra Training Services Ltd. on completion of the sale of the training business. Should Astra wish to acquire the freehold interest it would be in the same position as any other purchaser and would need to discuss any interest with the Department's agent, King and Company.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 9 July, what instructions have been given to King and Co. to dispose of his Department's leasehold interest in the skill centre buildings and associated land at Western avenue, Cardiff.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The leasehold interest in the site at Western avenue, Cardiff, was conveyed to Astra Training Services Ltd. on completion of the sale of the training business.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the reply from the Secretary of State for Wales of 9 July, what future plans he has for development of the Department's land and buildings at Western avenue, Cardiff after 1993.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The land and buildings at Western avenue, Cardiff, are in the process of being marketed by King and Company. It will be for the purchaser to decide any future plans for development.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he has undertaken with *(a)* Cardiff chamber of commerce and industry, *(b)* Confederation of British Industry, Wales region, *(c)* Engineering Employers Federation, south Wales region, *(d)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(e)* South Glamorgan training and enterprise council regarding the future use of land and buildings currently used for industrial training purposes at Western avenue, Cardiff.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* My Department has had no consultation with the organisations listed. Negotiations about the sale of the freehold of land and buildings owned by my Department are being conducted on my behalf by King and Company.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what negotiations he is pursuing with Astra Training Services regarding its requirement for an industrial training centre at Western avenue, Cardiff *(a)* before 1993 and *(b)* after 1993.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* No negotiations are being pursued with Astra Training Services Ltd. Astra has a three-year lease on most of the freehold site now being marketed by King and Company. It will be for Astra to decide its future requirements in the locality.

Astra's plans for the future of the business it sought to purchase were discussed with my advisers before terms of sale were agreed.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the reply from the Secretary of State for Wales of 9 July, whether he has discussed plans for long-term investment in an industrial training centre at Western avenue, Cardiff, with Astra Training Services.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* In the course of negotiations for the sale of the Skills Training Agency, my advisers discussed with all potential purchasers their plans for the future of the business they were seeking to buy and these plans were taken into account in reaching a decision on bids.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 9 July, what consultations he had with the manager of the skill centre at Western avenue, Cardiff, before instructing King and Company regarding the sale of his Department's interest in the site.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* I understand that King and Company, which is marketing my Department's freehold interest in the site, has liaised with the leaseholder, Astra Training Services Ltd., about viewing arrangements and the siting of sale boards etc.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the terms and conditions he has agreed with Astra Training Services for the disposal of his interest in the land and buildings currently sub-let to the employee rehabilitation centre at Western avenue, Cardiff.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 13 July 1990]:* Most of the area occupied by the employment rehabilitation centre (ERC) at Western avenue, Cardiff is outside that part of the site leased to Astra Training Services Ltd. The small part of the ERC that falls within Astra's leased area is covered by a three-year sub-lease between Astra and the Government. Should the ERC vacate within that period, Astra would be free to occupy that area itself or grant a new sub-lease to a third party. This would be until Astra itself vacates the site under the terms of its own three-year lease.

Back-related Illnesses

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on how many working days have been lost in each of the last three years due to back-related illness.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

The available information is given in the following table. This shows the number of days of certified incapacity for sickness and invalidity benefit, where the cause of incapacity was due to a back-related illness.

	Total number of days millions[1]
7 April 1986 to 4 April 1987	39·8
6 April 1987 to 2 April 1988	46·5
4 April 1988 to 1 April 1989	52·6

[1] This total excludes the first three days in any spell of sickness (waiting days). It also excludes all days of incapacity covered by statutory sick pay (payable for up to 28 weeks) and all days lost by other persons not entitled to sickness or invalidity benefit. It includes days of incapacity for which invalidity benefit was claimed by men aged 65 to 69 and women aged 60 to 64.

DEFENCE

Radiation

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total occupational whole body equivalent radiation exposure of *(a)* Chatham and *(b)* Devonport dockyard workers in milliSieverts, for each year since the onset of the nuclear programme.

Mr. Neubert: The cumulative radiation doses for all workers at Chatham and Devonport dockyards for each of the years 1979 to 1989 inclusive are shown in the table. These figures include the cumulative radiation doses of employees monitored for exposure to ionising radiations by the local issue of direct reading dosimeters while employed under a written system of work. Figures for earlier years are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Total occupational whole body equivalent radiation exposure

	Chatham (mSv)	Devonport (mSv)
1979	8,214	1,020
1980	9,653	1,712
1981	7,330	2,128
1982	4,109	2,320
1983	390	5,533
1984	62	10,140
1985	9	7,330
1986	6	6,028
1987	1	4,543
1988	2	2,760
1989	9	2,767

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *245*, concerning exposure to radiation, when the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces expects to write to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will be writing to the right hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown for *(a)* Chatham and *(b)* Devonport dockyards of annual individual radiation exposure for workers in the bands of (i) 0 to 10, (ii) 10 to 20, (iii) 20 to 30, (iv) 30 to 40, (v) greater than 50, (vi) greater than 70 and (vii) greater than 100 milliSieverts for all years since the onset of nuclear work.

Mr. Neubert: A breakdown of annual individual radiation doses for *(a)* Chatham and *(b)* Devonport dockyard workers for each of the years 1979-89 is given in the tables. A more detailed or alternative breakdown of the figures and data for years earlier than 1979 can be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Table A
Annual individual radiation dose equivalents
Chatham
Numbers of personnel in dose ranges

	[1]0–15mSv	15–20mSv	20–30mSv	30–40mSv	40–50mSv	>50mSv	>70mSv	>100mSv
1979	821	57	74	37	18	1	0	0
1980	1,703	36	77	54	44	1	0	0
1981	1,285	56	84	24	7	0	0	0
1982	1,175	37	30	4	0	0	0	0
1983	446	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
1984	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1985	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1986	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1987	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1988	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1989	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table B
Annual individual radiation dose equivalents
Devonport
Numbers of personnel in dose ranges

	[1]0–15mSv	15–20mSv	20–30mSv	30–40mSv	40–50mSv	>50mSv	>70mSv	>100mSv
1979	1,258	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
1980	1,643	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1981	2,159	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1982	2,543	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
1983	2,968	26	17	5	0	0	0	0
1984	2,879	77	82	31	5	0	0	0
1985	2,831	48	44	13	0	0	0	0
1986	2,945	47	38	5	0	0	0	0
1987	2,616	34	13	6	0	0	0	0

	[1]0–15mSv	15–20mSv	20–30mSv	30–40mSv	40–50mSv	>50mSv	>70mSv	>100mSv
1988	2,676	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
1989	2,382	9	3	0	0	0	0	0

[1] The 0–15mSv dose band includes those employed on written systems of work.

Helicopter Noise

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he will publish the results of the review of the boundaries of the helicopter noise insulation grant scheme;

(2) if he will publish the results of the noise survey carried out by the university of Ulster at sites affected by high levels of helicopter activity.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is little that I can add to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 21 June, column *647*. The results of the noise surveys undertaken by the university of Ulster in the vicinity of the helicopter landing sites at Bessbrook, Crossmaglen and Forkhill are currently being studied by my Department.

My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces expects to be in a position to write to the hon. Member, and other hon. Members who have expressed an interest, in the near future with details of the survey results. Local announcements will be made shortly afterwards.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many helicopter noise insulation grants have been issued since the insulation scheme was implemented;

(2) how many buildings currently fall within the boundaries to which the helicopter noise insulation grant scheme applies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Noise insulation grant schemes were introduced at Bessbrook, Crossmaglen and Forkhill on 1 June 1988. These enabled residents of homes within the qualifying noise contour to apply for grants for secondary acoustic glazing for all bedrooms and up to two living rooms.

The following table lists the number of grant applications received thus far for each scheme.

	Eligible dwellings	*Grant applications*
Bessbrook	45	22
Crossmaglen	30	24
Forkhill	20	1
TOTAL	95	47

Procurement Executive Airfields

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of the procurement executive's airfields at Bedford, Farnborough and Boscombe Down.

Mr. Neubert: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on 19 June, *Official Report*, column *547*.

Research and Development

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will publish a list of research contracts and agreements in universities and polytechnics funded by his Department which are not classified secret;

(2) what contracts have been placed with universities and other institutions of higher education for research on zirconium and zirconium films since 1983;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* a list of the five universities which were awarded the highest number of research and development contracts in the last financial year, *(b)* the number of contracts and agreements which each of these universities received and *(c)* the total worth of these contracts for each of the five universities;

(4) if he will list the universities and polytechnics in Britain where his Department is currently funding research and development contracts and agreements.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on 8 February at column *774*.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how his Department intends to reduce its spending on defence research and development;

(2) if he has any plans to reduce the amount of money his Department spends on research and development in *(a)* universities and polytechnics and *(b)* industry.

Mr. Neubert: The Government have announced their intention gradually to reduce the real level of their spending on defence research and development, while recognising there must be sufficient activity for defence needs. This will involve looking very carefully at what is available off the shelf and at the opportunities for international collaboration before embarking on major new development programmes. Within the total, spending in industry and the universities will depend on the requirements of the programme.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many research and development contracts and agreements in universities and polytechnics are currently being funded by the Admiralty Research Establishment; how many universities and polytechnics currently hold contracts and agreements funded by the Admiralty Research Establishment; and what is the total worth of these contracts and agreements;

(2) how many research and development contracts and agreements in universities and polytechnics are currently being funded by the Royal Aircraft Establishment; and what is the total worth of these contracts and agreements;

(3) how many research and development contracts and agreements in universities and polytechnics are currently being funded by the Atomic Weapons Establishment; how many universities and polytechnics currently hold contracts and agreements funded by the Atomic Weapons Establishment; and what is the total value of these contracts and agreements;

(4) how many research and development contracts and agreements in universities and polytechnics are currently

being funded by the Chemical Defence Establishment; how many universities and polytechnics currently hold contracts and agreements funded by the Chemical Defence Establishment; and what is the total value of these contracts and agreements;

(5) how many research and development contracts and agreements in universities and polytechnics are currently being funded by the Royal Armaments Research and Development Establishment; how many universities and polytechnics currently hold contracts and agreements funded by the Royal Armaments Research and Development Establishment; and what is the total value of these contracts and agreements;

(6) how many research and development contracts and agreements in universities and polytechnics are currently being funded by the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment; how many universities and polytechnics currently hold contracts and agreements funded by the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment; and what is the total value of these contracts and agreements;

(7) how many research and development contracts and agreements in universities and polytechnics are currently being funded by the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment; how many universities and polytechnics currently hold contracts and agreements funded by the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment; and what is the total value of these contracts and agreements.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested on research agreements funded by A&AEE, ARE, AWE, CDE, RAE, RARDE and RSRE is as follows:

Funding establishment	*Number of current agreements*	*Total value £ million*	*Number of universities and polytechnics*
A&AEE	0	0·0	0
ARE	113	8·8	40
AWE	0	0·0	0
CDE	64	7·9	33
RAE	188	16·6	43
RARDE	153	13·0	47
RSRE	101	9·7	40
TOTAL	619	56·0	203

The Ministry of Defence currently has some 143 research and development contracts with universities and polytechnics. The total value of these is some £5·1 million. It is not possible to provide the information on research and development contracts at each establishment without incurring disproportionate expense.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Chemical Defence Establishment is funding research in universities and other institutions of higher education on various aspects of verification technology.

Mr. Neubert: As part of the United Kingdom's support for the negotiations in Geneva for a comprehensive, global and verifiable chemical weapons convention, the Chemical Defence Establishment, together with other departments concerned, is undertaking work on various aspects of verification technology, supported by extramural contracts with universities and polytechnics as appropriate.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the positive results from his Department's funding of research and development in universities and polytechnics since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: This work has played an important role in support of the defence research programme and has provided good value for money. It is not possible to list individual benefits without incurring disproportionate expense.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons his Department has increased its spending on research and development in universities and polytechnics since 1984.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on 8 February 1990 at column *775*.

Universities and Polytechnics

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what formal links exist between universities and polytechnics and his Department, other than the awarding of contracts and agreements.

Mr. Neubert: The MOD currently funds six defence lectureships at British universities and is contributing towards the cost of the establishment and running of a new centre for defence studies at Kings college, university of London. Links are also maintained through the sponsorship of MOD personnel undertaking research and higher degrees at universities and polytechnics; and participation in seminars. Grants for work of relevance to defence are made under collaborative grants arrangements with the research councils. The MOD and the Science and Engineering Research Council co-fund awards to certain students who are jointly supervised by their university and defence research establishments. All activities are in support of the defence programme.

Royal Marines School of Music

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has reached a decision on the future of the Royal Marines school of music at Deal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A review carried out during 1989 recommended, on financial and management grounds, that the Royal Marines school of music (RMSM) should be relocated from Deal to Whale island, Portsmouth. My right hon. Friend has considered this recommendation carefully but concluded that a decision should be postponed until such time as the longer-term requirement for the RM barracks at Deal has been clarified. The RMSM will therefore remain at Deal for the foreseeable future.

ENVIRONMENT

Creosote

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what discussions he has had in meetings of the European Council of Ministers on the failure of the Federal Republic of Germany to adopt new regulations on the use of creosote for wood preservation;

(2) if he has any proposals to increase controls over the use of creosote as a wood preservative.

Mr. Trippier: There are at present no Community regulations on the use of creosote for wood preservation. The German Government have notified the Commission in accordance with directive 83/189/EEC of their intention to introduce controls on certain uses of creosote. The Department of the Environment and the Health and Safety Executive are preparing a response to the proposals in consultation with other Departments and industry. This subject has not been discussed by the Council of Ministers.

Big Ben

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *647*, to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, what will be the cost of forging the new hammer arm for Big Ben.

Mr. Chope: About £8,000.

Local Government Finance

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what guidance was given by his Department to local authorities on the recruitment of suitably qualified computer systems operators for processing community charge payments;

(2) what guidelines were issued by his Department on the operation of computer systems for processing community charge payments.

Mr. Chope: My Department has issued guidance to local authorities and the major computer companies on the operation of all aspects of the community charge. We continue to keep them up to date as necessary with any changes in the arrangements. It is the responsibility of local authorities, which vary greatly in size and requirements, to ensure that they have suitable computer systems and staff to operate them.

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers local authorities have to charge a different rate of community charge to those with two sets of accommodation in the light of individual circumstances.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* Local authorities have a wide discretion in levying the standard community charge on the owners of domestic properties which are not used as a sole or main residence. They may at the beginning of each financial year set for the whole of that year the multiplier for the standard charge at zero, half, one, one and a half or two times the personal community charge for the area. If the authority wishes, different multipliers may be set for different classes of circumstances providing these do not exceed the maximum multipliers prescribed for 11 particular circumstances defined in regulations. Authorities may also determine, within defined criteria, their own further classes for the purpose of applying different multipliers. They may also in certain classes prescribe periods of grace within which no charge is payable. Multipliers cannot be varied during the course of a year.

My right hon. Friend is currently reviewing the use that authorities have made of their discretion during 1990-91 and may in due course propose further classes which are to be subject to maximum multipliers in 1991-92 and future years.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate has been made of the extra administration costs for each authority which has been capped.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear in his statement on 3 April 1990 about community charge capping in England—*Official Report*, Volume 170, column 1033—we estimate that the costs per authority will be about £200,000 per charging authority. The Secretary of State took account of this amongst the other relevant factors in deciding on the appropriate levels of cap.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average increase across England in standard spending assessments as against grant-related expenditure assessments for 1990-91 against 1989-90; what were the figures for Calderdale; and what were the causes of the deviation between Calderdale and the national average.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* Standard spending assessments (SSAs) for 1990-91 were around 10 per cent. higher than the total of grant-related expenditure assessments (GREs) for 1989-90, adjusted on to a comparable basis. The equivalent increase for Calderdale was 4·1 per cent. The SSA for Calderdale was calculated, as for all authorities, according to the formulae set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) approved by the House on 18 January, using the appropriate data (as described in annex A to that report) for Calderdale, reflecting its social, physical and demographic characteristics.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of administering the rates each year since 1979 in each of the authorities which have been capped.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The information as returned by authorities is given in the table:

Cost of rate collection 1979-80

	£000
Rochdale	564
Wigan	675
St. Helens	444
Barnsley	422
Doncaster	532
Rotherham	245
North Tyneside	771
Calderdale	335
Camden	854
Greenwich	572
Hammersmith and Fulham	615
Islington	841
Lambeth	800
Southwark	787
Brent	738
Haringey	747
Hillingdon	548
Bristol	987
Basildon	184

1980-81

	£000
Rochdale	675
Wigan	825
St. Helens	566
Barnsley	443
Doncaster	659
Rotherham	485
North Tyneside	922
Calderdale	385
Camden	1,228
Greenwich	681
Hammersmith and Fulham	920
Islington	783
Lambeth	1,202
Southwark	1,001
Brent	930
Haringey	917
Hillingdon	685
Bristol	1,206
Basildon	217

1981-82

	£000
Rochdale	584
Wigan	911
St. Helens	590
Barnsley	734
Doncaster	700
Rotherham	552
North Tyneside	1,219
Calderdale	534
Camden	1,817
Greenwich	721
Hammersmith and Fulham	950
Islington	1,286
Lambeth	1,014
Southwark	1,246
Brent	1,171
Haringey	813
Hillingdon	782
Bristol	1,129
Basildon	237

1982-83

	£000
Rochdale	636
Wigan	1,092
St. Helens	599
Barnsley	887
Doncaster	688
Rotherham	601
North Tyneside	1,113
Calderdale	594
Camden	1,652
Greenwich	924
Hammersmith & Fulham	1,045
Islington	1,398
Lambeth	932
Southwark	1,184
Brent	1,226
Haringey	803
Hillingdon	810
Bristol	1,353
Basildon	271

1983-84

	£000
Rochdale	697
Wigan	1,082
St. Helens	660
Barnsley	923
Doncaster	625
Rotherham	556
North Tyneside	794
Calderdale	640
Camden	1,431
Greenwich	1,595
Hammersmith & Fulham	1,157
Islington	1,742
Lambeth	1,167
Southwark	1,324
Brent	2,036
Haringey	923
Hillingdon	970
Bristol	1,414
Basildon	319

1984-85

	£000
Rochdale	682
Wigan	982
St. Helens	558
Barnsley	745
Doncaster	643
Rotherham	475
North Tyneside	555
Calderdale	818
Camden	1,480
Greenwich	1,639
Hammersmith and Fulham	961
Islington	1,894
Lambeth	1,103
Southwark	1,213
Brent	2,074
Haringey	827
Hillingdon	969
Bristol	1,213
Basildon	253

1985-86

	£000
Rochdale	666
Wigan	1,058
St. Helens	720
Barnsley	1,043
Doncaster	682
Rotherham	627
North Tyneside	598
Calderdale	605
Camden	1,509
Greenwich	1,693
Hammersmith and Fulham	808
Islington	2,576
Lambeth	1,103
Southwark	1,059
Brent	2,643
Haringey	862

	£000
Hillingdon	977
Bristol	1,336
Basildon	306

1986-87

	£000
Rochdale	675
Wigan	1,071
St. Helens	727
Barnsley	1,161
Doncaster	772
Rotherham	691
North Tyneside	776
Calderdale	710
Camden	1,589
Greenwich	2,108
Hammersmith and Fulham	887
Islington	1,968
Lambeth	1,710
Southwark	998
Brent	1,682
Haringey	924
Hillingdon	937
Bristol	1,460
Basildon	367

1987-88

	£000
Rochdale	774
Wigan	1,259
St. Helens	620
Barnsley	952
Doncaster	846
Rotherham	793
North Tyneside	1,208
Calderdale	637
Camden	1,554
Greenwich	1,516
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,503
Islington	2,194
Lambeth	1,756
Southwark	1,132
Brent	1,853
Haringey	1,019
Hillingdon	1,088
Bristol	1,470
Basildon	385

1988-89

	£000
Rochdale	822
Wigan	1,473
St. Helens	500
Barnsley	943
Doncaster	856
Rotherham	943
North Tyneside	1,303
Calderdale	571
Camden	1,462
Greenwich	1,858
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,937
Islington	2,126
Lambeth	1,804
Southwark	1,189
Brent	1,449
Haringey	827
Hillingdon	1,045
Bristol	1,636
Basildon	490

1989-90

	£000
Rochdale	837
Wigan	1,375
St. Helens	793
Barnsley	981
Doncaster	1,046
Rotherham	704
North Tyneside	1,151
Calderdale	526
Camden	1,389
Greenwich	1,197
Hammersmith and Fulham	2,853
Islington	2,833
Lambeth	2,007
Southwark	1,562
Brent	2,253
Haringey	891
Hillingdon	1,191
Bristol	1,683
Basildon	561

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what extra resources the Government will make available to each poll tax-capped authority.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The Government will make available to authorities no extra resources as a consequence of designation for charge capping.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the clearing banks about the workings of the direct debit system to process community charge payments.

Mr. Chope: My Department has been in close touch with the major clearing banks, the Association for Payment Clearing Services and local authorities about the use of direct debits for community charge payments. We have issued guidance to local authorities on the use of direct debit in our practice note on collection of the community charge. Since the commencement of the community charge system on 1 April 1990 we have not received any representations from the clearing banks.

Air Safety

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he issues to district councils on the weight to be given to air safety in considering planning applications from gliding clubs and similar organisations.

Mr. Moynihan: My Department has issued no guidance on this matter. Statutory responsibility for safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now rescind permission for the discharge of radioactive waste into the River Thames.

Mr. Trippier: The levels of radioactive waste in the Thames are extremely low. Drinking water derived from the Thames contains levels of radioactivity well below those limits recommended by the World Health Organisation and the International Commission on Radiological Protection. As a consequence the risk to health is negligible and there is no reason to discontinue the present disposal arrangements to the River Thames.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites are currently under consideration by Nirex for a repository for intermediate-level and low-level radioactive waste; if he will name those sites; and if he will list the sites that are on any reserve list for consideration.

Mr. Trippier: Site investigations for a repository for low-level and intermediate-level radioactive waste are currently under way in the vicinity of Sellafield and Dounreay. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no information about consideration by Nirex of any other sites.

Parish Councils

Mr. Buckley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the results of the survey carried out by his Department on the workings of parish councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department is in the process of commissioning research on parish councils; the target date for the completion of the research will depend on the terms of the contract eventually made.

Rent-to-Mortgage Scheme

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the expected take-up of the scheme for converting rents into mortgages;

(2) whether the scheme for converting council rents into mortgages will include *(a)* recipients of housing benefit, *(b)* recipients of income support, *(c)* retirement pensioners and *(d)* people receiving poll tax rebate.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No such scheme has been announced for England.

Homeless Women

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many single women *(a)* under 25 years, *(b)* over 25 years and *(c)* over 60 years are homeless.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Local authorities report the number of households for whom they accept responsibility to secure accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Acts. The information provided does not identify those who are single women and my Department has no estimates.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many women-only *(a)* hostels and *(b)* night shelters there are.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest estimates of the numbers of homeless women in the following categories: *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* young women, *(c)* single mothers and *(d)* women from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Local authorities report the number of households for whom they accept responsibility to secure accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Acts. The information provided does not include the number of women accepted, nor those in the categories requested, and my Department has no such estimates.

Disabled People (Housing)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has issued any guidelines to local authorities on the provision of housing for disabled people.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Local housing authorities are required by section 3 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 to have regard to the special housing needs of disabled people when considering the housing needs of their district. The Department has recently issued a circular to local authorities on the assistance available to disabled people for house adaptations under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Homelessness

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has developed any proposals to seek to amend the Housing Act 1985 to extend the official definitions of homelessness and priority need.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend part III of the Housing Act 1985 to extend the statutory responsibilities of local authorities to include single women; and if he will make a statement about single women and homelessness.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government recently reviewed the homelessness legislation and concluded that the Act provided an adequate safety net for the genuine homeless in priority need. We concluded that the Act was serving the purpose which Parliament had originally intended of it, and therefore proposed no changes to the statutory framework.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the £15 million recently allocated for the relief of homelessness will be spent on the provision of more hostel placements for young people in London.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We are in the process of consulting public bodies, local authorities and housing associations about the provision of direct access and move-on accommodation through the programme which I announced on 22 June.

Housing

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities allocate housing to women who are the victims of domestic violence; and how many allocations were made for this purpose in 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has no information on this subject.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's strategy for ensuring housing is provided for those people covered by community care legislation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The housing aspects of the care in the community proposals are the subject of discussion between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Health in consultation with the local authority associations.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he is developing to enable women heads of households on low incomes to gain easier access to housing;

(2) what proposals he is developing to enable women heads of households to become owner-occupiers more easily.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government's policies designed to promote the supply of affordable housing to rent and buy will benefit households headed by men and women alike.

Radon Gas

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the causes, incidence and location of abnormally high concentrations of radon gas in domestic homes; and what action he intends to take further to assess and mitigate consequent problems for human health.

Mr. David Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the free booklet issued by my Department, the "Householders' Guide to Radon". A second edition is to be issued shortly. Further information is given in the statement on radon in houses, published by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) in documents of the NRPB, volume 1, number 1, January 1990. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House. My Department is continuing to fund research on the distribution of homes with high concentrations of radon, on ways of reducing the radon levels, and on the effects of radon on human health.

Alpha Lighting Ltd.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department received an application from the London borough of Greenwich for a grant to Alpha Lighting Ltd. under section 6 of the Inner Urban Areas Act; and when it will be approved.

Mr. Moynihan: The London borough of Greenwich applied originally in January this year for urban programme grant approval for assistance for Alpha Lighting Ltd. The borough's 1989-90 allocation was already fully committed so the application was part of the 1990-91 inner area programme submission. That programme is not yet approved as further information is awaited from the borough. Nevertheless a provisional approval for an urban programme grant for Alpha Lighting Ltd. has been given by the Department in advance of final approval of the borough's full programme.

Ozone Pollution

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Hornchurch, 14 June, *Official Report*, column *294*, if he will indicate to whom the 27 daily summaries have been released and publish a telephone number for the public to inquire about levels of ozone pollution.

Mr. Trippier: We cannot precisely say to whom the daily summaries have been released because we do not record such information but the majority were requested by the media. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), in his reply to a question from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 27 June, gave the telephone number of the Department of the Environment's public inquiries—071 276 3000—from which information about low-level ozone is available during episodes.

Water Meters

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will suspend expenditure by his Department on the water meter trials in the Normanton constituency until the Office of Water Services has published its consultative document in September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. The water metering trials have been set up to provide information on the costs and problems of implementing an effective metering system and to determine the impact of charging by volume on consumption. They will continue for a further two to three years and provide valuable information on costs and benefits for the water industry, Government and the Director General of Water Services which will contribute to the debate about future methods of charging.

Beaches

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to ensure that beaches awarded the European Economic Community blue flag safety levels maintain the standards and to monitor those standards.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It will be for the National Rivers Authority using its powers under the Water Act 1989 to monitor bathing waters and to ensure that they continue to meet the directive's standards. Responsibility for beaches rests with the local authority or, in some cases, with the owner. They have a clear incentive to ensure that their beaches continue to meet the requirements for the award of a blue flag.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the overall cost of cleaning the nation's beaches to European Economic Community blue flag safety levels.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The cost of bringing the bathing waters up to the directive's standards and ensuring that all substantial discharges of sewage will be treated is estimated at £2·9 billion. The cost of bringing beaches up to the standards needed to qualify for a blue flag has not yet been estimated nationally.

Football Supporters Association

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet officials of the Football Supporters Association.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the Football Supporters Association. Officials from my Department have had recent meetings with it both in England before the world cup finals and in Italy during the tournament.

Bedford (Population)

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessments have been made of population projections for Bedford, including Kempston, in 1995, 2000 and 2010 and the number of new houses likely to be built *(a)* south of the River Ouse and *(b)* north of it.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Population projections below national level are prepared by OCPS, in consultation with the Department of the Environment, for areas down to county level only. Assessments of expected population levels, and the equivalent requirements for house building at district level and below are a matter for county and district councils in reviewing and updating the development plans for their areas.

The approved structure plan for Bedfordshire is currently being reviewed to 2001, taking into account the current regional planning guidance for the south-east. That review is expected to be submitted in the autumn of this year, and the population proposed, including that for the Bedford area, is expected to be assessed at an examination in public early in 1991.

North Bedfordshire district council published a draft districtwide local plan for its area in July 1988 for public consultation. This was updated by an interim strategy published in February of this year. It is understood that the district council expects to place the local plan on deposit later this year, following the submission of the structure plan review by the county council. A local public inquiry into that plan by an independent inspector will provide an opportunity for the proposed levels of house building in Bedfordshire to be assessed.

Housing Capital Grants

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the arrangements for paying new housing capital grants.

Mr. Chris Patten: New housing capital grants were introduced by part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The approval of Parliament for expenditure on these new grants is being sought in the main supply estimates for class VIII, vote 1; Housing England. Pending that approval urgent expenditure, estimated at £71·546 million, is being met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Drinking Water

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are considered to be safe levels of iodine 125 in drinking water; and what assessment he has made of the levels of the radioactive isotope in Thames water from Berkshire down to its mouth.

Mr. Trippier: Limits for the levels of iodine 125 in drinking water are recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has a national programme for checking the levels of radioactivity in drinking water sources. This programme includes the sampling of the Thames including the stretch between Berkshire and the mouth of the Thames. The levels of iodine 125 in drinking water from the Thames are trivial and the risk to health is negligible.

Planning Agreements

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the outcome of the consultation exercise about planning agreements, announced on 11 July 1989, *Official Report*, column *485;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The consultation paper provoked 229 responses. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales have decided that the three proposed amendments to section 52 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 should proceed as soon as there is a legislative opportunity. These are:

(a) to enable a developer to give a unilateral undertaking to carry out certain works, or to do whatever the undertaking specified;

(b) to make provision for a planning agreement or unilateral undertaking to be discharged when its planning purpose has ended; and

(c) to enable the Crown to enter into section 52 agreements.

It is also intended to make certain technical changes to section 52, designed to improve and clarify the drafting.

The new policy guidance on which we consulted will be issued in due course, taking account of some of the points made by respondents to the consultation paper.

Development (Bradford)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Rothschild's representing shareholders in 3Ds Ltd. is currently involved in the negotiations for city grant for the West End development in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* Rothschild's is not involved in any negotiations with the Department in connection with the proposed West End development in Bradford.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when it is expected that the application for city grant by 3Ds Ltd. will be concluded; what is the estimated cost of considering the application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* 3Ds Ltd. has submitted details of its proposals for the West End development scheme, and discussions are continuing with the Department on what further information may be needed. I am not able to provide an estimate of the cost of considering the application.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of houses currently being considered in the application for city grant by 3Ds Ltd. for the West End development in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer to him of Monday 18 June 1990 at column *482*.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sum of money is currently allocated in the integrated development operation application by Bradford for the West End scheme; whether any such money will be subjected to the additionality rule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* Private sector developments such as the proposed West End scheme are not eligible for funding under the Bradford integrated development operation. The IDO supports public sector schemes.

The only project in the West End area of the city to have been allocated resources through the Bradford IDO is environmental improvement work in Quebec street. This project has attracted £12,625 in grant from the European regional development fund. The normal additionality arrangements apply. EC receipts are taken into account when domestic expenditure programmes are set so that these programmes are larger than they would otherwise have been.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 17 July 1990

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 4 July, *Official Report*, column 577, if he will now state to what extent, either implicitly or explicitly, pensions were taken into account in each of the years from 1960 onwards in determining home civil service pay; and if he has a precise figure for the extent that pensions were taken into account for any particular year.

Mr. Major: Civil service pensions are an important part of the total remuneration package and are fully taken into account in setting pay levels. Assessments of the value of the civil service pension scheme have been made for the purposes of pay negotiations under the previous pay comparability arrangements and under the pay determination framework introduced as part of the new flexible pay arrangements. In 1980, the last year of the earlier arrangements, the reduction in pay levels averaged over men and women to take account of civil service pensions was 7·9 per cent.

VAT

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what are the value added tax rates in each European Community state in respect of hotel accomodation and restaurant meals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The information requested is contained in the publication "VAT in Europe", published by the International Bureau of Fiscal Documentation, a copy of which is located in the economic affairs section of the House of Commons Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by police area the number of firearms certificates and shotgun certificates which were in force in England and Wales on 31 December 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not yet available. The latest information, for the number of firearms certificates and shotgun certificates on issue at 31 December 1988, is shown by police force area in tables 2 and 4 of the Home Office statistical bulletin 18/89, a copy of which is in the Library.

Working Men's Clubs

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from organisations in England and Wales in relation to police right of entry to working men's clubs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have received 31 such representations, all from working men's clubs.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to amend the law relating to police right of entry to working men's clubs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to amend the law in this respect.

Prisons (Suicides)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, pursuant to his answer on suicides by prison officers in Brixton prison, *Official Report*, 3 July, column 485, he will give the figures for suicides in other local and trainer prisons in 1989.

Mr. Mellor: The table gives, for each prison service establishment, the number of inmates who died by their own hand in 1989 and, of these cases, the number in which verdicts of suicide were returned at coroners' inquests.

Before 1 January 1990 no central record was kept of the causes of deaths of prison officers. That information is therefore not readily available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Deaths of inmates of Her Majesty's prison service establishments at their own hand in 1989

Establishment	*Suicide verdicts*	*Other verdicts*	*Total self-inflicted deaths*
Acklington	—	—	—
Albany	—	—	—
Aldington	—	—	—
Ashford	—	—	—
Ashwell	—	—	—
Askham Grange	—	—	—
Aylesbury	—	—	—
Bedford	—	—	—
Birmingham	—	—	—
Blantyre House	—	—	—
Blundeston	—	—	—
Bristol	1	—	1
Brixton	2	6	8
Brockhill	—	—	—
Buckley Hall	—	—	—
Bullwood Hall	—	—	—
Camp Hill	—	—	—
Campsfield House	—	—	—
Canterbury	2	1	3
Cardiff	—	1	1
Castington	—	1	1
Channings Wood	—	—	—
Chelmsford	—	—	—
Coldingley	—	—	—
Cookham Wood	—	—	—
Dartmoor	1	—	1
Deerbolt	—	—	—
Dorchester	—	—	—
Dover	—	—	—
Downview	—	—	—
Drake Hall	—	—	—
Durham	2	—	2
East Sutton Park	—	—	—
Eastwood Park	—	—	—
Erlestoke	—	—	—
Exeter	1	—	1

Establishment	Suicide verdicts	Other verdicts	Total self-inflicted deaths
Featherstone	—	—	—
Feltham	—	—	—
Finnamore Wood	—	—	—
Ford	—	—	—
Foston Hall	—	—	—
Frankland	1	—	1
Full Sutton	—	—	—
Garth	1	—	1
Gartree	—	—	—
Glen Parva	1	—	1
Gloucester	—	1	1
Grendon	—	—	—
Guys Marsh	—	—	—
Haslar	—	—	—
Hatfield	—	—	—
Haverigg	—	—	—
Hewell Grange	—	—	—
Highpoint	—	—	—
Hindley	1	—	1
Hull	—	—	—
Huntercombe	—	—	—
Kingston (Portsmouth)	—	—	—
Kirkham	—	—	—
Kirklevington Grange	—	—	—
Lancaster	1	—	1
Latchmere House	—	—	—
Leeds	2	—	2
Leicester	—	—	—
Lewes	1	—	1
Leyhill	—	—	—
Lindholme	—	—	—
Littlehey	1	—	1
Liverpool	2	—	2
Long Lartin	1	—	1
Lowdham Grange	—	—	—
Low Newton	—	—	—
Maidstone	—	—	—
Manchester	4	—	4
Morton Hall	—	—	—
The Mount	—	—	—
New Hall	—	—	—
Northallerton	—	—	—
Northeye	—	—	—
North Sea Camp	—	—	—
Norwich	—	—	—
Nottingham	—	—	—
Onley	—	—	—
Oxford	—	—	—
Parkhurst	—	—	—
Portland	—	—	—
Preston	—	—	—
Pucklechurch	—	—	—
Ranby	—	—	—
Reading	—	—	—
Risley	—	2	2
Rochester	1	—	[1]2
Rudgate	—	—	—
Send	—	—	—
Shepton Mallet	1	—	1
Shrewsbury	—	—	—
Spring Hill	—	—	—
Stafford	1	1	2
Standford Hill	—	—	—
Stocken	—	—	—
Stoke Heath	—	—	—
Styal	—	—	—
Sudbury	—	—	—
Swaleside	—	—	—
Swansea	1	—	1
Swinfen Hall	—	—	—
Thorn Cross	—	—	—
Thorp Arch	—	—	—
Usk/Prescoed	—	—	—
The Verne	—	—	—
Wakefield	—	—	—
Wandsworth	1	—	1
Wellingborough	—	1	1
Werrington	—	—	—
Wetherby	—	—	—
Whatton	—	—	—
Winchester	2	—	2
Wormwood Scrubs	1	—	1
Wymott	—	—	—
TOTALS	33	15	48

[1] An inquest is yet to be held on one of the two inmates who died by their own hand at Rochester in 1989.

Re-entry Visas

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to move the re-entry visa section from Petty France to Lunar house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are keeping the arrangements for the readmission of visa nationals under review. But no plans have been made to move the re-entry visa section at the London passport office to Lunar house.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time for the processing of a re-entry visa for each of the offices in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The table shows the maximum processing times for straightforward, non-urgent applications as at 11 July 1990:

Office	Working days
Glasgow	2
Liverpool	5
London	8
Newport	5
Peterborough	6
Lunar House, Croydon	[1]—
Belfast	[2]—

[1] Same day service for counter applications.
[2] Following initial processing in Belfast applications are dealt with in London.

Passport Offices

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons are employed at the *(a)* passport office and *(b)* re-entry section in each office in the United Kingdom for the years (i) 1970, (ii) 1975, (iii) 1980, (iv) 1985, (v) 1986, (vi) 1987, (vii) 1988, (viii) 1989 and (ix) at present.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. Table (a) shows the number of permanent and casual staff in post at each office on 31 May for each year since 1984 when the Home Office assumed responsibility for passport issuing in the United Kingdom. Table (b) shows the number of staff employed on re-entry visa work in the London passport office on 31 May for each of the years 1985 to 1990. In other passport offices re-entry visa applications are handled by staff whose main function is the issue of passports. The staffing resources required for re-entry visa work in such offices cannot be identified separately.

Table A
Passport Office staff in post

Location	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
London	281·5 (+25)	283·5 (+31)	289 (+27)	286 (+54)	208·5 (+66)	230·5 (+16)
Liverpool	196 (+30)	197 (+34)	201·5 (+45)	197·5 (+62)	190 (+103)	249·5 (+74)
Peterborough	156 (+27)	164 (+38)	162·5 (+42)	163 (+60)	164·5 (+90)	204·5 (+63·5)
Newport	160 (+19)	168 (+24)	165 (+39)	166·5 (+51·5)	165·5 (+86)	208·5 (+55)
Glasgow	76 (+9)	82·5 (+14)	82 (+15)	84·5 (+38)	164·5 (+52)	201 (+60)
Belfast	15 (+4)	14 (+5)	17·5 (+3)	15 (+5)	14·5 (+7)	49·5 (+9·25)

Notes:
1. The figures are as at 31 May each year.
2. The first figures represent permanent staff and the bracketed figures casual staff (employed to assist with peak demand).
3. The London figure includes Headquarters staff, but not staff located at Hayes.

Table B
Staff employed on re-entry visa work London Office on 31 May each year

Year	*Number*
1985	11·5
1986	11·5
1987	11·5
1988	11·5
1989	10·5
1990	10·5

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he has introduced to help with stress-related illnesses for the workers at the passport offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Internally mounted management courses for Home Office managers contain an input on the management of stress and passport office managers attend such courses. All staff also have access to staff welfare facilities. I am not, however, aware that staff in passport offices are particularly prone to stress-related illnesses.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visas have been issued from each passport office in the United Kingdom from 1985 to the present.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is shown in the table for the financial years 1985-86 to the present:

Visas issued by passport office since 1985

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*[2]	*Total*
London	53,086	49,247	43,816	47,958	52,516	17,007	263,630
Liverpool	5,729	5,527	5,063	5,831	6,139	2,299	30,588
Peterborough	3,280	3,296	3,177	3,774	4,705	1,919	20,151
Newport	2,815	2,331	2,285	2,542	2,877	915	13,765
Glasgow	2,236	2,029	1,885	2,121	2,845	889	12,005
Belfast[1]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	67,146	62,430	56,226	62,226	66,237	22,140	340,139

[1] Following initial processing in Belfast, applications are dealt with in the London office.
[2] The figure for 1990-91 is for April to June 1990.

Brixton Prison

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any temporary limit has been placed on the admission of prisoners to Brixton prison.

Mr. Mellor: Prison officers voted in June to take national industrial action over staffing levels and overcrowding. The local branch of the Prison Officers Association at Her Majesty's prison Brixton, together with other branches, took industrial action between noon on 6 July and noon on 9 July. This took the form of reducing the prison population to its certified normal accommodation level by refusing admission of prisoners. As a result of this action at Brixton, 40 prisoners were accommodated in police cells overnight on 6 July and 43 prisoners overnight on 7 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present establishment for *(a)* prison officers and *(b)* all staff at Brixton prison; and what plans there are to increase it.

Mr. Mellor: There are at present 916 in post at Brixton prison of whom 718 are prison officers (including principal and senior officers and specialists). The target officer-in-post figure set by regional management for 31 March 1991 is 720.

Video Cassettes

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what role he envisages for the Broadcasting Standards Council in commenting upon the suitability of programme material distributed via video cassette rental.

Mr. Mellor: Although we have not included the video industry within the statutory functions of the Broadcasting Standards Council in the Broadcasting Bill, the council's

general remit extends to video on a non-statutory basis. We understand that the British Board of Film Classification, in discharging its function under the Video Recordings Act 1984, will take account of the council's code of practice on the portrayal of violence and sex and standards of taste and decency and that the council will consult the board, among others, when drawing up or revising the code.

Security Industry

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to finalise his views on the recommendations of the report on the self-regulation of the security industry, submitted to him in July 1989.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member on 3 May at column *666*.

Immigration

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refugees from Somalia and their dependants have so far been granted leave to remain in the United Kingdom; how many applications have been refused; and how many are awaiting a decision.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested for years from 1979 to 1988, including the number of Somalian applications for refugee status and asylum awaiting a decision at the end of 1987 and 1988, is published in Home Office statistical bulletin "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom, 1988", a copy of which is in the Library. Revised figures, including provisional figures for 1989, will be published shortly in the bulletin for 1989 and are given in the table. Figures for the number of applications outstanding especially at the end of 1989 overstate the position because of under-recording of decisions made earlier.

Revised and more up-to-date information on applications received for refugee status or asylum from Somalian citizens

	[1]1987	[1]1988	[2]1989
Grants of refugee status or asylum	57	346	1,170
Grants of exceptional leave	[3]85	73	305
Refusals of exceptional leave or refugee status	[3]89	9	10
Applications outstanding at end of year	[3]600	580	1,820

[1] Revised figures.
[2] Provisional figures.
[3] These figures are unaltered.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken by his Department to investigate cases referred from overseas posts in order to assess whether the maintenance and accommodation requirements of the immigration rules have been met.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested. But the estimated average time taken by the immigration service to deal with all categories of cases deferred by entry clearance officers during the past 12 months was about 60 days.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long it takes for a decision to be made on a case of *(a)* naturalisation, *(b)* registration, *(c)* immigration, *(d)* eastern European casework and *(e)* asylum and related casework from the opening of the letter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* The available information relates to the average times taken from the date of receipt of applications to their completion. Applications for naturalisation and registration completed in June 1990 took 30 months and 22 months respectively. After-entry immigration applications, applications from eastern European nationals and applications for asylum completed in the first quarter of 1990 (the latest period for which information is available), took 102 days, 108 days and 9·5 months respectively.

Pet Theft

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with the Association of Chief Police Officers concerning reports on pet theft given to him by the national Petwatch organisation; and with what result.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have not discussed this with the Association of Chief Police Officers, but we sent material provided by National Petwatch to the association which then circulated it to all chief constables in England and Wales. The investigation of alleged thefts is a matter for the police to whom all incidents should be reported.

RAF Greenham Common (Sentences)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will initiate the process to have the sentences of those persons prosecuted under the Ministry of Defence's bylaws at RAF Greenham Common, which were the subject of the House of Lords ruling of 12 July, reviewed or quashed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are currently considering the terms of the House of Lords ruling of the RAF Greenham Common byelaws and will of course consider any representations made by those who have been convicted under those byelaws.

Prison Overcrowding

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to reduce overcrowding in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The Government are tackling the problem of overcrowding by policies designed to ensure that imprisonment is not used in the case of persons who can be adequately punished in the community, and by a massive prison building programme. On 13 July there were 45,483 people in prison or temporarily held in police cells. This is the lowest July figure since 1984.

Under the prison building programme, eight prisons have been completed since 1979, and 12 are under construction, with more planned to follow. Between now and March 1992 the programme will produce over 5,000 new places, and this figure will rise to nearly 7,000 by March 1993. The new establishments are being built to a high standard, and places in them will have integral sanitation; and with their completion, the number of

places available to the prison service of category B standard will rise by one third. Over 5,000 of the new places will be used for prisoners in local prisons or remand centres, thus relieving directly the areas of greatest pressure.

There is also a substantial programme of projects producing places at existing establishments. Over the next three years 3,000 places with integral sanitation will come into use at existing establishments. About half these places will be in local establishments.

I concluded towards the end of last year that the distribution of the prison estate needed attention. In particular, with the welcome fall in the young offender population, young offender accommodation was not full, while the adult system remained under considerable strain. A review has been carried out of the prison estate as a whole with the aim of providing the necessary places through the most cost-effective and efficient mix of establishments, in particular by examining what scope and options exist for changes and adjustments to the young offender estate and to the role of establishments in order to bring planned capacity and expected population levels more closely into line. The prime purpose was to seek ways of relieving the burden of overcrowding in the adult estate, where the need is for good quality and secure accommodation.

The main proposals which have emerged from the review are as follows. First, three large young offender institutions will become adult prisons for category C prisoners. Her Majesty's prison Wellingborough, which has accommodated with success the bulk of the Grendon population while building work has been going on there, will continue as an adult prison when Grendon returns to operation during the autumn. Her Majesty's young offender institution The Mount will become an adult establishment (the purpose for which it was originally built) before the end of the current financial year, and Her Majesty's young offender institution Castington similarly in 1992-93. While some security work will be necessary to make them fully suitable for their new role, all three establishments offer modern and secure accommodation and will be most valuable additions to the adult estate. Secondly, a number of establishments will change their functions in whole or in part so as to provide a resource more fitted to the expected population. This may involve the provision of local, training or young offender places as required in the particular area. In some areas, these changes will help to move young offenders on remand out of adult local prisons. For example, part of the existing young offender institution at Everthorpe has been redesignated as a prison to enable it to hold such offenders and to give immediate relief to Her Majesty's prison Hull. In 1992, it is intended that Her Majesty's prison Thorp Arch should take young offender remand prisoners so as to reduce or even eliminate the young offender population in Her Majesty's prison Leeds.

It was always clear that as we sought to develop plans for the better use of the estate, the possibility could not be ruled out of closing establishments, particularly young offender establishments, where their accommodation was uneconomic, poorly located, or in other respects below standard. It is proposed that HM young offender institution Campsfield House and HM young offender institution Lowdham Grange should close by the end of the current financial year, and HM young offender institution Eastwood Park and HM prison Northeye by the end of 1992-93. Campsfield House offers no more than 70 places with low security. To fill this up with prisoners not suitable for these conditions would be to put the public at risk. The establishment could discharge any alternative and secure function only following virtual rebuilding at high cost and considerable delay. Similar considerations apply to Eastwood Park and Northeye. Lowdham Grange is an open young offender establishment which has for some time been only partly occupied as the young offender population has fallen. Inmates suitable for open conditions can be accommodated elewhere within the system. Staff, trade unions and boards of visitors will be consulted on the basis of these proposals.

These initiatives will produce a more efficient prison estate in which accommodation is better located, better fitted to its tasks, and with better facilities than now exist.

Rape

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken since 1987 to tackle the crime of rape.

Mr. John Patten: The Government continue to attach a high priority to action against rape, including the detection and punishment of offenders; the provision of help and support to victims; and the development of prevention policies.

The enhanced police response to rape allegations is reflected in the increases in the recorded crime statistics. Victims of rape have been encouraged to come forward. Changes in police practice have meant that a higher proportion of rape allegations have been recorded as crimes. A high percentage of recorded rapes are cleared up by the police (71 per cent. in 1987 and 74 per cent. in 1989) and the police now have their disposal improved detection methods such as DNA fingerprinting with which to provide the courts with evidence of guilt. The maximum penalty for attempted rape was increased to life imprisonment in 1985. In 1986 the Court of Appeal gave guidance on sentencing in rape cases in *R v Billam*. Since 1987, over 70 per cent. of convicted rapists have received sentences of five years or more.

In line with Home Office guidance issued in October 1986, the police are increasingly alert to the special needs of rape victims. Rape examination suites have been set up where distressed victims can be examined in comforting surroundings and by a woman doctor wherever possible; interviews with victims are usually also conducted by women police officers. The aim is to treat victims sensitively and to provide them with full information about medical, support and counselling services after their ordeal.

Anonymity for rape victims was strengthened in the Criminal Justice Act 1988. It is now an offence to publish or broadcast the name or address or a still or moving picture of a woman after an allegation has been made that she has been the victim of a rape offence, if that is likely to lead members of the public to identify her as the alleged victim. The prohibition applies during the whole of the woman's lifetime, unless the courts make a specific direction to the contrary, and it applies whether proceedings follow or not; if they do, it applies in relation to civil as well as criminal proceedings.

The Home Office is providing £4·5 million this year towards the cost of local victim support schemes. These now cover over 94 per cent. of the population of England

and Wales and are helping increasing numbers of victims of serious crime, including rape victims. Improved understanding of the nature of crimes is desirable as a basis for developing prevention policies. In February 1989, we published two important research studies about rape, "Changes in rape offences and sentences" (Home Office Research Study 105) and "Concerns about rape" (Home Office Research Study 106). Among other findings, the studies suggest that women are more likely to be raped by someone they know than by a stranger, and that more rapes take place indoors than in public places. The reports are in the Library.

The latest edition of our crime prevention handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" encourages women to take common-sense precautions to reduce the risk of attack.

Arrangements for the treatment of sex offenders in prison custody and their treatment and supervision in the community are being reviewed by a prison service working party and by Her Majesty's inspectorate of probation. This work should contribute to the development of improved provision for the treatment of offenders, so that they are less likely to re-offend.

TRANSPORT

M3 (Compulsory Purchase)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 12 July to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, when he expects the remaining part of the compulsory purchase order relating to the Bar End-Compton section of the M3 will be made.

Mr. Atkins: A date for making the compulsory purchase order for the Bar End-Compton section of the M3 has not yet been fixed.

Toxic Materials (Rivers and Estuaries)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to introduce new regulations for the control of the transport of toxic materials on rivers and estuaries.

Mr. McLoughlin: The existing Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1981, as amended, which govern the transport of toxic materials on rivers and estuaries within the United Kingdom, will be revised to take account of recent internationally agreed conditions for the transport of marine pollutants by ships.

Collisions (River Usk)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many collisions and other accidents involving ships in the River Usk, Gwent have taken place in the past three years; and how many of these involved ships carrying toxic wastes.

Mr. McLoughlin: Records show that there have been two accidents involving ships in the River Usk in the past three years. The details are:

Date of accident	*Name of vessel*	*Type of accident*
13 November 1989	Hargevan	Grounding
24 April 1990	Bell Ranger/Morias	Collision

The Bell Ranger was carrying, among other items, a container of drums of chemical waste. The chemical is classified as a toxic substance. Hargeven and Morias were both carrying cargoes of steel.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 6 July to the hon. Member for Newport, West, *Official Report*, column *737*, if he has any additional information *(a)* on the condition of the containers and *(b)* the severity of the collision.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have no information on the condition of the containers as commissioned for use but none was damaged in the incident in question.

As to the severity of the collision, both vessels sustained only minor damage.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions his Department has had with the Metropolitan police about the case for ensuring a stronger enforcement of regulations as to the illegal use of bus lanes by other motor vehicles; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he is having with London councils about an extension of the present provision of bus lanes within the Greater London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The provision of bus lanes and the enforcement of the regulations applying to them are being considered with the development of our proposals for improving traffic management and parking control in London set out in "Traffic in London". Discussions are under way with the Metropolitan police and the local authorities concerned in connection with the priority route pilot scheme planned in north and east London.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with the Metropolitan police about the removal of any existing bus lanes in central London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has had no recent discussions with the Metropolitan police on this subject.

Roads, Cumbria

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what road improvements are pending between Cumbria and the A1 in the light of the proposed upgrading of the A1; and if he will make it his policy that the upgrading of the A66 will be completed before the A1 upgrading is completed.

Mr. Atkins: On the A66 between Penrith and Scotch Corner there are three improvement schemes planned. Works are expected to begin in September on a dual carriageway scheme between the Bowes bypass, in Durham, and the Cumbria border.

The two other schemes are in preparation. These are between Stainmore and Banksgate and at Temple Sowerby and works are planned to start from mid-1992.

The trans-Pennine study, now being carried out by consultants commissioned by the Department, will consider the need for further improving the road links across the Pennines, including the A66.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained in his announcement on 3 July 1990, the

upgrading of the A1 from London to Tyneside will inescapably be spread over a number of years. Within this period and with the outcome of the trans-Pennine study the future needs for the A66 trunk road will become more defined.

Merchant Ships

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average age of British merchant ships; and what information he has on the world average age.

Mr. McLoughlin: As at 31 March 1990, the average age of United Kingdom-registered trading vessels was 13·7 years: the average age of all world trading vessels was 12·7 years.

UK Airports and Airspace

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet received the Civil Aviation Authority's advice on United Kingdom airport and airspace capacity, which was commissioned for his Department in July 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The Civil Aviation Authority is publishing today its advice on airport and airspace capacity. Copies of the report are being placed in the Library.

The CAA's work has had two main elements: first, an examination of what additional runway capacity appears to be needed to serve the south-east; and, secondly, an analysis of the technical feasibility, in airspace and air traffic control terms only, of the options for providing that capacity.

The CAA has reassessed its traffic forecasts. It has reached the view that extra runway capacity to serve the south-east will be required around the year 2005.

The authority looked at eight options for further development at existing airports. At my request, it did not consider green field sites. Sir Christopher Tugendhat, the chairman of the CAA, has noted in his covering letter to me that the Government will need to take account of many wider factors before making a choice. He has also acknowledged that the wider view might lead us to reject some locations which, from an airline or air traffic control viewpoint alone, might appear favourable.

The Government are in no way committed to any of the options identified by the CAA. I am acutely aware of the impact of airport development on the environment, on employment, and on local infrastructure. These matters will need to be thoroughly addressed and there will be no question of any major new runway development taking place without full public consultation and a public inquiry into any objections.

As the next step, I propose to establish a working group to examine these factors, and to make recommendations. Representatives from bodies representing local and environmental interests, from airport and airline operators, from the tourism and travel industry, and from Government Departments, will be invited to participate.

In their 1985 White Paper on airports policy, the Government expressed their view that a second runway should not be built at either Stansted or Gatwick. The considerations which led to that view remain compelling.

I shall be reminding the working group of the undertakings which have been given in the case of Gatwick and Stansted and of the acute environmental problems which gave rise to the views which the Government expressed on those airports in the 1985 White Paper. Obviously, the wider considerations the chairman referred to are no less relevant at Heathrow.

In its advice, the CAA has said that it believes that traffic at regional airports will continue to grow rapidly, but that this will not be an effective substitute for additional London area capacity. I shall be asking the working group to assess this conclusion most carefully and to gauge the extent to which regional airports can play a part in meeting the overall growth in demand, into the next century.

Orange Badge Holders

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many orange badge holders were registered in England and Wales for the year 1988; and what is his Department's projected figure for 1991 under the new proposals.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 13 July 1990]:* According to information supplied by local authorities, whose task it is to administer the scheme, about 930,000 badges were in circulation in England and Wales in March 1988.

Changes currently proposed to the regulations are designed to ensure that badges are issued only to those people who most need them. The scheme is not being modified with any specific target in mind for the number of badge holders.

Bedford (Traffic Flows)

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are the most recent traffic flow figures for the A428 and the A6 in Bedford and of the number of vehicles passing over the Prebend street, High street and Newnham street bridges;

(2) what is his Department's estimate of the traffic expected to be taken off the A428 at Bedford following the upgrading of the A45 and the completion of the southern route through Elstow to the M1.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The most recent traffic flows are shown in the table together with the anticipated reduction at the opening of Bedford southern bypass. These figures allow for a transfer of traffic from Bedford to take account of the improvements along the A45 and the completion of the M1-A1 link route.

16 hour Annual Average Weekday Traffic (all vehicles)

Location	*1989*	*Predicted reduction*[1]
A428 West of Bedford	21,000	6,500
A428 East of Bedford	18,000	11,500
Longholme Way/ Newnham Avenue Bridge	29,000	15,000
A6 North of Bedford	20,000	—
A6 Town Bridge (High Street)	29,000	—
Prebend Street Bridge	27,000	—

[1] On opening of Bedford southern bypass.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made of the cost to Bedford for failure to tackle the traffic problems in the town.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The net present value (NPV) of the proposed road improvements,

using my Department's standard cost-benefit analysis method, gives a guide to the overall cost. The proportions of value/cost accruing to Bedford alone are not calculated. The NPV of Bedford southern bypass has been estimated at between £33 million and £85 million (at 1988 cost and prices), depending on the rate of economic growth assumed over a 30-year period. The NPV of a proposed improvement to the west of Bedford has not yet been estimated.

Benefits may also accrue from the proposed town centre improvements which are the responsibility of Bedfordshire county council as the local highway authority.

Polegate Bypass

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a decision about the route of the proposed Folkington link on the A27/A259 trunk road which is part of the proposed Polegate bypass.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to make an announcement about the A27 Folkington link extension of the proposed Polegate bypass later this year.

Bypasses

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many towns in the south-east of the size of population of about 80,000 remain to be bypassed.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The towns in the south-east of the size of population of about 80,000 outside the M25 ring, on trunk roads, that do not have a bypass are:

Town	*Progress*
Bedford/Kempston	At planning stage
Norwich	Construction of the southern bypass has recently started
Dunstable	At planning stage
Hastings Bexhill	At planning stage
Brighton and Hove	Bypass under construction
Worthing	At planning stage
*St. Albans	
*Milton Keynes	
*Luton	
*Southend	

Although through traffic passes through the towns marked with an asterisk, the Department has no proposals for a bypass.

Road schemes are not planned around the size of populations, but to assist economic growth by reducing transport costs, to improve the environment by removing through traffic from unsuitable roads in towns and villages and to enhance road safety.

A1

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals for linking developments *(a)* at Thurleigh and *(b)* at Poddington airfields with the A1.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* No.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport at how many points the A1 between Newcastle and the border is currently reduced to one-way operation during roadworks; and at how many points it is expected to be restricted to one-way operation during the forthcoming Scottish and English bank holiday weekends.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* There are three points on the A1 between Newcastle upon Tyne and the border which are currently reduced to one-way operation for roadworks. These are at adjacent locations on the Alnwick bypass to allow for road maintenance and the provision of marginal strips, and on the Berwick bypass.

There will be no one-way operation on this section of the A1 during the forthcoming Scottish bank holiday. Maintenance works are to start south of Scremeston in August. Consideration will be given to the possibility of removing one-way operation for the forthcoming English bank holiday weekend.

M20/M2 Improvements

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that major road improvements on the M20, junctions 3 to 5 and 5 to 8, and the M2, junctions 1 to 3, will be completed before the channel tunnel is due to open.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The proposed widening of the M20 between junctions 3 and 5 was added to the roads programme in the May 1989 review. My Department's consultants are investigating possible options with a view to the announcement of a preferred scheme in autumn 1991.

Proposals to improve the M20 between junctions 5 and 8 were considered at a public inquiry earlier this year. Subject to the completion of the statutory procedures it is hoped to start work next summer for completion by the time the channel tunnel is planned to open in 1993.

The timing for the proposed widening of the M2 between junctions 1 and 3 is being reviewed following the addition to the roads programme earlier this year of a scheme to improve the motorway between junctions 3 and 4.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether proposals for upgrading trunk roads to motorways are subject to public inquiry procedure.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* In all cases we will publish orders under section 16 of the Highways Act 1980. If any statutory objections are received we will undertake a public inquiry.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in bringing forward proposals for upgrading trunk roads to motorways, he will give consideration to the need to offer alternative road arrangements or compensation to users of agricultural and other vehicles prohibited from using such roads for local journeys.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* In developing proposals to upgrade trunk roads to motorway the Secretary of State is required to consider the requirements of local planning and agriculture before making a scheme under section 16 of the Highways Act

1980 authorising a motorway. An order cannot be made under section 18 of that Act appropriating an existing road as part of a motorway unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that either another reasonably convenient route is available for prohibited traffic or that no such route is reasonably required for any such traffic. In the case of non-prohibited traffic he would of course also consider making alternative arrangements for persons undertaking local journeys which would formerly have involved the road to be upgraded but which could not in future be made.

Entitlement to compensation is governed by statute and will depend on the circumstances of each case.

Newly Qualified Drivers

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider the introduction of P-plates to indicate that a motor vehicle is driven by a newly qualified driver; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* Yes, I am in the process of so doing.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Frans Buitelaar (Farms) Ltd.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has made an assessment of the animal welfare and human health implications of the intensive husbandry practices associated with the use of feedlots at Frans Buitelaar (Farms) Ltd. premises at Claygate farm in Lincolnshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Farm Animal Welfare Council has examined the feedlot system. Its conclusion was that it does not present a welfare risk as long as certain sensible precautions are taken. The state veterinary service has inspected the farm referred to and found no evidence of any unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress in contravention of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968. I am not aware of any human health risk associated with the feedlot husbandry system.

Live Animals (Travel)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's current policy in relation to EEC proposals to restrict the time that live animals may be required to travel without rest; and if he will make it his policy to support a reduction below 12 hours.

Mr. Maclean: The Government will support proposals to fix maximum intervals for the transport of animals without rest, food and water. These must relate to the welfare requirements of individual types of animal rather than be set at a fixed period to cover all animals.

Live Animals (Export)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will invoke article 36 of the treaty of Rome to prevent the export of live animals where those animals are likely to suffer transportation and slaughter conditions inferior to those operating in this country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I am advised that article 36 of the treaty cannot be invoked where, as in this case, there are Community measures on the subject in question. The Government however already prohibit the export of live animals for slaughter or for further fattening to countries which do not implement standards equivalent to those laid down in Community directives on the protection of animals during international transport and on the pre-slaughter stunning of animals.

Caribbean Bananas

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the letter of 25 June to the hon. Member for Oxford, East, concerning banana exports from the Caribbean after 1992, whether price guarantees are included in his assurance of preferential access arrangements for Caribbean banana exporters.

Mr. Curry: Our objective is an effective preferential arrangement after 1992, which will enable a continuing flow of bananas from the Caribbean into the Community market, in line with our commitments under the Lomé convention. Current preferential access to the United Kingdom for Caribbean bananas does not guarantee prices. Commission proposals for post-1992 banana trade have not yet emerged. We cannot predict the mechanism by which preferential access will be protected.

Food from Devon

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to food from Devon to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Curry: Yes. I understand the exhibition will be on display for one week from 5 November.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, *Official Report*, 10 July, column *109*, when he expects to be content that welfare-related problems will have been eliminated from the emerging alternative systems and that these systems are commercially viable.

Mr. Maclean: Some alternative systems are already being installed successfully. The proposals now under discussion in the Council of Ministers provide for the Commission to report by 1 January 1993 on the welfare of sows kept in different degrees of confinement or in groups, and to submit appropriate proposals. I am hopeful that any remaining problems with alternatives to stall and tether systems will have been resolved by that time.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, *Official Report*, 10 July, column *109*, whether he will phase out the existing stall and tether systems if the alternatives prove not to be commercially viable.

Mr. Maclean: I have made it clear that legislation requiring major changes to husbandry systems should be adopted on a Community basis. The action to be taken, should the Community not agree to the phasing out of stall and tether systems, would need to be considered at the time.

Fur Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take regarding the recommendations made by the Farm Animal Welfare Council on 4 April 1989 concerning mink and fox farming.

Mr. Maclean: The Farm Animal Welfare Council recommended that Agriculture Ministers should require that the state veterinary service carry out effective monitoring of standards of management on these farms. This is being done.

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will amend the rules of the farm woodland scheme to permit farmers to make more than one application per holding.

Mr. Gummer: Existing participants in the farm woodland scheme have shown interest in increasing their plantings under the scheme. The rule limiting them to one application per holding is preventing that. Agriculture Ministers have therefore decided from today to abolish the rule and to permit additional applications to be made up to the limit of 40 hectares per agricultural unit. I am pleased with the continuing interest in this innovative scheme which should bring environmental benefits for future generations.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Visits

Q52. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to Scotland in the near future.

The Prime Minister: I hope to visit Scotland later this year.

Q78. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to make an official visit to the Channel tunnel site.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Defence Review

Q65. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister what consideration has been given to the role of the security services in her Government's present options for change review; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The options for change studies are concerned with the future structure and deployment of our armed forces.

Bed-and-Breakfast Hotels

Q70. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what action she is taking to ensure that children in bed-and-breakfast hotels are living in safety and in receipt of full-time education when of school age.

The Prime Minister: Local authorities have considerable powers to control safety standards of houses in multiple occupation, which include bed-and-breakfast hotels. These powers have recently been strengthened. Responsibility for ensuring that all children of compulsory school age receive a proper education, including those in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, rests, under the Education Acts, with parents, schools and local education authorities. The Government are concerned to reduce the need for local authorities to use unsatisfactory bed-and-breakfast hotels and are making available, over the next two years, £250 million to local authorities and housing associations in London and the south-east, specifically to get homeless families out of such accommodation and into permanent homes.

Afghanistan

Q198. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will meet the President of Afghanistan to discuss renewal of diplomatic relations between the two countries; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to meet General Najibullah. Diplomatic relations between Britain and Afghanistan have not been broken.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act her office has received; what was her estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration she is giving to the subject access fee charged by her office as a result; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The total number of subject access requests received by my office is one. No specific estimate on the number of requests expected was made at the time as the amount of information held on computers in my office was small. The subject access fee charged was minimal to cover the cost of the work involved. The fee is set by the Cabinet Office, which has the responsibility for Data Protection Act matters for my office.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* her response to the letter of 15 June from Dr. Peter Jung and expert colleagues in minerals, molluscs and entomology of the natur-historisches museum in Basel, about whether major collections can be actively cared for under proposals such as those for the natural history museum in respect of expert staff; and what action she proposes to take to discharge obligations in respect of scientists' work in building up collections to the benefit of smaller museums throughout the world.

The Prime Minister: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts will shortly be placing a copy of the Government's response to Dr. Peter Jung's correspondence in the Library of the House.

The Minister for the Arts has asked the Government's chief scientific adviser, who is in discussion with the natural history museum, to keep him informed of the museum's position in relation to the United Kingdom science base. The Minister for the Arts will also be meeting the chairman and director of the museum to discuss the corporate plan and the wider issues.

British Airways

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will raise at her next meeting with the President of the Commission of the European Community his officials' search of the private offices of the chairman and chief executive of British Airways and examining of their private papers and personal bank statements.

The Prime Minister: I am advised that the visit was made by prior arrangement with the company and a legal representative of British Airways vetted documents (for relevance to the investigation and for possible legal privilege) before the Commission officials read them.

Engagements

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement concerning the use by the Crown prosecution service of lawyer agents in magistrates courts.

The Attorney-General: In the long term, as and when lawyer strength permits, it would be the aim of the Crown prosecution service (CPS) to employ agents to cover only 5 to 10 per cent. of court sessions.

The number of sessions (half days) in magistrates courts undertaken by counsel and solicitors in private practice on behalf of the CPS in 1989-90 was 138,000. This represented 38 per cent. of all sessions undertaken by the CPS in the magistrates courts. The information given in annex 9 of the CPS evidence to the Home Affairs Committee was incorrect: the data had been wrongly interpreted. The percentage of court sessions covered by agents has remained at 38 per cent. for both 1988-89 and 1989-90. The revised figures are:

(a) Court sessions covered by agents

	National totals
1988-89	130,643
1989-90	138,066

(b) Percentage court sessions covered by agents

	Per cent.
1988-89	38
1989-90	38

(c) Expenditure on agents fees

	£
1988-89	14,793,896
1989-90	16,473,527

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Order Paper

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he is considering to review the format of the Order Paper.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is understood that, once the decisions have been taken on the recommendations contained in the Procedure Committee's report on oral questions, the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee will be prepared to consider a review of the format of the Order Paper. The hon. Member and any others with a contribution to make on this issue should send their comments to the Sub-Committee Chairman.

Procedure Committee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the reports of the Procedure Committee, published since 1983-84, which have yet to be dealt with on the Floor of the House; and when he expects them to be brought forward for decision.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The following are the reports from the Procedure Committee, published since 1983-84, which have neither been debated on a substantive motion nor "tagged" as relevant to a general debate on procedure: First Report (1988-89) HC 290 ("Conduct of Members in the Chamber and the Alleged Abuse of Parliamentary Privilege"); First Report (1989-90) HC 379 ("Oral Questions"). I hope to be able to give the House an opportunity in the near future to reach a decision on the report on oral questions. There are no immediate plans for a debate on a substantive motion on any of the reports from the Procedure Committee on which the House has not yet reached a specific conclusion.

NORTHERN IRELAND

North Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary were assigned to investigate allegations of irregularities in North Eastern education and library board contracting from June 1986 until August 1987; what was the level of qualification and experience within the Royal Ulster Constabulary of each officer involved in this investigation; how many man-hours were spent by each investigating officer on the assignment; how many witnesses were interviewed by Royal Ulster Constabulary officers; how many miles were travelled by Royal Ulster Constabulary officers investigating the allegations from June 1986 until 31 March 1987; and whether, in the period 1 April 1987 until August 1987, the investigating officers completed reports on hours worked, miles travelled and so on, throughout the period of the investigation.

Mr. Cope: The Chief Constable has informed me that two officers from the RUC's serious crime squad were assigned to this investigation assisted as necessary by other officers and that all the officers involved were appropriately qualified for their work. I regret that the other particulars requested are not readily available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of expenditure of funds saved by United Kingdom withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation and figures of how these funds were used in the main area of United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation activity for the financial years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90; and if he will ensure that the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation's savings will continue to be spent in the same manner until Her Majesty's Government decide to return to membership of the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: Figures for expenditure of funds saved by United Kingdom's withdrawal from UNESCO for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are:

	1987-88 £	*1988-89* £
Overseas Development Administration (ODA) technical co-operation training programme	1,772,848	1,773,033
English language training courses	600,300	593,920
ODA shared scholarship schemes	320,000	320,000
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) scholarships and awards schemes	640,000	640,000
ODA cultural projects	100,000	92,000
Public expenditure survey transfer to FCO for cultural projects	100,000	100,000
Chinese student scholarships in the United Kingdom	950,000	950,000
Distance learning project in Commonwealth countries	100,000	
Nassau fellowships	650,131	743,368
Commonwealth media development fund	150,000	150,000
Royal Society	112,000	116,000
Research in arid Commonwealth Africa	300,000	300,000
Inter-governmental Oceanographic Commission	80,864	78,000
Man and the Biosphere/International Hydrological Programme/ International Association of Hydrological Sciences	200,000	200,000
Dissemination of results of research	200,000	200,000
Total	6,276,143	6,256,321

Figures for 1989-90 are not yet available.

My hon. Friend may rest assured that in planning our aid programme priorities we will continue to take full account of the appropriate allocation of the funds saved by our withdrawal from UNESCO.

Epidemics

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support the Overseas Development Administration has given to setting up a global early warning system for new epidemics at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Mrs. Chalker: None; responsibility for global monitoring of notifiable diseases rests with the World Health Organisation. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine is an international centre for epidemiology and public health, and works closely with the WHO. The ODA has recently agreed a package of assistance (£11 million over the next five years) for nine new research and training programmes in public health and tropical medicine at the school. These programmes will strengthen the school's (and the ODA's) capacity to provide practical advice to international agencies and Governments in developing countries on all aspects of international health policy.

Nicaragua

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will be in a position to make a decision in respect of further bilateral technical aid to Nicaragua.

Mrs. Chalker: No further decisions are needed. The modest technical co-operation programme which I announced on 2 April in a reply to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) at column *415* will be a continuing one.

Rain Forests

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to link British aid packages to agreements with the recipient Governments to limit the destruction of the rain forests.

Mrs. Chalker: While specific environmental conditions will often be appropriate at the project level, we do not favour conditionality based on a country's overall environmental record. We believe institution building and strengthening capacity to care for the environment and support for activities which help recipient countries limit rain forest destruction are more likely to be effective.

Women

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in ranked order the top 10 countries making financial contributions to the United Nations development fund for women.

Mrs. Chalker: The 10 highest Government pledges of financial contributions to UNIFEM in 1990 were:

1. Finland
2. United States of America
3. Netherlands
4. Federal Republic of Germany
5. Sweden
6. Italy
7. Australia
8. United Kingdom
9. Denmark
10. Belgium

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the work of the Overseas Development Administration towards achieving the aims of the Nairobi "Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women" declaration.

Mrs. Chalker: ODA's policy is to take account in all its activities of the role of women as agents and beneficiaries

of development aid. Our efforts focus on designing projects to ensure that these benefit women in developing countries; finding ways of increasing the numbers of women participating in training programmes both in the United Kingdom and in developing countries; trying to overcome constraints to the recruitment of women on ODA contracts in developing countries and improving ODA staff's understanding of women-in-development issues.

The ODA encourages aid recipient Governments to adopt policies which would fulfil the aims of the Nairobi forward-looking strategies and has encouraged other donor agencies, including the World bank and the European Commission, to improve their performance on women-in-development issues. Britain plays an active role in the OECD's development aid committee women-in-development expert group and has contributed over £900,000 to the United Nations development fund for women (UNIFEM) since it was established.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of nominations by developing countries under the technical co-operation training programme to study in Britain were for women in each year since 1980.

Mrs. Chalker: No central record is kept of the number of nominees for awards for women under the technical co-operation training programme (TCTP) but the number of women arriving to take up awards in this country since 1985 (earlier figures are not available) and as a percentage of the total is as follows:

Financial year	*Woman TCTP arrivals*	*Total percentage of TCTP arrivals*
1985-86	698	14·5
1986-87	964	16·7
1987-88	1,065	17·0
1988-89	1,122	17·8
1989-90	1,115	19·2

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of the Minister for Overseas Development of 9 July, *Official Report*, column 20, what is the number and percentage of women participating in Overseas Development Administration training programmes in developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1988, the latest date for which analysed figures are available, 2,665 women students and trainees were on courses financed directly or indirectly by the ODA, excluding some in-country training. This was 19 per cent. of the total.

Uganda

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Minister for Overseas Development holds regular discussions with the Government of Uganda.

Mrs. Chalker: The Minister for Overseas Development and her officials have regular discussions with President Museveni, Ugandan Ministers and officials on all aspects of our aid relationship.

Forestry

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many forestry projects have been agreed with Latin American, Caribbean, African and Pacific countries.

Mrs. Chalker: Bilateral forestry projects, research projects and projects financed by ODA under the joint funding scheme in the regions named are as follows:

	Number
Latin America	17
Caribbean	5
Africa	59
Pacific	7

Vietnam

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the European Economic Community regarding aid to Vietnam.

Mrs. Chalker: We have regular contacts with our European Community partners at both ministerial and official level on the question of aid to Vietnam.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Sanctions

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what factors he takes into consideration when considering the circumstances in which it is appropriate to apply trade sanctions against any country.

Mr. Redwood: The imposition of trade sanctions is a matter for the Community as a whole. In considering whether such action is appropriate, the Government must have regard not only to the reasons why sanctions may be necessary but also to their likely impact and effectiveness and to the response of others. In addition, we need to consider the broader implications for our foreign, trade and competition policy.

Post Office Users National Council

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response he proposes to make to the latest report by Post Office Users National Council and if he will review the Post Office monopoly as it may be affected by its recommendations.

Mr. Forth: I have noted with interest the comments contained in the annual report of the Post Office Users National Council and I have written to the chairman thanking him for the valuable work done by POUNC on behalf of all postal users. The Post Office's letter monopoly is kept under review, but no decisions have been taken.

Management Training

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the amount of money spent by his Department on the management charter initiative for management training and the anticipated amount to be spent in each of the next three financial years, in real terms.

Mr. Forth: My Department agreed in principle in 1988 that we should offer support of up to a total of £2·5 million over a period of up to five years to cover the setting up of the management charter initiative (MCI). Funding for each financial year is the subject of separate negotiation. In the first financial year 1988-89 £500,000 was spent and in 1989-90 £500,000 was spent. The Government are presently considering MCI's business plan for 1990-91 and beyond, and a decision on future funding will be made shortly. Responsibility for this funding will be transferred to the Department of Employment from 1 April 1991.

Textiles

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next proposes to meet representatives of the textile industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend's predecessor met representatives of the textile industry on 12 June. No date has been fixed for a further meeting, but Ministers and officials are in regular contact with the industry.

Accounting Practices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received *(a)* on the open marketing of off-balance sheet financing schemes and *(b)* calling for the curbing of such schemes; and from where.

Mr. Redwood: I replied to questions from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) about off-balance sheet finance in April, but have not received any subsequent representations. The extension of the definition of a subsidiary undertaking in the Companies Act 1989 will bring on to the balance sheet a number of schemes which would previously have been off-balance sheet. The issue of off-balance sheet finance is also being addressed by the Accounting Standards Committee, which published an exposure draft in May entitled "Reflecting the substance of transactions in assets and liabilities".

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the different treatment of *(a)* research and *(b)* development expenditure in company accounts.

Mr. Redwood: The issue of disclosure of research and development expenditure was discussed during the passage of the Companies Bill last year. I am not aware of any representations since then on the treatment of such expenditure in company accounts.

EC-Gulf Trade

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department plans to make an assessment of the effects on the United Kingdom petrochemical industry of a free trade agreement between the European Community and the states of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Mr. Redwood: The Government have consulted widely with industries interested in the forthcoming negotiations, including the petrochemical industry, and remain ready to consider further views.

Fur Products

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the value of fur and fur product exports from Britain in *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1988-89 and *(c)* 1989-90; and what proportion in each case was accounted for by re-export.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The available information is in the table. Data on re-exports could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

United Kingdom exports of fur and fur products

Year	*Value (£ million)*
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	130·3
1 April 1988—31 March 1989	99·4
1 April 1989—31 March 1990	86·8

Sources: Industrial Economics Indicator (IEI) Database Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom (March 1990).
Classification: Standard Industrial Classification (SIC 80)—Activity Heading 4560.
Definition: Sorting, dressing and dyeing furs and the manufacture of fur apparel and other fur goods.

Financial Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the names of all companies or firms investigated or suspended since the implementation of the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* Statistical information on investigations is included in the report of the Trade and Industry Select Committee on company investigations and the annual report of the Securities and Investments Board also includes similar information on the use of their enforcement powers. Suspensions by SIB and the SROs are made public by these bodies. Investigations are confidential, as they may reveal that the firm or persons being invesitgated is innocent and publication of suspicion would be damaging.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all the reports published on investigations carried out under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* Only reports of inspectors appointed under section 94 of the Financial Services Act can be published. No such reports have been published. The Secretary of State's powers under section 94 have been transferred to the Securities and Investments Board.

Auditors

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of cases since 1980 when his Department has taken court action against auditors criticised in Companies Act inspection reports.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* None. Copies of initial reports are passed to the auditors' professional body for consideration.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Curriculum

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when examples of test papers under the new curriculum for mathematics, science and English will be made available to teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: Prototype standard assessment tasks (SATs) were piloted in a sample of primary schools this summer. In the light of the evaluation of that pilot, SATs for the purpose of statutory assessment will be developed and made available to teachers in spring 1991.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the guidelines for making reports to parents in assessments under the new curriculum for school reports will be available.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Education (Individual Pupils' Achievements) (Information) Regulations 1990 were laid by my right hon. Friend on 10 July and come into force from 1 August 1990. Copies are available in the Library.

Primary Schools (Admissions)

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a commencement order in respect of admissions to primary schools in accordance with sections 26 to 32 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has not yet reached a decision on when the more open enrolment provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 should be extended to primary schools. When a decision has been reached, a commencement order will be made as necessary at the appropriate time.

School Closures

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the closure of four comprehensive schools in the borough of Wandsworth.

Mrs. Rumbold: None. I understand that the authority is to consult locally on school reorganisation proposals which include the closure of four secondary schools.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if students training to qualify as physiotherapists and other vocational qualifications registered under the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960 are eligible for a student loan.

Mr. Jackson: The Education (Student Loans) Act, together with the regulations recently approved by Parliament, make the loan available to full-time students who meet the personal eligibility requirements and who attend courses of the type prescribed by schedule 1 of the Act at educational institutions receiving support from public funds. At other institutions such courses would have to be specifically designated.

Universities and Polytechnics

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), *Official Report*, 10 July, column 164, if he will list the distinctive characteristics in respect of universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Jackson: The distinctive characteristics of polytechnics compared to universities include a greater emphasis on: teaching compared to research; applied research rather than other research; vocational, professional and industrially based courses; sub-degree and part-time courses; provision for a broader range of students; and meeting the particular needs of local and regional employers.

Higher Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of all visits made to independent institutions of higher education by Her Majesty's inspectors, including accompanied visits, showing the name of the institution, the circumstances by which the visit came to be made, the purpose of the visit, its results, its cost and by whom this was borne, for the period 1986 to date.

Mr. Jackson: To answer the hon. Member's question would involve a scrutiny of some 2,600 HMI diaries for each of the past four years. This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Information Technology

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy in respect of the recommendations of the expert group on information technology in initial teacher training, which reported in March 1989.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The recommendations of the expert group which were for action by the Government have been implemented. The revised criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher training courses, published last November, require that initial teacher training institutions should provide all students with a specified minimum IT capability. In addition, we commissioned the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council to undertake a survey of the IT resources available to initial teacher training institutions. The survey was carried out at the end of last year and the results are being analysed. A number of institutions have commented on the expert group's report, at the Department's invitation. The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and Her Majesty's inspectorate will be monitoring the action taken by institutions in response to the revised criteria and the recommendations of the report.

Crookham Court School (Sexual Abuse)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he has given to the result of the case concluded at Reading on 12 July concerning sexual abuse at Crookham Court school in Berkshire; and if he will consider the introduction of new legislative provisions governing the operation of private schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Under new provisions to be introduced by virtue of the Children Act 1989, section 71 of the Education Act 1944 will be amended to provide an additional ground for complaint with respect to independent schools. This additional power will be brought into effect where there is failure by a proprietor of an independent school to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child provided with accommodation by the school. The Act will also enable local social services departments to enter and inspect independent schools to determine whether the proprietor is fulfilling his welfare duties. These provisions of the Children Act will be implemented in October 1991.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received regarding unsolicited telephone calls requesting personal information made to members of the public by companies authorised by his Department.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department has received only one representation regarding unsolicited telephone calls requesting personal information.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the topics of interest to his Department which were regarded as suitable for commercial public opinion surveys by means of unsolicited telephone calls.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Topics considered suitable for commercial public opinon surveys by means of unsolicited telephone calls in the last three years were:

Calls to employers:

1. Employers' sick pay and disability pension.
2. Maternity rights survey (a).
3. Awareness of the social security advice line to employers.
4. Awareness of national insurance and statutory sick pay information materials.
5. Check of receipt of 1989 national insurance tables.

Calls to the general public:

Awareness and opinions of households in Berkshire of people with disabilities.

Note: Survey jointly sponsored by DSS, Department of Employment and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many surveys based on unsolicited telephone calls have been commissioned by his Department in the last three years; how many commercial organisations were engaged; and at what cost.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Details of surveys based on unsolicited telephone calls commissioned by the Department in the last three years are contained in the table.

	£000
Number of surveys	6
Number of commercial organisations involved[1]	6
Total cost[2]	274·5

[1] Includes "not for profit" organisations.

[2] The cost is the total cost of the study of which the survey was a part.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice he will give to a member of the public who receives an unsolicited telephone call from a commercial company claiming it was authorised to collect personal information on behalf of his Department on how to deal with that call.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Commercial companies authorised by the Department to conduct telephone surveys among the general public are required to give a telephone number which people may ring to check the validity of the research. A member of the public who has any reason to doubt the validity of a call should report the fact to the Department. Additionally, they have the right not to take part in any survey.

Transitional Payments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants were receiving transitional additions in April 1988, 1989 and 1990; how many of these were pensioners; and how many were receiving income support for mortgage interest payments.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table shows the number of income support claimants receiving normal statutory transitional additions immediately after the introduction of income support in April 1988 and the uprating in April 1989, together with the number of pensioners, and of claimants receiving income support for mortgage interest which are included in those totals. Corresponding figures, but excluding boarders and those living in residential care and nursing homes, immediately after the uprating in April 1990 are estimates based upon the results for 1988 and 1989 and estimated changes since then.

	May 1988	*May 1989*	*May 1990*
(a) Claimants receiving a transitional addition	1,587,000	497,000	130,000
(b) Claimants included in (a) receiving a pensioner, enhanced pensioner or higher pensioner premium	710,000	241,000	64,000
(c) Claimants included in (a) with housing costs including mortgage interest	138,000	25,000	5,000

These figures are derived from the Annual Statistical Enquiries of May 1988 and May 1989, copies of which are in the Library.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many full-time students in receipt of discretionary awards, who do not qualify for a student loan, will lose entitlement to social security and housing benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are estimated to be some 48,000 discretionary award holders, but not all such students are excluded from receipt of a student loan.

It is not possible to estimate the number of discretionary award holders currently receiving benefit as the social security data collected do not differentiate between types of student claimant. However, those students in vulnerable groups, including students with

dependent children, disabled students and those students in further education under the age of 19, will retain entitlement to income support and housing benefit.

Those full-time discretionary award holders who lose entitlement to income support, unemployment benefit and housing benefit will be able to turn to the access funds for further financial assistance.

Elderly People (Funding)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any proposals to increase the funding of support for the elderly in their homes especially for those living alone.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: All benefit levels are considered for uprating each year and final decisions for next April will be taken in the autumn.

Pensions

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he has any proposals to increase the basic state pension to one third of average male earnings for a single person, and one half of average male earnings for a couple where the partner's pension is dependent on her husband's contributions;

(2) if he has any proposals to introduce a basic non-means-tested state pension of not less than one third and one half of national male earnings for a single person and married couple, respectively.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government have honoured their commitment to maintain the value of the state retirement pension in line with prices. A link with earnings is not the key factor in improving pensioners' incomes. What matters most to pensioners is the value of their total income, from whatever source. The success of our policies is demonstrated by the over 31 per cent. real terms growth in pensioners' average total net income between 1979 and 1987.

OPCS Reports

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made to date in reproducing the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' survey reports in braille.

Mr. Scott: I can confirm that work on reproducing the OPCS survey reports in Braille is continuing and that the report entitled "Financial Circumstances of Families with a Disabled Child" will be available shortly. A copy will be placed in the Library and additional copies can be obtained from Social Survey Division, OPCS, St. Catherines House, 10 Kingsway, London WC2B 6JP. As each braille report is published, a copy will be placed in the Library.

Widows' Benefits

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of repealing those parts of the overlapping benefits regulations which prevent the payment of other benefits to widows receiving *(a)* a widowed mother's allowance and *(b)* a widow's pension; and what would be the cost if the repeal were limited to the payment to widows of sickness, invalidity and unemployment benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The cost in relation to widowed mother's allowance is estimated to be approximately £4·3 million and in relation to widow's pension £63·7 million. Were the repeal to be limited to payment of sickness, invalidity and unemployment benefit, the cost in relation to widowed mother's allowance is estimated to be approximately £1·9 million and in relation to widow's pension £9·7 million.

Note: Widow's pension is not payable beyond age 65. Widows aged 65 and over receive either a widow's retirement pension or a pension based wholly or partly on their own contributions.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Antarctic

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will announce his proposals to protect the Antarctic environment for the special Antarctic treaty consultative meeting to be held in November in Santiago.

Mr. Maude: When consultations with our Antarctic treaty partners have been completed.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the purpose of the liability protocol meeting on the minerals convention.

Mr. Maude: To explore and discuss all proposals relating to article 8(7) of the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now support the proposal of the New Zealand Government for an environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty.

Mr. Maude: We favour an environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand has said that New Zealand will work with Antarctic treaty partners on a draft of such a protocol for presentation to the Santiago meeting in November. We look forward to seeing the draft.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from non-governmental organisations calling for Antarctica to be declared a wilderness reserve.

Mr. Maude: We have received representations from the World Wide Fund for Nature, from Wildlife Link and from the Women's Institute.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding New Zealand's decision to set aside ratification of the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities; if Her Majesty's Government will reconsider ratifying the convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We are aware of the New Zealand Prime Minister's press statement of 6 July. We continue to support the Antarctic minerals convention as a means of ensuring protection for the Antarctic environment.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give

consideration to the establishment of a long-term legally binding moratorium on minerals mining in Antarctica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The Antarctic minerals convention provides for a binding moratorium on mineral exploration and development which would remain in force until such time as the convention's commission decided otherwise by consensus. We fully support such a moratorium and therefore the early entry into force of the convention.

Gifts

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, *Official Report*, 9 July, column 47, how many gifts received from foreign powers in 1989 *(a)* were placed on the inventory of a British mission, *(b)* were placed on the inventory of his Department, *(c)* were given to external institutions, *(d)* were retained by Ministers, *(e)* were retained by civil servants, *(f)* were bought by Ministers, *(g)* were bought by civil servants and *(h)* were sold at public auction.

Mr. Maude: The disposal of gifts received from foreign powers in 1989 is as follows:

	Number
(a) Were placed on the inventory of a British mission	2
(b) Were placed on the inventory of his Department	7
(c) Were given to external institutions	3
(d) Were retained by Ministers	22
(e) Were retained by civil servants	13
(f) Were bought by Ministers	10
(g) Were bought by civil servants	9
(h) Were sold at public auction	None

This does not include gifts of a minor nature.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has concerning the validity of reports that Pol Pot is currently inside Cambodia;

(2) what information he has concerning the current whereabouts of Pol Pot.

Mr. Maude: There are no reliable reports of Pol Pot's whereabouts.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will instruct Her Majesty's Government's representative at the United Nations to oppose recognition by the United Nations of any Cambodian delegation that includes members of the Khmer Rouge.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) on 11 July.

Political Parties (Funding)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the information available to him on the systems of state funding for political parties in the Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Maude: The following is a summary of information currently available:

(a) *Canada*

The Treasury reimburses registered political parties 22·5 per cent. of allowable election expenses and parliamentary candidates 50 per cent. of expenses up to a maximum of 50 per cent. of the total permitted, subject to certain conditions of expenditure incurred and votes received. Political contributions to candidates and political parties benefit from income tax credits. Parties in Parliament receive funds for research staff budgets, office supplies and certain support services.

(b) *France*

Under new legislation parties will receive funding for legislative and presidential election campaigns, subject to conditions of parliamentary representation, contesting at least 75 constituencies and opening their accounts to scrutiny. Funds will be allocated proportionate to the number of seats held in Parliament and the number of votes won in the first rounds of the most recent legislative elections.

(c) *FRG*

At general elections each party is reimbursed DM 5·00 per eligible voter voting for it, subject to its publishing its accounts. The reimbursement may not exceed half a party's revenues, but under certain conditions deductions may be made from the next reimbursement, and parties may receive advances of reimbursement. Similar arrangements apply to elections to the European Parliament and in the Federal Laender.

(d) *Italy*

Subject to certain conditions of parliamentary representation or votes received at the most recent general election and to opening their accounts, parties receive an annual subvention. The amount is calculated by complex rules reflecting recent electoral performance. In 1990 the largest grants were to the Christian Democrats (25·7 million lire), Communists (17·8 million) and Socialists (11·6 million).

(e) *Japan*

There is no formal state funding of political parties but political groups represented in the Diet receive a monthly sum of 605,000 yen per Dietman.

(f) *United States*

For presidential elections, a voluntary public financing system provides, subject to certain conditions, matching funds to candidates in primaries and to party nominees in the general election and flat grants to parties for their nominating conventions. (In 1988 the national spending limit for pre-nomination campaigns within which matching funds were available was 23·1 million dollars plus 4·6 million dollars for fund-raising; the maximum subsidy for the two major parties' nominating conventions was 9·2 million dollars; and the maximum subsidy for the general election (subject to no additional funds being raised or spent by the candidate) was 46·1 million dollars. As for congressional elections, until recently no public funding was available, but some states are beginning to experiment with a matching fund system. Some states and cities provide public funding for state and municipal elections; others do not.

Kenya

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Kenya about human rights in that country, and the recent arrest without charge of Mr. Kenneth Matsla and Mr. Charles Ruha.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are real causes for concern including the detention of critics of the Government which are bound to worry the friends of Kenya. The Kenyan Government are well aware of our views on these matters.

Gulf Co-operation Council

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet representatives of the Gulf Co-operation Council; and what matters he will discuss.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs expects to meet representatives of the Gulf Co-operation Council in the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York in September. He last met such representatives at an EC/GCC ministerial meeting in Muscat on 17 March 1990. Among the matters discussed were the implementation of the EC/GCC first-stage agreement and forthcoming negotiations for a second-stage agreement, as well as regional and international issues.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has seen the text of the European Parliament's resolution on a possible free trade agreement between the European Community and the states of the Gulf Co-operation Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We have seen the text of a resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 13 July concerning a possible free trade agreement with the Gulf Co-operation Council.

The Commission will shortly begin negotiations with the GCC for a second-stage EC/GCC agreement, based on a free trade arrangement. We have consulted widely with United Kingdom industries interested in these negotiations and believe that the Commission's negotiating mandate takes into account essential United Kingdom interests.

ENERGY

Community Insulation Projects

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many homes were insulated by community insulation projects in 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The number of homes treated by the projects in 1988 and 1989 were some 159,000 and 134,000 respectively.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much was spent on the promotion of energy efficiency *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Expenditure by my Department on energy efficiency programmes in 1979-80 was £2·4 million. The provision for expenditure by the Energy Efficiency Office in 1989-90 was £15 million.

EC-Gulf Trade

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has made any assessment of the effects on the United Kingdom offshore sector of a free trade agreement between the European Community and the states of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Assessment of the effects of a free trade agreement between the European Community and Gulf Co-operation Council is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. However, any agreement is expected to have little effect on the United Kingdom offshore sector.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to review the upper limits on direct sales to large electricity consumers by the present generating companies.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those companies which have been given second-tier licences as electricity suppliers.

Mr. Baldry: The Director General of Electricity Supply has a statutory responsibility for maintaining the register of all licences granted.

Standing Charges

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will seek powers to abolish standing charges on domestic electricity supplies for all old age pensioners.

Mr. Baldry: No. Pricing decisions are a matter for the regional electricity supply companies.

ENVIRONMENT

Bathing Waters

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by which date all designated beaches will be prohibited from having untreated sewage discharged into their bathing waters.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 5 March at column *452* that in general all substantial discharges of sewage should be treated at a sewage treatment works and that this investment programme should be completed as soon as practicable. Discussions are now being held with the water industry about implementation of this policy.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to bring all Britain's beaches up to European Community blue flag level; and by what date he hopes to achieve this.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 5 March at column *452* that, in general, sewage will be treated before discharge. The cost of doing this was estimated to be £1·5 billion. The programme, which is being integrated with the £1·4 billion investment programme to bring the remaining bathing waters up to the directive's standards, is expected to last for 10 years. It will be for local authorities and other proprietors of beaches to capitalise upon this and bring their beaches up to the requisite standards.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met leaders of local authority associations to discuss alternatives to the community charge.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I last met the leaders of the local authority associations on 5 July at the

Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. The leaders did not raise the question of alternatives to the community charge.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average reduction in poll tax per head for each additional £1 million support for each local authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The effect on community charges of an extra £1 million of support for an area depends upon the budget decisions of the local authorities in that area. Prudent authorities would pass the support on to their charge payers in the form of reduced community charges. Others might increase spending, giving no benefit to charge payers in their area.

Nitrogen Oxides

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the research which he has commissioned into the control of nitrogen oxides technologies; what reports he has received; and if he will place copies in the Library.

Mr. Trippier: My Department commissioned a report on acid emission abatement technologies from the Fellowship of Engineering, a major part of which deals with technologies for reducing emissions of nitrogen oxides. The report was placed in the Library. As part of its work for my Department, the Warren Spring laboratory is making a study of technology for reducing emissions of nitrogen oxides from cars and its report will be placed in the Library.

My Department recently commissioned an evaluation of NOx abatement technologies for large combustion plant. A draft report has been received and is being considered.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what grant in aid the National Rivers Authority is receiving for its laboratory investment programme; what assessment has been made of the impact of running costs in such a programme as against contracting out these services; and what is his policy towards funding such work;

(2) what cost-benefit analysis was undertaken before the National Rivers Authority reversed the original intention of contracting out analytical requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The National Rivers Authority may claim grant in aid in respect of that part of its laboratory investment programme which is not financed by cash transfers from water and sewerage undertakers. The total net cost of the programme is not yet known, but amounted to some £2 million in the period 1 September 1989 to 31 March this year.

In those regions where water authorities transferred one of their laboratories to the authority a full cost-benefit analysis was not thought appropriate. In those regions where new laboratories were to be provided and where contracting services were, or might have been, available a comparative cost analysis was carried out to assess whether building new laboratories was the best way of providing the required capability.

I am satisfied with the decisions reached on the authority's ownership of its own independent laboratory facilities and that grant in aid should support their provision.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of new laboratory facilities at Reading for the National Rivers Authority; and what is the estimated annual revenue cost of undertaking analysis in-house as against contracting out.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The estimated capital cost of the National Rivers Authority's new Reading laboratories is £3·62 million. The estimated annual revenue cost of using it to undertake analysis in-house is £1·02 million, compared with a contracting-out cost of £1·31 million.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the National Rivers Authority is able to compete for and perform any third-party work.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Section 145 (2) of the Water Act 1989 gives the National Rivers Authority power to carry out work for other public bodies. It also has general powers to do anything which, in the opinion of the authority, is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the carrying out of the authority's functions.

Gas Emissions

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department collects on the emission of gases damaging to the ozone layer from *(a)* aircraft, *(b)* road vehicles and *(c)* other sources; and what the most recent statistics indicate in respect of such emissions.

Mr. Trippier: The approach of the Montreal protocol, and that of the European Community, is to control the supply to the market, rather than the emission, of ozone-depleting substances. We do not therefore need to collect data on emissions.

Avon Dam

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current water volume stored by the Avon dam; and what is his current projection of when the volume will drop to 600 megalitres.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: South West Water Services Ltd. has recently reported that the current stored-water volume in the Avon reservoir is 1,232 megalitres and that the reservoir is 96 per cent. full. The projection requested is not held centrally.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts are made by his Department to quantify the total amounts of low-level radioactive waste being dumped in London.

Mr. Trippier: Radioactive waste may be disposed of only if an authorisation has been issued by HMIP under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The Department does not maintain a central record of the quantities of low-level radioactive waste disposed of through local disposal routes nor of specific disposal locations.

However, a condition of authorisation requires waste producers to keep proper and detailed records relating to their disposals. These records as well as the premises or sites concerned are subject to scrutiny by HMIP inspectors to ensure compliance with the terms of the certificates of authorisation.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached in respect of the purity of water supplies in London arising from the study sponsored by his Department on the disposal of low-level radioactive waste; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library.

Mr. Trippier: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has a national programme for checking the levels of radioactivity in drinking water sources. This shows that the levels of radioactivity in the Thames are extremely low and the levels in drinking water supplies are below the guideline values for potable water recommended by the World Health Organisation. The research study commissioned by my Department and being carried out by St. Bartholomew's hospital medical college will not be completed until March 1991. A first draft report was received by my Department this month and is currently being reviewed. The report will be published in due course and copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list all those organisations authorised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to dispose of low-level radioactive waste; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will give the number and names of organisations in Greater London area permitted to dispose of low-level radioactive waste.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the Department's "List of Premises in England and Wales currently authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to dispose of radioactive waste", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Radon

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, following the Government's announcement of 19 January that the recommended action level for radon in houses was to be halved, he plans to issue any advice to householders.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A second edition of the Department's publication, "The Householders' Guide to Radon", was published today, and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

The guide comprises a general first section describing what radon is and where it comes from, how it can affect people, how it gets into homes, the ways of finding out if a house has a high level of radon, and what to do if measurements show radon concentrations above the action level. The second section gives practical advice on ways of reducing the level of radon indoors in various types of houses, and on how to get the work done and paid for. The third section answers some more questions which are commonly asked about radon. Sources for further information and advice are also given.

The new edition takes account of the reduction of the action level from 400 to 200 becquerels per cubic metre announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside on 19 January this year. The section on reducing the level of radon in houses has been extended, and incorporates the latest findings of the Government-funded research programme currently being carried out by the Building Research Establishment.

The second edition of "The Householders' Guide to Radon" will be widely distributed, especially in those areas of the country where high levels of indoor radon are most prevalent. The document is available free of charge from the Department by writing to:

"Householders' Guide to Radon"
Room A518
Romney House
43 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 3PY.

Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the business ventures that made use of Warrington and Runcorn development corporation property; how long each of them used the property rent-free; and how much in each case was eventually deducted from fees paid by the corporation to take into account the use of its property.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* Although Warrington and Runcorn development corporation did not at the outset charge business ventures directly for the use of its property, the fees which the corporation paid to business ventures were exclusive of accommodation costs. This ensured that the costs incurred by the corporation were no greater than if the work of business ventures had been retained in-house. The absence of a direct rental charge to business ventures did not represent a subsidy. After the first year the development corporation reduced the fees it paid to business ventures to reflect the use they made of its accommodation in carrying out work for other clients. The period over which each business venture used corporation property and the fee reduction in respect of work for other clients are as follows:

		£
Rendel Palmer and Tritton	1 April 1987 to 30 September 1989	60,666
Cipfa Services (latterly CSL)	1 August 1987 to 30 September 1989	1,050
Meredith Hewson	1 October 1987 to 30 September 1989	200
Kingham Knight Architects	1 October 1987 to 30 September 1989	6,479
E. C. Harris and Partners	1 October 1987 to 30 September 1989	5,200
Gillespies	1 October 1987 to 30 September 1989	1,908
Dove and Hodd	1 November 1987 to 30 September 1989	1,540
Povall Worthington	1 February 1988 to 30 September 1989	Nil
Warrington-Runcorn Property Services (latterly Eileen Bilton Partnership)	1 March 1988 to 30 September 1989	917
Business Environment Planning	1 April 1988 to 30 September 1989	1,326

		£
Mainmet	1 August 1988 to 30 September 1989	Nil
Dixon Webb	1 October 1988 to 30 September 1989	Nil

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether business ventures supported by the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation paid the bills covering rates, heating and lighting *(a)* during the period they used corporation property rent-free and *(b)* after the corporation had started to make deductions for the use of its property.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* Since the fees paid by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation to business ventures were exclusive of accommodation costs, it would not have been appropriate for the business ventures to have paid bills covering rates, heating and lighting. However, these items were taken into account in the adjustment to fees paid to business ventures to reflect the use they made of corporation accommodation in carrying out work for other clients.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what savings were made as a consequence of the privatisation of Warrington and Runcorn development corporation services; what records were kept to show what savings had been made; and whether the contracts awarded to these business ventures will be offered for competitive tender when they come up for renewal.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* Business ventures were established on the basis that they should cost Warrington and Runcorn development corporation no more than the cost of retaining the work in-house. Budgetary controls were used, and appropriate records kept, to ensure that this objective was achieved. It is the normal policy for the Commission for the New Towns to let contracts on the basis of competitive tender.

Tenancies

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to ensure that live-in carers have the right to succeed to a tenancy in the event of the death of the person they care for; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* No. If the carer is a spouse or is living with the tenant as a husband or wife, and the tenant is not already a "successor", he or she has the right of automatic succession to a secure tenancy (granted by local authorities and, before 15 January 1989, by housing associations) or an assured tenancy (new tenancies granted by housing associations and by some private landlords).

If the carer is a close relative and has lived with the tenant for at least a year, he or she has an automatic right to succeed to a secure tenancy and may be able to negotiate to succeed to an assured tenancy by agreement with the landlord.

In other cases it is open to these landlords to grant a joint tenancy, secure or assured as appropriate, to the live-in carer.

Women's Safety

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidelines to local authorities concerning the improvement of street lighting and the use of resident caretakers on housing estates in the interests of the safety of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* Street lighting is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but I understand that recommendations for local authorities are covered in British standard 5489 part 3, relating to lighting of subsidiary streets, which my right hon. Friend reissued last year after extensive consultation.

Guidance on the use of resident caretakers on housing estates can be found in the priority estates project guide to local housing management issued by my Department in April 1987. In addition, the estate action programme encourages a local management presence and the use of concierges, where appropriate, for the benefit of all residents.

My right hon. Friend has no plans to issue further guidelines.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what services are provided on behalf of the Government by local authorities at Heathrow airport.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[pursuant to his reply, 13 July 1990, c. 350]:* No local authority acts as agent for the Government in providing services at Heathrow airport: such functions as they discharge there are their own responsibility.

I understand, however, that staff of the London borough of Hillingdon are employed in support of medical inspectors of immigrants at Heathrow airport. The council also negotiates the rental of the health control unit premises at the airport.

WALES

Maternity Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what research his Department has funded to assess the safety or comparative costs of delivery in *(a)* district general hospitals, *(b)* general practitioner maternity units and *(c)* at home; and if he will give the conclusions of each project funded.

Mr. Grist: No research directly assessing the safety and comparative costs of delivery has been funded by the Department. The hon. Lady may, however, wish to note the conclusions of the Wales perinatal mortality initiative 1984-86 and the report on perinatal intensive care services in Wales. Copies are available in the Library.

Teachers

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on education authorities in Wales seeking to limit the number of applicants for teaching posts by stipulating a criterion that applicants should have been educated at some stage within that county.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. The employment and deployment of teachers is a matter for local education authorities and schools.

Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authority schools in Wales have voted to opt out of local education authority control.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Two.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many local education authority *(a)* nursery schools, *(b)* infant schools, *(c)* primary schools and *(d)* secondary schools there are in each of the counties of Wales;

(2) how many private *(a)* nursery schools, *(b)* infants schools, *(c)* primary schools and *(d)* secondary schools there are in each of the counties of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is available in "Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools No. 3", table 1.02. Independent schools are not classified by sector.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authority *(a)* nursery schools, *(b)* infant schools, *(c)* primary schools and *(d)* secondary schools he has visited in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As the Minister with direct responsibility to my right hon. Friend for education matters in Wales I am a frequent visitor to schools throughout the Principality.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the impact of recent legislation on school governing bodies in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Recent education legislation provides governors with the statutory powers to make decisions about school priorities, and about the needs of individual children. The governing bodies of schools with delegation under local management of schools are now directly responsible for their budget spending and for taking decisions about staff appointments.

River Pollution

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the causes of the decrease in the percentage of consented discharges achieving a minimum of 80 per cent. compliance with conditions for discharge into rivers in the Welsh Water Authority area as reported in table 2.10 of Environmental Digest for Wales No. 4 for 1988-89; and what action his Department has taken to tackle this trend.

Mr. Grist: One of the general duties of the National Rivers Authority, which was established last year, is to monitor and improve the quality of rivers and other controlled waters. Since its establishment, the authority has increased monitoring of rivers and effluents, is applying stricter conditions and prosecuting a greater proportion of offenders for consent failures. In 1989-90 the performance recorded reversed the trend suggested in 1988-89 and continued the improvements shown in the preceding years. The reasons why the performance overall of discharges of trade effluent should deteriorate in any particular year are unknown.

EC-Gulf Trade

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if his Department will make any assessment of the effects on the petrochemical and allied industries in Wales of a free trade agreement between the European Community and the states of the Gulf Co-operation Council;

(2) if his Department will make any assessment of the effects on employment in the petrochemical and allied industries in Wales of a free trade agreement between the European Community and the states of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to do so. The Government have already consulted widely interested industries.

Health Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy that public access to the information and documents of health authorities in Wales should be on the same basis as for local authorities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: No. There is already considerable openness in health authority affairs. They continue to be subject to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 10 July, *Official Report*, column 147, if he will list how many collective meetings his Department had with the non-departmental public bodies in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The available information is as follows:-

Year	*Number of meetings*
1984	3
1985	2
1986	0
1987	1
1988	2
1989	2
1990 (to date)	1

Reliable information on the number of meetings held in the earlier years is not available.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to each community health council in Wales covering the area of one district council with a mechanism for all the community health councils in a health authority's area to meet on a representative basis.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 13 July by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

National Health Service

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has made any announcement in the past week on the financial resources available to the national health service in Wales.

Mr. Grist: At a meeting of district health authority and family practitioner committee chairmen my right hon. Friend was delighted to be able to announce his endorsement of the strategic intent which will provide the management target for the National Health Service in Wales into the next century.

In so doing my right hon. Friend drew attention to the record level of funding being provided by the Government for the service in Wales: over £1·5 billion this year—£500 million more in real terms than in 1979-80.

My right hon. Friend was also pleased to announce separately his decision to make available the necessary resources to enable Project 2000 courses to be introduced in south-east Wales from spring 1992, at the same time as in west Wales.

General Practitioner Budgets

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply of 9 July, *Official Report*, column 69, if he will make it his policy to ensure that the necessary software will be available to enable those general practitioners who wish to be responsible for their budgets, and the practice funding scheme, to start on 1 April 1991.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 9 July 1990.

Bypasses

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the bypasses planned for Llanymynech Pant and Welshpool will be completed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The A483 Pant/Llanymynech scheme is in Shropshire; its timing is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. The A483 Welshpool relief road scheme is included in the "Roads in Wales" short-term programme to start before April 1991, and will take about two years to complete.

Unfit Housing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's latest estimate of the total cost that would be involved in bringing all unfit housing *(a)* in Cardiff and *(b)* in Wales as a whole up to a fit standard.

Mr. Grist: Information in the form requested is not available centrally.

Myodil

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will undertake a review of problems which have arisen for patients in Wales as a result of the use of Myodil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my letter of 27 April, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, to which there is nothing I can usefully add.

Renewal Areas Scheme

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been provided to local authorities in order to develop the renewal areas scheme for older housing in Wales *(a)* so far this financial year and *(b)* prior to April 1990; and for what purposes this money was provided.

Mr. Grist: Renewal areas were introduced under the provisions of part VII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 with effect from 1 April 1990. Credit approvals of £1 million are being held by the Department to meet local authorities' proposals for renewal areas in the current financial year.

North-south Dual Carriageway

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for a dual carriageway road link between north and south Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Our proposals for selective improvements are clearly set out in "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s".

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has made any estimate of what the effect on tourism of a dual carriageway road link between north and south Wales would be.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The selective improvements planned, together with improvements to the motorway and trunk road network throughout Wales, will greatly improve the potential for growth in tourism and leisure-based industries.

A55

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the final improvements to the A55 between St. Asaph and Holywell will be completed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Work on the Rhuallt Hill scheme started in May and is expected to take two years to complete.

A470 and A483

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current traffic flow figures for the A470 and the A483; and what estimates there are of the future traffic flow on these roads.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Annual average daily traffic flows on the A470 range between 42,300 north of Cardiff and 2,500 in mid-Wales; and on the A483 between 19,800 in Clwyd and 2,000 in mid-Wales.

The latest national road traffic forecasts indicate that between 1988 and 2025 traffic is expected to grow by between 83 per cent. and 142 per cent.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what improvements have been made to the A470 and A483 during the last 10 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1979, 21 schemes on the A470 and nine schemes on the A483 have been completed, at a cost of over £100 million and £52 million respectively.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what improvements are currently under way on the A470 and the A483; and what future improvements are planned.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Twenty-eight schemes are under construction or planned on the A470, at a cost of over £73 million; six schemes are under construction or planned on the A483 at a cost of some £30 million.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for accelerating planned improvements to the A470 and the A483.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The timing of schemes is determined by the satisfactory completion of engineering and statutory procedures, and the availability of finance.

Bangor-Cardiff Road

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for having improvements to sections of road with bad bends and steep hills between Bangor and Cardiff added to the roads programme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Our policy is to continue to undertake schemes to improve safety and reduce journey times. Schemes will be added to the programme as the need for them is identified.

A487

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to improve the conditions on the Caernarfon-Maentwrog section of the A487.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The case for improving the A487 between Caernarfon and Maentwrog is under consideration. It is too soon to say what proposals will emerge.

Heads of the Valleys Road

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what stage of development has been reached in the provision of a dual carriageway on the heads of the valleys road.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The case for upgrading the A465 is being reviewed as part of the South Wales traffic study which is scheduled for completion later this year.

Bypasses

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to add bypasses to settlements not currently planned for bypassing to the road programme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Work is continuing to identify towns and villages where bypasses are desirable and the cost can be justified. Schemes will be added to the programme as appropriate.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of funding his Department has provided to the Alzheimer's Disease Society *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in each country of Wales in each of the past five years; and what level of finance he intends to provide (i) to maintain and develop the present work of the society and (ii) to provide facilities and support to carers following the transition to care in the community.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 9 July 1990]:* No funding was provided by the Department to the Alzheimer's Disease Society before 1987-88. The following amounts have been given for local and national purposes since that year:

	£
1987-88	5,741
1988-89	24,607
1989-90	91,009
1990-91	124,641
1991-92	[1]30,025
1992-93	[1]30,025
1993-94	[1]22,525

[1] Projected allocations.

The county breakdown of central funding for local projects is:

	Gwent (£)	*South Glamorgan (£)*
1987-88	5,741	—
1988-89	11,936	12,671
1989-90	13,096	77,913
1990-91	16,800	95,341

Any bid for additional resources in future years would be considered on its merits.

The development of facilities and services for users and carers is a matter for the local health and social services authorities and other organisations working within the framework of the White Papers "Working for Patients" (Cmnd. 555) and "Caring for People" (Cmnd. 845) and other policy guidance, including the all-Wales mental illness strategy.

Forests (Recreational Activities)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the factors which led to a drop in public recreational activities provided by the Forestry Commission between 1986 and 1989 as reflected in table 1.4 of the environmental digest for Wales No. 4 1988-1989.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 10 July 1990]:* The fall in the numbers of listed picnic places, forest walks and forest nature trails is a reflection of the Forestry Commission's policy of channelling resources into improving those facilities most used by the public. The Commission's objective is to attract more visitors and to offer them better value.

Consultants

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each of the financial years from 1985-86 to 1989-90, how much was spent on the work of outside

consultants by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* each district health authority in Wales, *(c)* each family practitioner committee in Wales and *(d)* any other public body or assisted body in respect of the work of the national health service.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 10 July 1990]: (a)* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 8 June for expenditure in respect of district health authorities. Additional expenditure by the Department in each of the past five years on the work of outside consultants relating to other aspects of the work of the national health service was as follows:

Year	*Number*
1985-86	15,000
1986-87	31,441
1987-88	Nil
1988-89	93,662
1989-90	148,222

(b) and *(c)* Comprehensive information in respect of expenditure by health authorities and family practitioner committees in Wales is not held centrally.

(d) Expenditure was incurred by one outside body directly responsible to the Department as follows:

Welsh National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting

Year	*Number*
1985-86	Nil
1986-87	Nil
1987-88	2,128
1988-89	Nil
1989-90	14,447

HEALTH

Elderly People

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the organisations providing for elderly people to which his Department makes grants under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department provides funding under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 to a large number of voluntary bodies, many of which undertake provision for elderly people as part of their overall role. I refer my hon. Friend to the the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) on 24 April 1990 at columns *160-64*. Voluntary organisations working wholly or predominantly with and for elderly people, which are receiving funding under section 64 in 1990-91, are as follows:

Age Concern England
National Osteoporosis Society
Extend
Age Exchange Theatre Company
New Horizons Trust
Contact
Jewish Welfare Board
British Association for Services to the Elderly

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the programmes run by the Health Education Authority which make express provision for the health education needs of elderly people.

Mr. Dorrell: Express provision is made in the "Look After Your Heart" campaign. Relevant advice is also given in other programmes, including those on smoking, alcohol, nutrition and cancer.

Persons Needing Care and Attention

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) on how many occasions section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948 was invoked by each local authority in England and Wales in each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to monitor the use by local authorities of section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948;

(3) what guidance he issues to local authorities in respect of their responsibilities under section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948.

Mr. Dorrell: Information about the use made by local authorities of section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948 is not collected centrally. This is a matter for local authorities and the courts and no central guidance has been issued.

Cancer

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has any information on the protection offered by selenium against carcinogens in humans.

Mr. Dorrell: Some reports in the scientific literature suggest that the risk of developing cancers of the lung, colon and bladder decreases as the consumption of vegetables with a high selenium content increases. However, other reports suggest that the risk of developing cancers of the stomach and liver and, in contradiction of the aforementioned reports, of the lung increases as the blood level of selenium increases.

Selenium is one of a number of substances that appear to inhibit the development of cancer. The mechanism whereby such substances exercise inhibitory effects are not clear and, for the present, no firm conclusions can be drawn. It is important to note that an excess of selenium can cause acute illness and it is inadvisable for anyone to take selenium supplements other than under medical supervision. Eating a well-balanced diet will ensure, for most people, an adequate intake of selenium.

If further data become available they will be carefully considered.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he is aware of any studies which point to a possible role for calcium ingestion in the prevention of cancers in humans;

(2) if his Department has any information on studies which have demonstrated a possible link between nutrition and pre-cancerous intestinal lesions;

(3) if his Department holds any information on studies of links between diet and cancers of the pancreas and bile ducts.

Mr. Dorrell: No such studies have been drawn to our attention.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department holds any information on studies which demonstrate a possible relationship between nutrition, alcohol consumption and breast cancer.

Mr. Dorrell: We are aware of a number of studies investigating such links.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has yet received the report of the International Agency for Research on Cancer on the control study relating to the links between nutrition, lifestyle and the incidence of breast and colon cancer in the European Community.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Creosote

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has of any carcinogenic risk to humans from the use of creosote as a wood preservative.

Mr. Dorrell: There are case reports published in the United Kingdom and reports to Her Majesty's inspector of factories of skin cancers among workers treating timber with creosote, handling creosote in storage and using creosote as a releasing agent for brick moulds. These indicate that repeated and prolonged contact with the skin over many years may result in skin cancer. The WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has, on the basis of these reports and the results of experiments on laboratory animals, classified creosote as a probable carcinogen. However, there is no evidence to indicate that occasional contact with creosote would be likely to give rise to cancers.

Alzheimer's Disease

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the projections of those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and related dementias for the periods *(a)* 1985 to 1990, *(b)* 1990 to 1995 and *(c)* 1995 to 2000; and what assumptions these projections are based on.

Mr. Dorrell: Such projections are not produced.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has made an assessment of the possible impact of *(a)* burnt hydrocarbon gases from diesel engine exhausts, *(b)* nitrogen dioxide and *(c)* sulphur dioxide on the potency of pollen grains and the consequences for public health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Reports in the scientific literature of interactions between pollen and a range of air pollutants from motor vehicle or other fuel-burning sources have been examined in relation to their possible effect on the occurrence of asthma, but no clear conclusions have emerged. The matter is being kept under review.

GP Budgets

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what payments are projected to general practitioners to *(a)* work up and *(b)* operate practice budgets.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Eligible practices are able to claim an allowance of up to £16,000 to help meet the costs of the preparatory work necessary in order to become fund holders. From 1 April next year fund-holding practices will be able to claim an annual management allowance of up to £32,000 to help meet the costs incurred in running the fund. In addition, practices which commit themselves formally to participation in the scheme will be able to claim an extra 25 per cent. of the cost of purchasing, leasing or upgrading their computer systems in accordance with a scale to be published in the statement of fees and allowances. This is in addition to the allowance of up to 50 per cent. which all GPs can claim.

Embossed Literature Service

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the amount awarded by his Department to fund the embossed literature service for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available;

(2) what steps he is taking to encourage greater provision of materials in braille;

(3) what would be the current value of the embossed literature service grant had it been increased in line with inflation since 1979;

(4) what discussions he has held with the Royal National Institute for the Blind on the embossed literature service grant.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the amounts awarded, under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, to the Royal National Institute for the Blind's (RNIB) embossed literature service, for each of the financial years 1981-82 to 1990-91. The amount awarded in 1978-79 (£165,000) would be worth £411,341 at 1990-91 prices. Officials met a number of senior representatives of the RNIB in February this year to discuss the future funding of this service, which produces embossed literature to meet a wide variety of social, cultural, educational and technical needs. As a consequence of this meeting, a number of suggestions have been offered to the RNIB for generating new sources of income for the service. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People has also initiated discussions between his officials and the RNIB about producing social security information in braille at an agreed cost which would be met by funds from the Department of Social Security.

Year	*Amount (£000)*
1981-82	355
1982-83	235
1983-84	240
1984-85	250

Year	Amount (£000)
1985-86	250
1986-87	250
1987-88	250
1988-89	250
1989-90	250
1990-91	200

Pro Plus Tablets

Mr. Rhodes James: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received any representations on Pro Plus tablets; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received one letter from my hon. Friend.

Self-Governing Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library on a daily basis applications received by his Department by units for self-governing trust status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. However, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will direct the relevant regional health authority to consult on each application for trust status. The region will seek the views of local Members of Parliament as part of this process. If the hon. Member wishes to see individual applications, he should contact the relevant regions.

Heart Drugs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the budgets set aside for heart drugs in each regional health authority for 1990-91; and what were these budgets, expressed as an expenditure figure per head.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities are responsible for setting their own budgets for particular items of expenditure. Details are not held centrally.

National Health Service and Community Care Act (Publicity)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will break down the £2·75 million being spent on publicising the National Health Service and Community Care Act, giving the amount spent on *(a)* design, *(b)* production and *(c)* distribution of the booklet; and if he will give the timetable for distribution;

(2) if work done on the design of the booklet to publicise the National Health Service and the Community Care Act was done by an outside agency; whether tenders were invited for *(a)* the design and *(b)* the production of the booklet; and when the decision was taken to produce and distribute 20 million booklets.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimated costs for the booklet "The NHS Reforms and You" are:

	£
(a) Design costs	24,000
(b) Production costs	1,400,000
(c) Distribution costs	800,000
	2,224,000

These costs are for the English version only. The remainder of the £2·75 million will be required for the production and distribution of the shorter version being produced in nine ethnic minority languages for fulfilling requests for further copies of the English version and the "Look After Your Heart" insert. The distribution begins in the week comencing 16 July and is scheduled for completion in the week commencing 13 August. Ninety-two per cent. of households should receive a copy in the first week.

The decision to produce and distribute the booklet was taken on 15 March 1990.

The booklet was designed by an outside agency appointed by tender. The production of the booklet was commissioned by Central Office of Information and HMSO using suppliers approved by them and appointed on their ability to deliver a quality product, on time, at a competitive price.

Herbal Medicines

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure the continued availability of herbal medicines; and if he will make a statement on the progress of European Community deliberations in respect of controls on herbal medicines.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no new initiatives in Europe exclusively or explicitly affecting herbal medicines. There are currently under consideration European Community proposals which apply to all medicinal products, including herbal products, and which have implications for their wholesale distribution, legal status, labelling, advertising and future licensing. There are also proposals for a directive to regulate homoeopathic medicines.

None of these proposals implies any change to the general availability of herbal medicinal products, and none is planned.

Colin Jago

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he received a report from the Nottingham health authority on the death of Colin Jago; what conclusions he has reached; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We received a report from Nottingham health authority in late June. Having read the report, we have concluded that Mr. Jago received a proper level of care from the Nottingham health authority.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the production and use of *(a)* 2-Naphthylamine and its salts, *(b)* 4-Aminobiphenyl and its salts, *(c)* Benzidine and its salts and *(d)* 4-Nitrodiphenyl is permitted in Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

Regulation 4 and schedule 2 of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (COSHH) prohibit the manufacture and use for all purposes, and the importation into the United Kingdom,

of 4-aminodiphenyl, 4-nitrodiphenyl, benzidine, 2-naphthylamine, their salts and any substance containing any of these compounds in a total concentration exceeding 0·1 per cent.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the carcinogenic substances that have already been classified by directive 67/548/EEC.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The list of carcinogenic substances is included in part 1A1 of the third edition of the "Authorised and Approved List—information approved for the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances for supply and conveyance by road", published by the Health and Safety Commission. A copy of this is available from the House of Commons Library.

SCOTLAND

TVEI

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is carrying out any current evaluation of the educational impact of the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Lang: A report by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools on TVEI pilot projects, "Learning and Teaching in TVEI in Scotland", was published in November last year. A series of evaluation studies has also been undertaken as part of the initiative itself. The need for further work is kept under review.

Playground Supervision

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest position on his playground supervision initiatives.

Mr. Lang: The Schools (Safety and Supervision of Pupils) (Scotland) Regulations 1990, which place a duty on education authorities to provide playground supervision for most primary and all special school pupils under their charge, came into force on 1 April 1990.

Waste Incinerator, Scotstoun

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received an appeal against Glasgow district council's decision to refuse planning permission for a medical waste incinerator in Scotstoun.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has not received such an appeal.

Court Proceedings

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state, in respect of each procurator fiscal office, the number of police reports received in 1989 and the actual number and percentage marked no proceedings.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of reports submitted by the police and other reporting agencies to procurators fiscal which were marked "no proceedings" in each procurator fiscal office for 1989 is as follows:

	Reports	*No Proceedings*	*Percentage*
Aberdeen	14,411	820	5·69
Airdrie	9,295	768	8·26
Alloa	3,226	306	9·49
Arbroath	2,644	152	5·75
Ayr	11,953	1,175	9·83
Banff	1,140	59	5·18
Campbeltown	803	78	9·71
Cupar	3,288	274	8·33
Dingwall	1,969	179	9·09
Dornoch	660	44	6·67
Dumbarton	9,137	602	6·59
Dumfries	7,073	288	4·07
Dundee	13,812	2,261	16·37
Dunfermline	8,395	615	7·33
Dunoon	1,463	185	12·65
Duns	1,388	93	6·70
Edinburgh	41,411	4,029	9·73
Elgin	4,956	530	10·69
Falkirk	11,329	1,606	14·18
Forfar	3,403	125	3·67
Fort William	1,804	118	6·54
Glasgow	82,948	19,066	22·99
Greenock	7,573	406	5·36
Haddington	4,785	466	9·74
Hamilton	28,404	2,486	8·75
Inverness	6,593	625	9·48
Jedburgh	1,872	138	7·37
Kilmarnock	14,099	1,164	8·26
Kirkcaldy	9,443	517	5·47
Kirkcudbright	1,411	35	2·48
Kirkwall	664	56	8·43
Lanark	5,254	1,194	22·73
Lerwick	1,007	137	13·60
Linlithgow	9,928	457	4·60
Lochmaddy	244	13	5·33
Oban	1,174	74	6·30
Paisley	12,935	921	7·12
Peebles	1,126	61	5·42
Perth	8,908	1,211	13·59
Peterhead	2,731	273	10·00
Portree	586	35	5·97
Rothsay	373	58	15·55
Selkirk	2,280	228	10·00
Stirling	7,623	422	5·54
Stonehaven	3,119	202	6·48
Stornoway	1,027	20	1·95
Stranraer	2,336	243	10·40
Tain	1,464	163	11·13
Wick	1,218	114	9·36
Total 1989	374,685	45,092	12·03

EC-Gulf Trade

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department will make any assessment of the effects on employment in the petrochemical and allied industries in Scotland of a free trade agreement between the European Community and the states of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Mr. Lang: The Government have consulted widely with industries interested in these forthcoming negotiations, including the petrochemical industry and remain ready to consider further views. Employment in Scotland will be one of the issues to be considered.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department will make any assessment of the effects on the offshore industry in Scotland of a free trade agreement between the European Community and the states of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Mr. Lang: Assessment of the effects of a free trade agreement between the European Community and the Gulf Co-operation Council is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. However, any such agreement is expected to have little effect on the offshore sector in Scotland.

Court Delays

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the delay in weeks between pleading and trial hearings in *(a)* each sheriff court and *(b)* each district court in Scotland for the quarters ended (i) 31 December 1988, (ii) 31 March 1989, (iii) 30 June 1989, (iv) 30 September 1989, (v) 31 December 1989 and (vi) 31 March 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the tables:

Interval (in weeks) between pleading and trial diets
A. Sheriff Courts

Sheriff Court	*Quarter ended*					
	31 December 1988	*31 March 1989*	*30 June 1989*	*30 September 1989*	*31 December 1989*	*31 March 1990*
Aberdeen	19	14	18	22	20	17
Airdrie	14	10	14	12	11	12
Alloa	16	23	14	9	6	8
Arbroath	12	10	8	11	15	9
Ayr	17	16	18	16	11	12
Banff	10	9	13	11	10	10
Campbeltown	12	10	14	14	12	8
Cupar	14	12	13	9	11	9
Dingwall	8	10	8	8	13	12
Dornoch	10	10	12	9	12	12
Dumbarton	21	19	19	19	19	18
Dumfries	17	15	15	12	10	10
Dundee	8	8	6	6	5	5
Dunfermline	7	7	9	9	8	10
Dunoon	11	12	10	11	15	16
Duns	6	7	8	5	6	7
Edinburgh	20	19	20	19	20	20
Elgin	7	7	12	7	7	9
Falkirk	7	11	12	11	10	10
Forfar	7	11	6	6	6	7
Fort William	12	12	8	12	12	12
Glasgow	10	11	12	12	14	12
Greenock	20	16	15	16	20	17
Haddington	26	6	7	6	7	9
Hamilton	16	13	11	12	18	20
Inverness	8	12	14	12	12	11
Jedburgh	6	7	8	8	8	10
Kilmarnock	17	17	13	12	12	11
Kirkcaldy	10	11	14	8	11	12
Kirkcudbright	17	14	6	9	12	11
Kirkwall	7	7	7	8	8	9
Lanark	5	8	11	8	11	10
Lerwick	8	10	16	11	12	11
Linlithgow	10	11	6	9	9	14
Lochmaddy	12	12	8	8	8	12
Oban	10	10	12	16	14	12
Paisley	22	21	20	19	15	13
Peebles	10	4	12	9	11	10
Perth	8	7	8	6	8	7
Peterhead	16	13	16	17	12	10
Portree	12	12	8	16	8	4
Rothesay	6	10	12	10	9	18
Selkirk	6	7	11	4	5	10
Stirling	13	11	14	13	13	8
Stonehaven	10	12	12	9	9	10
Stornoway	14	14	12	12	10	12
Stranraer	8	11	14	14	11	10
Tain	6	6	8	6	8	7
Wick	7	7	10	8	6	8

Interval (in weeks) between pleading and trial diets
B. District courts

District court	*Quarter ended*					
	31 December 1988	*31 March 1989*	*30 June 1989*	*30 September 1989*	*31 December 1989*	*31 March 1990*
Aberdeen	15	11	14	17	22	20
Airdrie	12	11	12	13	16	18
Alloa	19	16	15	8	6	11
Arbroath	4	4	8	8	8	8

District court	Quarter ended 31 December 1988	31 March 1989	30 June 1989	30 September 1989	31 December 1989	31 March 1990
Ayr	12	14	15	20	19	18
Banff	0	2	9	9	7	6
Campbeltown	8	8	8	8	8	8
Cupar	7	10	14	11	14	9
Dingwall	8	4	4	4	4	4
Dornoch	10	10	10	10	10	10
Dumbarton	22	16	16	16	14	14
Dumfries	20	13	12	12	12	12
Dundee	6	6	7	7	12	13
Dunfermline	20	25	17	16	15	22
Dunoon	4	4	8	8	8	8
Duns	4	4	4	4	4	4
Edinburgh	11	12	15	16	16	26
Elgin	12	9	14	11	11	16
Falkirk	16	13	20	15	21	18
Forfar	16	16	12	16	17	13
Fort William	4	6	6	6	6	8
Glasgow	21	21	20	14	13	14
Greenock	6	13	16	16	9	8
Haddington	48	45	15	14	10	11
Hamilton	20	11	13	12	10	13
Inverness	7	10	6	10	7	7
Jedburgh	7	6	6	6	6	6
Kilmarnock	7	8	11	8	8	8
Kirkcaldy	12	20	12	10	13	12
Kirkcudbright	10	10	10	10	10	10
Lanark	6	6	9	9	9	7
Linlithgow	14	14	20	13	14	14
Oban	8	10	12	12	4	8
Paisley	27	23	22	23	12	14
Peebles	8	8	8	8	8	8
Perth	3	10	12	7	5	6
Peterhead	7	14	18	15	18	24
Portree	4	8	8	8	4	4
Rothesay	0	4	8	4	0	8
Selkirk	6	6	6	6	6	6
Stirling	10	10	8	10	15	12
Stonehaven	12	13	11	11	11	13
Stornoway	10	10	10	10	10	10
Stranraer	13	18	18	17	4	4
Tain	6	6	8	8	12	7
Wick	8	8	4	4	4	4

Labour Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people were made redundant in Scotland in each of the past five years and in each month of 1990;

(2) how many manufacturing jobs have been lost in each of the regions of Scotland since 1979; and what percentage this is of the manufacturing jobs in existence in 1979.

Mr. Lang: There are no comprehensive statistics on redundancies. The number of redundancies involving 10 or more workers confirmed to the Department of Employment: the Training Agency as having occurred in Scotland since 1985 is set out in the table:

Year	Redundancies
1985	23,892
1986	32,882
1987	22,833
1988	14,311
1989	15,350
1990	
January	336
February	1,428
March	1,968
April	667
May[1]	1,573
June[1]	2,079

[1] Confirmed redundancies in the latest 2 months are provisional and may be subject to revision.

Information on employment for Scottish local authority regions is obtained from the censuses of employment. There was no such census undertaken in 1979 and the latest census results relate to 1987. The change in manufacturing employment in the Scottish regions between June 1978 and September 1987 is set out in the table:

Change in employees in employment in manufacturing between June 1978 and September 1987

Region	[1] Thousands	[2] Per cent.
Borders	−2·0	−14
Central	−12·2	−35
Dumfries and Galloway	−0·9	−8
Fife	−10·3	−24
Grampian	−3·1	−8
Highland	−3·7	−29
Lothian	−12·7	−18
Strathclyde	−136·7	−41
Tayside	−14·5	−32
Orkney	+0·2	+40

Region	[1] Thousands	[2] Per cent.
Shetland	−0·2	−17
Western Isles	+0·3	+33

[1] Change in manufacturing employment between June 1978 and September 1987.
[2] Change as a percentage of manufacturing employment in June 1978.
Source: Census of Employment.

Students

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish students attained university entry qualification level in each of the years 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Lang: The available information was published by the Scottish Education Department in its statistical bulletins "Higher Education Projections for Scotland" (No. 7/J1/1988) and "Higher Education Projections for Scotland 1990" (No. 8/J1/1990) which are available in the Library.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish students went to British universities outside Scotland in each of the years 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Lang: The figures are given in the table:

Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants[1] to British universities outwith Scotland
Figures as at 31 December

	Number
1979	662
1980	716
1981	655
1982	676
1983	696
1984	704
1985	730
1986	724
1987	795
1988	775
1989	n.a

[1] Full-time and sandwich students.

Service Station, Nether Abington

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he intends to announce his decision to site the new service station to replace the existing station at Nether Abington; and if the proposed fast-link road from the M8 to the M74 will influence the decision;

(2) if he will make a statement on the provision of a service station on the M74 when upgraded to replace the existing station at Nether Abington;

(3) if he will list the representations he has received on the siting of a new service station to replace the existing station at Nether Abington.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The Government's policy for the provision of motorway service areas in Scotland was given in my reply on 4 April to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) at columns *661-62*.

In accordance with this policy, consultants will be advising on the location of a new motorway service area in the general vicinity of Millbank and Nether Abington. Their recommendations are awaited. Consideration of the best location for a new facility will require to take account of all proposed developments, including the M74/M8 fast link, should this proceed. In any event, no decision can be made until road orders for the section of new M74 between Nether Abington and Elvanfoot are confirmed.

Written representations on the siting of the new motorway service station have to date been received from Clydesdale district council and the Scottish tourist board.

Health Visitors

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were recruited as health visitors in Scotland in 1988, 1989 and 1990 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 13 July 1990]:* Information on health visitor recruitment in Scotland is not held centrally, and could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Nitrogen Dioxide

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take to reduce levels of nitrogen dioxide in both Edinburgh and Glasgow city centres.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The levels of nitrogen dioxide in city centres are almost entirely due to emissions from motor vehicles, the reduction of which is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. Plans for the reduction of emissions are contained in the written answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport on 8 June 1990 at column *722*.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the levels of nitrogen dioxide in Edinburgh and Glasgow city centres; what are the relevant European Community air quality standards; and what recent representations he has received on this.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* On the basis of the results obtained from a nationwide survey of ambient nitrogen dioxide concentrations in 363 urban areas in the United Kingdom, one continuous monitoring station, operating in accordance with the requirements of the Council directive of 7 March 1985, was established in Glasgow. The results obtained have been satisfactory and are below the directive limit value.

The relevant limit and guide values in the Council directive of 7 March 1985 on air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide are for the 98th percentile calculated from the mean values per hour or per period of less than an hour recorded throughout the year:

Limit Value 200 micrograms per cubic metre
Guide Value 135 micrograms per cubic metre

No representations have been received.

Milk Marketing

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he intends to have on the report by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on the Aberdeen and district milk marketing board's commercial operations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for

Scotland published a report on 7 June 1990 on the relationship between the Aberdeen and district milk marketing board's producer activities and its commercial division. The Aberdeen and district milk marketing board and the Scottish Dairy Trade Federation have been invited to consider the report and its conclusions and to submit their views to the Department by 1 October 1990.

School Closures

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many schools in Scotland of fewer than 50 pupils closed in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The Scottish Education Department does not maintain records of school closures by size of school.

Industrial Fishing

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements have been made to police industrial fishing vessels to prevent them from catching significant proportions or amounts of small sile; if he will give details of these arrangments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The industrial fishery is regulated by licence and European Community legislation lays down the minimum mesh size of net to be used and the maximum percentage of species which may be retained as a by-catch. This is enforced by sampling the catch either on boarding the vessel or at the time of landing.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the calculation of estimates of the proportion of shoals caught by industrial fishing fleets for the production of soap and animal feed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The quantities estimated to have been landed in direct industrial fisheries using small-mesh trawls in the North sea for the years 1985-89 are given in the table together with the officially reported landings of all fish:

(thousand tonnes)

	(a) Estimates landings in industrial trawl fishery	*(b) Reported landings of fish used for all purposes*
1985	1,033	2,428
1986	1,140	2,495
1987	1,106	2,552
1988	1,349	n/y a
1989	[1]1,483	n/y a

[1]Preliminary estimate.
n/y/a= not yet available.
Source: (a) Report of the Advisory Committee on Fishery Management of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, May 1990; (b) Bulletin Statistique des Peches Maritimes.

The figures given in the table indicate that a minimum of 42 to 46 per cent. of fish landed from the North sea in the years 1985-1987 were caught in directed fisheries for reduction to meal and oil. The estimates of industrial fish landings, however, do not include quantities of herring and mackerel caught in other fisheries and landed for reduction. For example, large quantities of herring and mackerel are sold for reduction in Norway.

United Kingdom fisheries are primarily for human consumption and the United Kingdom strongly supports the European Community ban on fishing for herring for industrial purposes.

Sandeels

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of any scientific evidence he has relating to the depletion of North Sea sandeel stocks by seals and by small herring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* Sandeels are preyed on by many predators in the North sea including, seals, seabirds and numerous other species of fish.

Published estimates for the total North sea indicate that the annual consumption of sandeels by grey seals was in the order of 35,000 to 40,000 tonnes in 1984 and 1985. An unpublished estimate for 1989 is 27,500 tonnes. There are no comparable estimates for common seals.

A rough estimate of the annual consumption of sandeels by both species of seals in the Shetland area of the North sea is in the order of 8,000 to 9,000 tonnes, which is over twice as much as the quantity taken in the fishery in 1989 and more than three times the 1990 catch.

Herring are known to prey on small sandeels at times. Research is currently being carried out by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland on the possible role of predation and other factors in controlling sandeel recruitment. At present, however, any link between the decrease in sandeel recruitment at Shetland and herring predation is purely speculative.

EMPLOYMENT

Equestrianism

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment to what extent the United Kingdom has been involved in the European Year of Tourism to date; and what plans he has to promote the United Kingdom's equestrianism during the European Equestrian Month in November.

Mr. Nicholls: The British Tourist Authority has taken the lead in co-ordinating the United Kingdom's participation in the European Year of Tourism. It has launched a number of campaigns to promote the interest and active involvement of the United Kingdom tourism industry and many events are taking place across the country throughout 1990. Thirty-nine United Kingdom projects have been accepted for co-funding by the European Commission.

A number of suggestions has been made for equestrian events during European equestrian month in November. The British Tourist Authority would be delighted to hear from the hon. Member if he has any specific ideas he wishes to put forward.

Union Assets (Sequestration)

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the importance of the sequestration of union assets as a means to enforce employment legislation.

Mr. Nicholls: Sequestration is a penalty that may be imposed by the courts, where appropriate, for any

contempt of court. As such, it is necessary to ensure that trade unions are not able to flout the law, including employment law, with impunity.

Child Care

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of whether the new single unit cost per training place system encourages training managers to discriminate against trainees with child care requirements; and what options have been considered as to how such trainees should be funded under the new contract.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has no evidence that lone parents are being denied access to employment training. Arrangements for funding child care are for negotiation between individual training managers and the training and enterprise council or Training Agency area office concerned.

Training Managers

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what transitional funding he proposes to offer to training managers to cover the shortfall between their contractual cost commitments to existing trainees and the unit cost per trainee they are receiving under the new contract.

Mr. Nicholls: Funding arrangements for employment training, including any transitional arrangements, are for negotiation between training managers and the local training and enterprise council or area office concerned.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of contracted training places awarded to training managers in each of the *(a)* private, *(b)* local authority and *(c)* voluntary sectors; and what were the comparable figures under the old contract.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Clothing Industry

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for employment how many jobs have been lost in the clothing industry over the past two years.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of employees in employment in the clothing industry including hats, gloves and fur goods, in Great Britain fell by 6,000, or 2·9 per cent. between December 1987 and December 1989.

Construction Industry

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new steps he intends to take to reduce accidents in the construction industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The prime legal responsibility to bring about improvements rests with the industry itself. As part of a continuing process to promote longlasting change in the industry, the Health and Safety Commission is to take forward proposals for new legislation to strengthen the legal requirements relating to the management of health and safety on construction sites.

The Health and Safety Executive is continuing to target inspection activity where it will be most effective. That is on the more hazardous activities such as roof work and demolition, and on the quality of site management and its ability to manage health and safety. Inspectors continue to pursue inquiries and enforcement action to the highest levels in companies which do not measure up to the standards expected to them and are also vigorously enforcing the Construction (Head Protection) Regulations which came into force on 30 March 1990.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on trends in employment since 1981.

Mr. Nicholls: In December 1989, the latest date for which information is available, the work force in employment in the United Kingdom was 27,082,000, the highest level ever. This represents an increase of 2,759,000, or 11 per cent., since June 1981.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he estimates the effect of the present Sunday trading laws is on employment.

Mr. Nicholls: No such estimates are available.

Disabled People

79. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish details for Great Britain of the number and percentage of people with disabilities of working age who are unemployed.

Mr. Eggar: The most recent estimate is that there are about 285,000 people with disabilities who are economically active and want but are not in work. This is 22 per cent. of the total. This information was obtained in summer 1989 during a survey commissioned by my Department into the numbers and characteristics of people with disabilities in the labour market. The figure is compiled on a basis different from that used to produce the monthly claimant-based statistics, so is not exactly comparable with general unemployment figures.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish details for Great Britain and for the west midlands region, for each year from April 1986 to the most recent date, of the number and percentage of YTS leavers who on leaving YTS were unemployed *(a)* in total and *(b)* with disabilities.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is as follows:

	All leavers		Disabled leavers	
	West midlands	Great Britain	West midlands	Great Britain
April 1986 to March 1987				
Number	2,739	19,761	73	761
Percentage	25·0	26·6	42·7	40·8
April 1987 to March 1988				
Number	4,542	42,478	339	2,804
Percentage	12·2	14·6	36·0	32·9
April 1988 to March 1989				
Number	2,853	27,381	186	1,738
Percentage	11·6	14·0	31·4	30·6
April 1989 to January 1990[1]				
Number	2,358	22,521	126	1,346
Percentage	11·6	13·1	25·0	28·6

[1] Subject to revision.
Source: Respondents to YT Follow-Up Survey.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to what percentage of the work force employed by British Coal registered as disabled.

Mr. Eggar: As at 1 June 1989, 0·4 per cent. of the work force of British Coal were registered disabled, as published in the *Employment Gazette* in February 1990.

Political Funds

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those unions which have voted on the establishment of a new political fund since 1984 with the full result in each case.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the establishment of political funds is contained in the annual reports of the independent certification officer for trade unions and employers' associations. Copies of the reports are available from the Library. The table lists those unions which were qualified to operate political funds for the first time between January 1984 and the end of December 1989 — the latest date for which that information is available. The full results of relevant ballots are provided in confidence to the certification officer by the unions concerned.

Union having political fund rules approved.

1984
- Amalgamated Society of Textile Workers and Kindred Trades.

1986
- Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance.
- Communication Managers Association.
- Inland Revenue Staff Federation.
- Clerical Group of National Communications Union (Engineering and Clerical Groups).[1]
- National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers.

1987
- Association of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Taxes[2].
- Civil and Public Services Association.
- Civil Service Union.
- National Union of Lock and Metalworkers.
- Society of Civil and Public Servants.

1988
- Educational Institute of Scotland.
- Health Visitors Association.
- Institution of Professional Civil Servants.
- National and Local Government Officers Association.
- National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education.
- National Union of Insurance Workers.
- Retained Firefighters Union.
- Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

1989
- Association of Agricultural Education Staffs.
- National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers.
- Association of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Taxes[3].

[1] The National Communications Union (Engineering and Clerical Groups), which already had approved political fund rules in relation to its Engineering group, had further rules approved in 1986 for its Clerical group.

[2] The Association of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Taxes, which had political fund rules approved in 1987, ceased to exist with effect from 1 January 1989 when it transferred its engagements to the Association of First Division Civil Servants.

[3] In 1989, a body was created within the Association of First Division Civil Servants called the Association of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Taxes which became listed in its own right as a trade union and which voted to adopt a political fund.

Note.—The information set out above is obtained from the Annual Reports of the certification officer for trade unions and employers' associations.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Health and Safety Executive last inspected the natural history museum.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive last inspected the natural history museum on 14 February 1990.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Employment Group, comprising the Employment Department, the Employment Service, the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Training Agency has received a total of 383 subject access requests under the Data Protection Act. Before the subject access date of 11 November 1987, it was not possible to make any firm estimate of the number of requests which would be received. We are currently reviewing subject access fee charging policy in the Department of Employment Group.

EC-Gulf Trade

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has any plans to make an assessment of the effect on employment in the United Kingdom of a free trade agreement between the European Community and the Gulf Co-operation Council states.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has no current plans for such an assessment. However, the Government have consulted widely industries interested in the forthcoming negotiations and remain ready to consider any further views.

Adjudication Officers

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what steps he is taking to introduce effective adjudication training for adjudication officers; and what progress has been made in incorporating an indicator for adjudication in his Department's quality control system;

(2) how many *(a)* adjudication officers, *(b)* sector adjudication managers and *(c)* regional adjudication officers there are in each employment service region; and if he will make a statement on their functions, particularly with respect to the changes brought in with the Social Security Act 1989;

(3) how many regional co-ordinators have been appointed and in which regional adjudication office sections, to develop expertise in the Social Security Act 1989; and if he will make a statement on the problems which they have identified;

(4) what arrangements exist for regional adjudication officers to assist adjudication officers regarding guidance on individual cases of particular difficulty.

Mr. Eggar: The Employment Service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Gentleman.

Young Travellers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to encourage the provision of low-price accommodation for short-term travellers.

Mr. Nicholls: The English tourist board, which receives funds from my Department, actively encourages the provision of all forms of accommodation, including budget accommodation, to meet the needs of the market. The ETB's forthcoming "Guide to Good Practice In Rural Accommodation" will further encourage the development and upgrading of accommodation suitable for young people.

Employment Service

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will take steps to ascertain whether the present arrangements regarding answers to questions relating to the employment service are acceptable to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the assurances I gave to the House during the Adjournment debate on executive agencies on 21 May, *Official Report*, columns *145-152*, and to my written replies to questions from the hon. Members for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) and Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on 9 and 10 July respectively, *Official Report* 9 July, column *102* and 10 July, column *144*.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans his Department has to reduce the impact of the uniform business rate on the hotel trade.

Mr. Nicholls: I have no such plans. The transitional arrangements introduced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will ensure that no existing business will face an annual increase of more than 20 per cent. in real terms. This phasing-in will last until 1995, and there is scope for it to be continued thereafter, should that prove to be necessary. My noble Friend Lord Strathclyde will continue to keep in touch with the hotel sector on this issue.

Tourism

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to provide grants towards improving the appearance of major tourist attractions.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no such plans.

Employment Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why there are variations in regional targets for output-related funding under the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: There are variations in regional targets for achievement of positive outcomes on employment training because of differences in regional labour markets.

Training Credits

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much of the funding of training credits will come from the Training Agency budget and how much from local authorities for 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Eggar: Funding for training credits will come from three sources: planned resources for youth training; additional funding from Government of £12 million in 1991-92 and £25 million in 1992-93; and thereafter and transfer of the relevant portion of rate support grant provision for part-time courses for 16 to 18-year-olds.

The rate support grant provision is estimated at approximately £5 million in 1991-92 and £15 million in 1992-93. Figures have not been produced for 1993-94.

"TEC Director"

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the annual cost of producing the publication "TEC Director".

Mr. Eggar: The estimated production costs for "TEC Director" during the financial year April 1990 to March 1991 are £99,440·88.

DEFENCE

Soviet Disarmament

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the defence implications for the United Kingdom of Soviet disarmament measures in Europe.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the defence implications for the United Kingdom of Soviet disarmament measures in Europe.

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the defence implications for the United Kingdom of Soviet disarmament measures in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are examining options for change in the structure and deployment of our armed forces in the light of changing international circumstances, including the withdrawals of Soviet forces from eastern Europe and Soviet unilateral force reductions. We continue to attach high importance to reaching agreement in the conventional forces in Europe negotiations in Vienna to eliminate the continuing significant Warsaw pact superiority over NATO in conventional arms.

Expenditure Reductions (Scotland)

15. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reductions in his Department's expenditure in Scotland he proposes arising out of the reduction in tension between NATO and the Warsaw pact countries.

47. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reductions in his Department's expenditure in Scotland he proposes arising out of the reduction in tension between NATO and the Warsaw pact countries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is too early to say what financial savings for the defence budget as a whole might be consistent with the outcome of the first stages of CFE and changes in eastern Europe. Defence expenditure is not accounted for on a regional basis.

Trident

16. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest progress made to replace the Polaris strategic nuclear deterrent with Trident.

Mr. Alan Clark: The programme to replace Polaris with Trident is on time and within budget and continues to make satisfactory progress towards its in-service date of the mid-1990s.

17. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any consideration has been given to the Trident nuclear submarine in his review of options.

20. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any consideration has been given to the Trident nuclear submarine in his review of options.

22. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any consideration has been given to the Trident nuclear submarine in his review of options.

67. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any consideration has been given to the Trident nuclear submarine in his review of options.

Mr. Tom King: As I informed the House on 18 June, we believe it is essential to keep our independent nuclear deterrent; that means that we intend to proceed with the replacement of Polaris with Trident. As the London summit declaration made clear, we believe nuclear weapons have a crucial role to play in the prevention of war.

Military Co-operation

18. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the scope for military co-operation with states applying to join the European Community.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Applications to join the EC have been made by Turkey, Austria and the Republic of Cyprus. We already have close defence links with Turkey through our joint membership of NATO. The scope for defence co-operation with Austria and the Republic of Cyprus is more limited, but we maintain appropriate links with them.

United States Defence Secretary

19. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his United States counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

Mr Tom King: The position is as I set out earlier for the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields).

39. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his United States counterpart to discuss weapons development and deployment.

50. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his United States counterpart to discuss weapons development and deployment.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields).

NATO

21. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for the defence policy of the United Kingdom as a result of the NATO summit in London.

25. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence implications of decisions taken at the NATO summit on 5 and 6 July.

34. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence implications of decisions taken at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation summit on 5 and 6 July.

36. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on present considerations on the future of NATO.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. and learned Member, the hon. Members and my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay).

"Options for Change"

23. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about his "Options for Change" review.

60. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about his "Options for Change" review.

69. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about his "Options for Change" review.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy).

Service Personnel

24. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the numbers of armed forces personnel which will be required for the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force in 1995.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Manpower plans are updated as part of our normal reviews of the defence programme under the long-term costing process. It would not be appropriate to give details of long-term manpower plans.

Over-the-Horizon Radar

26. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the proposed over-the-horizon radar, to be built at St. David's in Pembrokeshire and Blakehill in Wiltshire.

40. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received about the proposed over-the-horizon radar at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire.

48. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the proposed over-the-horizon radar, to be built at St. David's in Pembrokeshire and Blakehill in Wiltshire.

49. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the proposed over-the-horizon radar, to be built at St. David's in Pembrokeshire and Blakehill in Wiltshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 19 June. Since then I have received further representations.

Soviet Force Withdrawals

28. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made concerning the unilateral withdrawal of Soviet nuclear and conventional forces from eastern Europe over the last year.

43. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made concerning the unilateral withdrawal of Soviet nuclear and conventional forces from eastern Europe over the last year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Soviet Union has carried out the initial phase of its unilateral withdrawal of ground forces from eastern Europe on schedule. However, it has suspended the removal of further troops from East Germany in part pending the outcome of the two plus four talks on the future status of Germany. We do not expect the two Soviet divisions in Poland to withdraw in the immediate future.

The majority of Soviet nuclear-capable short-range ballistic missile launchers appear to have been withdrawn from Czechoslovakia and probably all from Hungary. Nuclear-capable artillery is still in the process of being withdrawn and some will probably remain in Czechoslovakia until the last divisions leave.

The Soviet Union has carried out, and probably exceeded, its stated intention to withdraw 300 combat aircraft from eastern Europe; some of the aircraft would have been capable of both nuclear and conventional operations. Some air defence surface-to-air missile forces have been withdrawn from Hungary, East Germany and Poland.

Nuclear Tests

29. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what nuclear tests have been carried out by NATO countries and France in the current year; and for what purpose.

45. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what nuclear tests have been carried out by NATO countries and France in the current year; and for what purpose.

52. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what nuclear tests have been carried out by NATO countries and France in the current year and for what purpose.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn).

Cruise Missiles

30. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent agreements have been reached regarding sea-launched cruise missiles; and what are the implications for the United Kingdom.

80. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent agreements have been reached regarding sea-launched cruise missiles; and what are the implications for the United Kingdom.

92. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent agreements have been reached regarding sea-launched cruise missiles; and what are the implications for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 22 June at column *723*.

81. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of removal of cruise missiles from the United Kingdom, and the alternative use of the sites.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answers which I gave to the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for City of Durham (Mr.

Steinberg) on 6 February at column *591*, in respect of RAF Greenham Common, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) on 11 January at columns *691-92*, in respect of RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about cruise missiles and their deployment in the United Kingdom and within United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: With the exception of the remaining ground-launched cruise missiles based at RAF Greenham Common, which are due to be removed by the end of May 1991 under the terms of the INF treaty, there are no nuclear cruise missiles deployed on land in the United Kingdom.

Vessels of the United States navy visit ports and facilities in the United Kingdom. Like the Royal Navy they neither confirm nor deny whether they are carrying nuclear weapons.

Germany

31. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had about the future defence role of Germany.

55. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had about the future defence role of Germany.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had about the future defence role of Germany.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin).

Territorial Army

33. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to increase the strength of the Territorial Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The work in hand on examining options for change is of a broad policy nature. While it is therefore not possible to be specific at this stage, there is no doubt that the Territorial Army will continue to play a vital role in the future.

82. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of serving members of the Territorial Army; and what was the comparable figure 10 years ago.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total strength of the Territorial Army, at 31 May, was 72,705. The corresponding figure 10 years ago was 62,989.

Aeroplane and Armaments Experimental Establishment

35. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he has taken to *(a)* screen personnel and *(b)* assess hazard in additional buildings, following the discovery of brown asbestos in offices at the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment at Boscombe Down, near Salisbury.

Mr. Neubert: Following the discovery of a trace of amosite, or brown asbestos, at the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment Boscombe Down, staff have been given a medical briefing by the occupational hygienist and the offer of an individual consultation. If, following such a consultation, members of staff wish to be given an appropriate medical screening, the establishment has offered to arrange for it to be provided free of charge.

The dust sample containing the trace of amosite came from a single building with inner and outer cladding of white asbestos sheeting. Extensive tests of the air in, and the fabric of, this building and eight others of a similar age and construction have, however, all proved to be negative.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

37. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence his Department has concerning the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have received reports from time to time on the development of chemical and biological weapons by other countries. However, it is not our normal practice to comment on the detailed information available to the Government on such matters.

Civilian Personnel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what retraining will be given to civilian personnel no longer required by his Department.

38. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what retraining will be given to civilian personnel no longer required by his Department.

87. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what retraining will be given to civilian personnel no longer required by his Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: Reductions in civilian manpower numbers will, so far as possible, be handled through natural wastage.

Nuclear and Chemical Weapons

41. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence implications of the proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons.

44. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence implications of the proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons.

84. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence implications of the proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We keep all potential risks under continuous review. We also aim to prevent the proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons by providing strong support for arms control agreements and associated regimes, such as the non-proliferation treaty, the missile technology control regime, the proposed chemical weapons convention and the Australia group.

RAF Parachute Training Establishments

42. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in 1989 safety inspectors visited Royal Air Force parachute training establishments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Safety inspections are regularly carried out at all parachute training establishments, but it is not possible to say how many such visits took place in 1989.

Aldermaston A90 Building

51. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes to the original programme of work has been made during the construction of the Aldermaston A90 building.

Mr. Neubert: Changes to the programme of work for the A90 building at AWE Aldermaston were made as a result of the Government's decision to purchase the Trident system and in response to subsequent programme slippage. I refer the hon. Member to appendix 4 of the July 1987 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General—"Control and Management of the Trident Programme"—HC27. The construction of A90 is now complete and equipment installation is proceeding within the scheduled time scale for Trident.

Weapons Development

53. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his French counterpart to discuss weapons development.

72. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his French counterpart to discuss weapons development.

70. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his French counterpart to discuss weapons development.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his French counterpart to discuss weapons development.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend last met M. Chevenement to discuss co-operative weapons development among other topics on 4 May. The press release has been placed in the Library.

Reserve Forces

54. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is considering enhancing the role of reserve forces in view of the changing situation in eastern Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are considering the structure of our armed forces, including the reserves, as part of the work on options for change.

Conventional Forces in Europe

56. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decisions he has made about the role of the Army following a possible conventional forces in Europe agreement.

74. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decisions he has made about the role of the Army following a possible conventional forces in Europe agreement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) earlier today.

62. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made in the conventional forces in Europe negotiations; and what are the prospects for achieving a conventional forces in Europe treaty on the size and disposition of forces in Europe during the current year.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on progress on conventional forces disarmament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The conventional armed forces in Europe talks which opened in Vienna in March 1989 are making good progress. Agreement has been reached on definitions for tanks, armoured combat vehicles and artillery, and is close for combat helicopters. Agreement has also been reached on ceilings for all these categories except artillery. Significant differences remain on the treatment of combat aircraft, and there is much detailed work still to do on verification. As was made clear in the NATO summit declaration of 6 July, we attach great importance to the successful conclusion of these negotiations this year. We understand that the USSR shares that aim.

Tornado

57. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of discussions between his Department and British Aerospace in relation to the recently announced cancellations of Tornado aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 2 July at column *466*.

75. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his proposals for a midlife update for Tornado aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: Contracts for the development and production investment phases of the Tornado GR1 midlife update programme have been placed with Panavia, the Tornado prime contractor.

78. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what grounds he took the decision not to proceed with the eighth batch of Tornado aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

91. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what grounds he took the decision not to proceed with the eighth batch of Tornado aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to the announcement which I made during the defence debate on 18 June at columns 770-71.

RAF Wattisham

58. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding the use of RAF Wattisham by civilian aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A limited number of civil flights already take place from RAF Wattisham. An outline proposal has been put forward for increased civilian use of RAF Wattisham if the existing civil airport at Nacton road, Ipswich closes.

Arms Conversion Agency

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received any representations to set up an arms conversion agency.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received any representations to set up an arms conversion agency.

Mr. Alan Clark: I would refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) and for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett).

Departmental Land

61. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what factors he takes into account in deciding whether to release land currently held by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is Government policy that the defence estate should be no larger than necessary to satisfy the requirements of the armed forces and we are continually seeking opportunities for rationalisation and release of surplus land. As well as considering operational requirements, rationalisation studies take into account economic factors such as potential disposal receipts and savings in running costs.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much land his Department owns throughout the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government policy on such land ownership.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At 1 April 1990, Ministry of Defence landholdings in the United Kingdom, including freehold and leasehold land and foreshore, stood at 240,613 hectares. The defence estate exists to meet the services' needs for operational bases, training areas, accommodation and support facilities and it is our policy that the size of the estate is the minimum necessary to meet these requirements. Since 1979, more than 12,000 hectares of land have been sold and we are continually seeking further opportunities to rationalise and reduce our landholdings.

Type 23 Frigates

64. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the command and control system for the type 23 frigate fully works yet.

Mr. Neubert: The type 23 frigate command system is currently under development and is planned to enter service in the mid-1990s.

Low Flying

65. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he anticipates will be necessary in the low-flying training programe as a result of changes in the United Kingdom's defence requirements following recent developments in eastern Europe.

Mr. Neubert: The nature and amount of low-flying training carried out by the RAF will naturally reflect future operational requirements.

79. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received on the subject of low flying; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Neubert: During June 1990, the Ministry of Defence received 742 inquiries or complaints about military low-flying training in the United Kingdom. My Department will continue to seek to ensure that the disturbance caused by low flying is kept to the minimum consistent with meeting essential training requirements.

83. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received in connection with low-flying aircraft in north-west Norfolk.

Mr. Neubert: During June 1990 the Ministry of Defence received six inquiries or complaints from north-west Norfolk about military low-flying training.

85. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received a copy of the report published by the Western European Union on low flying; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: My Department has received a copy of this report. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office stated in his answer to the hon. Member on 12 June 1990, at column *122*, a formal response to the recommendations of the report is the responsibility of the Western European Union Permanent Council.

Air-to-Surface Missiles

66. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the proposal to deploy tactical air-to-surface missiles in the United Kingdom.

71. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the proposal to deploy tactical air-to-surface missiles in the United Kingdom.

73. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the proposal to deploy tactical air-to-surface missiles in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave on 15 June at column *379*.

Soviet Weapons and Shipping

68. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest information on the output of conventional weapons and naval shipping by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Soviet Union continued to produce large numbers of conventional weapons in 1989, although in certain categories, especially tanks and fighter aircraft, we believe output was significantly reduced from the previous year's level. On the naval side, six major combatants and nine submarines were completed.

Royal Navy

76. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to announce what changes to the Royal Navy will result from his review of defence commitments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 14 June 1990 at columns *329-30*.

Ministry Personnel (Employment)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last considered the rules relating to senior MOD personnel with procurement responsibilities subsequently working for United Kingdom defence contractors.

77. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last considered the rules relating to senior MOD personnel with procurement responsibilities subsequently working for United Kingdom defence contractors.

90. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last considered the rules relating to senior MOD personnel with procurement responsibilities subsequently working for United Kingdom defence contractors.

Mr. Alan Clark: The rules and standards relating to the acceptance of business appointments by former Crown servants are drawn up by the Cabinet Office and apply equally to all Crown servants, including civilian and service personnel in the Ministry of Defence. The basis of the current rules was laid down in 1937 and has been subject to regular review, the latest in 1989.

Defence Commitments

86. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on progress on the review of United Kingdom defence commitments currently being undertaken by his Department.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran).

Disarmament Conferences

88. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution his Department is making to conferences on disarmament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) on 13 July 1990 at columns *370-71*.

NATO Secretary-General

89. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the Secretary-General of NATO; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with the Secretary-General of NATO. Their next scheduled meeting is in the autumn. A range of defence issues will be discussed.

Regiments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which regiments will be amalgamated or disbanded.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller).

Royal Marines School of Music

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has completed his consideration of the report of the board of inquiry into security at the Royal Marines school of music at Deal; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has now completed his consideration of the report and forwarded to the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence a memorandum summarising its principal findings. An unclassified version of this memorandum has been placed in the Library.

Willsworthy Firing Range

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of live firing at the Willsworthy range in Dartmoor national park for each of the last six months; and what is the proposed increase in the level of live firing.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The actual levels of live firing at Willsworthy range over the period in question were as follows:

Month	*Days*
January	6
February	8
March	10
April	6
May	10
June	15

Actual firing at the range fell short of planned levels, due mainly to adverse weather conditions, particularly in the early part of the year. There are no plans to increase live firing at Willsworthy range above currently permitted levels.

Royal Marines Reserve

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are currently members of the Royal Marines Reserve; and how he expects that number to change in the next five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The strength of the Royal Marines Reserve as at 31 May 1990 was 1,135. In 1983 we announced plans to increase the strength of the RMR by 400 men, to about 1,580 men in total, and the RMR continues to recruit towards this manpower target.

Iraq

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance is provided by the resident military attaché to United Kingdom companies seeking to export military equipment to Iraq.

Mr. Alan Clark: Assistance is offered by the resident military attaché in Baghdad in conformity with the

guidelines on the export of defence equipment to both Iran and Iraq announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on 29 October 1985 at column *450*.

RAF Greenham Common

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take in respect of the bye-laws at RAF Greenham Common following the House of Lords ruling of 12 July.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have received a copy of the House of Lords' judgment and are urgently considering its implications. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to my hon. Friend when the position is clearer.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 18 July 1990

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Social Security Commissioners

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Attorney-General what was the average waiting time between an appeal to the social security commissioners and a commissioner's decision being made.

The Attorney-General: The average waiting time from receipt of the appeal in the commissioner's office to notification of the commissioner's decision in 1989 was 404 working days.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Attorney-General how many social security commissioners' decisions were made in each of the last five years; how many oral hearings occurred in each of the last five years; and what percentage of commissioners' decisions are reported.

The Attorney-General: The answer in each category for each of the last five years is listed in the tables.

England, Wales and Scotland
Number of social security commissioners' decisions in each of the past five years

Location	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
England and Wales	n/a	1,839	1,894	[1]2,136	1,909
Scotland	486	334	407	660	[1]703

[1] Revised figures.
n/a = Not available.

Number of cases heard by social security commissioners in each of the past five years

Location	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
London	n/a	519	572	[1]346	287
Cardiff	n/a	6	42	56	37
Liverpool[2]	nil	nil	nil	53	54
Leeds[3]	nil	nil	nil	nil	39
Edinburgh	51	64	68	63	77

[1] Revised figures.
[2] No hearings before 1988.
[3] No hearings before 1989.
n/a = Not available.

Percentage of commissioners' decisions reported in the past five years

	Percentage
1985	n/a
1986	2·5
1987	1·9
1988	1·5
1989	1·8

n/a = Not available.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Attorney-General how many social security commissioners there are; how they are appointed; and what salaries or fees they are paid.

The Attorney-General: There are 12 full-time social security commissioners in England and Wales and three in Scotland. They are appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Lord Chancellor from among persons who are barristers, advocates or solicitors of not less than 10 years standing. Commissioners are paid an annual salary of £51,000. The chief commissioner is paid £56,000.

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Hind: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to lay before Parliament and to publish the annual report of the Serious Fraud Office for the year 1989-90.

The Attorney-General: The report has today been laid before Parliament. I have caused a copy of the report to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Managers

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training managers have not yet signed the new contract from each of the *(a)* private, *(b)* local authority and *(c)* voluntary sectors.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest available information shows that 35 private sector, 11 local authority and six voluntary sector training managers have not yet signed new employment training contracts. A number of these will relate to contracts agreed in principle but awaiting final signatures.

Social Fund

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of provision per trainee for (i) employment training trainees and (ii) comparable trainees funded by the European social fund.

Mr. Eggar: The average Exchequer cost per person on employment training is about £106 per week, including the trainee's allowance. Information is not available on comparable average costs of trainees on European social fund funded courses.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training managers have *(a)* withdrawn from the scheme or *(b)* reduced the number of trainees they take, with the introduction of the new contract, from each of the (i) private, (ii) local authority and (iii) voluntary sectors.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest available information shows that nine private sector, three local authority and four voluntary sector training managers have withdrawn from employment training following the introduction of new contracts. Information about those training managers who have reduced the number of their trainees is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Social Charter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made by the European Community Commission in preparing directives arising out of the principles of the social charter; and if he has received any guidance from the Commission on whether the directives are to be considered by majority vote.

Mr. Eggar: The European Commission has published four draft directives from its social action programme; one concerns asbestos, and three concern part-time and temporary work. The Commission's proposal is that the draft directive on asbestos and two of the draft directives on part time and temporary work, should be decided by qualified majority voting.

I understand that the Commission is well advanced in drafting a number of other directives. We do not yet know how many of these are likely to be proposed for qualified majority voting.

Employment Training

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the current level of expenses paid to those on employment training schemes.

Mr. Eggar: I have received no representations on the current level of expenses paid to those on employment training schemes.

Youth Training

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the development of youth training.

Mr. Nicholls: New youth training is a major step forward. It offers the promise of a level-2 qualification or more for every trainee who can achieve it. It offers flexible design and duration of training and wider eligibility. It will provide improved help for those with special training needs and those seeking employment after training.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to improve the quality of the initial assessment of trainees on employment training courses.

Mr. Nicholls: A number of initiatives are continuing to develop and improve the quality of initial assessment of trainees seeking training within employment training.

Tourist Attractions (wheelchair Access)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will outline his Department's policy on wheelchair access for the disabled to major tourist attractions.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department concurs with the findings and recommendations of the "Tourism for All" report, which was published last year by the English tourist board. The national tourist boards, in collaboration with the holiday care service, are currently taking forward those recommendations, which are designed to improve access for people with special needs to the whole range of tourist facilities.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have been created.

Mr. Eggar: Twenty training and enterprise councils have signed operational contracts. A further 57 TECs are in their development stage and preparing their corporate and business plans.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the companies and organisations represented on training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Eggar: Twenty TECs have now signed operational contracts and I will arrange for a list of board members for these TECs together with their companies/organisations to be placed in the House of Commons Library as soon as possible.

Government Training Schemes

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainers were involved with Government training schemes on *(a)* 18 June 1979 and *(b)* the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Telephone Chatlines

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to ensure that jobs with chatline companies are not advertised in Government jobcentres if they carry bonus incentives to keep callers talking for long spells.

Mr. Eggar: The Employment Service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Gentleman.

Training Centre, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what alternative provision he will make for the accommodation of the employee rehabilitation centre, Western avenue, Cardiff, after 1993.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 13 July 1990]:* Plans for the alternative provision for the accommodation of the employment rehabilitation centre, Western avenue, Cardiff, after 1993 have yet to be made. The South Glamorgan committee for the employment of disabled people will be consulted in drawing up any such plans.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he has undertaken regarding the future provision and location of services provided by the employee rehabilitation centre, Western avenue, Cardiff.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 13 July 1990]:* In the consultative document on employment and training for people with disabilities published by my Department on 29 June, my right hon. and learned Friend invited comments on plans for developing employment rehabilitation provision. The document has been sent to over 1,400 individuals and organisations including the South Glamorgan advisory committee for the employment of disabled people. Consultations about the future provision and location of services specifically provided by the employment rehabilitation centre in Cardiff have not yet commenced.

PRIME MINISTER

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government will publish a White Paper making an economic assessment of the effect of joining the ERM of the European monetary system at the current rate of exchange.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's Government have no plans to publish such a White Paper. Participation in the exchange rate mechanism will help to reinforce counter-inflationary policy.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Surendra Paul

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's high commissioner to India has in relation to a warning given in advance to the Assam state police about the murder of Mr. Surendra Paul.

Mr. Maude: The British high commission has no information about any such warning.

EC (Irish Presidency)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the period of the Irish presidency of the European Community.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made to the House on 28 June by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 28 June at columns *489-90*.

Human Rights

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries in each of the past five years to which Her Majesty's Government have made representations over human rights violations.

Mr. Maude: In the last five years we have made representations to the Governments of many countries, both bilaterally and with our EC partners. The precise information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The diplomatic and aid wings together have so far received 35 requests for subject access, all from present or former members of staff: this figure is in line with forecasts of likely numbers of applications. We do not propose to change the arrangements for charges set out in the reply given by my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member on 30 October 1987, *Official Report*, column *478*.

Albania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Albania concerning the refugees that are seeking to leave the country.

Mr. Waldegrave: On behalf of the whole Community, the ambassadors of the four member states represented in Tirana called on the Albanian Minister of Foreign Affairs on 7 July. They delivered an agreed statement urging the Albanian Government to ensure that the safety of the refugees, to refrain from reprisals against their families, to allow them to receive such assistance as necessary and to guarantee their departure from Albania.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for establishing new links with the Albanian Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following the apparent thaw in early 1990 in Albania's attitude towards the outside world we renewed on 20 April our 1980 offer to establish diplomatic relations without pre-conditions.

Indonesia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet the Indonesian Foreign Minister.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no immediate plans for a meeting with the Foreign Minister though he hopes one will be possible before long.

North and South Korea

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made with regard to the opening of the border between North and South Korea.

Mr. Maude: None. We have consistently supported all realistic initiatives which might lead to peace on the Korean peninsula. We welcome the resumption of official contacts on 3 July. How these contacts might be expanded must be left to discussion between North and South Korea.

Liberia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts he has had in the previous 12 months with the Liberian Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. Her Majesty's ambassador in Monrovia however has regular contacts with members of the Liberian Government.

Kenya

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Kenya for the

release of political prisoners and the establishment of multi-party democracy there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I would refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply I gave to the honourable Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 17 July, *Official Report*, column *496*.

China

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many diplo matic contacts and at what levels, have taken place with Chinese diplomatic representatives over the past month.

Mr. Maude: Regular contacts on a variety of subjects have been maintained between the two Governments through channels up to and including the Chinese ambassador in London and the British chargé d'affaires in Peking.

Visas

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from which European countries visitors to the United Kingdom are required to have visas; and what plans he has for removing these restrictions on a country-by-country basis.

Mr. Maude: Visitors to the United Kingdom from the following European countries require visas:

Albania
Bulgaria
Czechoslovakia
Hungary
Poland
Romania
Soviet Union
Turkey

We have no plans to abolish visas for Turkey, which were only recently imposed—in June 1989. We welcome the moves towards greater democracy and the freer movement of people in eastern Europe. We are examining our visa policies towards these countries on a case-by-case basis, in the light of developments, and keeping in touch with our European Community partners.

Ivory

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Hong Kong Government will comply in full with the CITES ban on all commercial trade in ivory when the six-month reservation is withdrawn on 18 July.

Mr. Maude: The Hong Kong Government have already enacted legislation to implement the CITES ban on international commercial trade in ivory. The legislation will come into effect when our reservation is withdrawn on 18 July 1990. A potential loophole in the legislation which might have enabled tourists to export ivory as souvenirs up to a weight of 5 kg has been closed. Hong Kong legislation now fully reflects the CITES convention.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the reason for the delay in issuing advice to school governors about their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act; whether his Department has any plans to indemnify or compensate any school governor prosecuted under the Act; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Preparation of guidance is well under way, but proving to be more complex than expected. The Data Protection Registrar is aware of the position and will be consulted in the course of its preparation.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected by the Department. The subject access fee for external requests is £8, which is below the maximum set in central guidance. Current and previous employees are not charged.

Grant-maintained Schools

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the issue of parents of first-year pupils, or children due to become first-year pupils at the start of the next school year, being disenfranchised from ballots on opting out due to the fact that the procedure was initiated in the period shortly before their children became formally registered at the school; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has received a number of letters on this subject. Guidance is contained in the Department's booklet "School Governors: How to become a Grant-Maintained School", which was sent last year to every school eligible to apply for GM status. It advises governors and parents to think carefully about the timing of actions they take.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals are being considered for amendments to the Education Reform Act in order to make it easier for schools to opt out; whether the introduction of a procedure to opt back into local education authority control, on the same basis as that to opt out, is under consideration; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This September there will be 44 GM schools with a total of 30,000 pupils. That means the number of GM schools has more than doubled in 12 months. That is an impressive measure of the strength of interest among parents and governors in becoming grant maintained. My right hon. Friend will be keeping a careful watch to ensure that LEAs do not abuse their position when dealing with individual schools; and will be ready to take further action should it prove to be necessary.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much his Department's booklet "Grant-Maintained Schools: Questions Parents Ask" cost to produce and distribute.

Mrs. Rumbold: The cost of printing the booklets and of posting an initial distribution to all schools eligible to apply for grant-maintained status was £32,275.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the introduction of a standard wording for parents' petitions requiring the governing body of schools to organise a ballot on whether or not the school should opt out of local education authority control; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received one letter on this subject. Guidance on the wording of parental petitions was given in the booklet "School Governors: How to Become a Grant-maintained School", which was sent last year to every school eligible to apply for GM status. Paragraph 11 of the booklet said:

"The wording of the petition should make it clear that it is to require the governing body of the school, in accordance with Section 60 of the Education Reform Act, to hold a ballot of parents on the question of whether the school should apply to the Secretary of State for grant-maintained status".

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the organisations referred to in his Department's booklet "School Governors: How to become a Grant-Maintained School" as sources of information on the subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Officials in the Department have received two letters on this subject.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local education authorities and local authority associations concerning his Department's booklet "Grant-Maintained Schools: Questions Parents Ask".

Mrs. Rumbold: There has been correspondence between the Association of County Councils and the Department about the booklet. My right hon. Friend has not received representations from individual local authorities about the booklet.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received a copy of the booklet published by Local Schools Information called "Grant-Maintained Schools: Questions Parents Ask"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has seen a copy of the booklet. The booklet suggests that grant-maintained schools could be isolated, but the facts point the other way. GM schools are working together constructively, sharing experiences and co-operating in joint ventures. The booklet also suggests that an application for GM status would be a leap in the dark. Yet the first GM schools have welcomed their new status and are already making full use of their greater freedom and responsibilities.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines he has issued in respect of the arrangements he would expect a governing body to make in order to enable parents of a school where opting out was being considered to have an informed debate about the options available.

Mrs. Rumbold: Guidance on this point is contained in the Department's booklet "School Governors: How to become a Grant-Maintained School", which was sent to all schools eligible to apply for GM status last year. Paragraph 21 of the booklet says

"That debate [for and against grant-maintained status for a particular school] will have to take place locally . . . and will no doubt be well under way before the ballot is actually held. The Secretary of State has made it clear that he expects such debate, and any ballot on grant-maintained status or its procedures to be properly conducted: if this proves not to be the case, he may require the ballot to be held again."

In addition a letter was sent from the Department to every local education authority in February 1989 about the responsibilities of LEAs during ballots on grant-maintained status. The letter made clear the Secretary of State's intention that parents, governors and school staff should be able to consider the option of grant-maintained status without fear of intimidation or harassment.

Special Educational Needs

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many appeals under section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981 he is currently considering; how mnay of those appeals concern hearing-impaired children; and how many have been under consideration for 12 months or more.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend is currently considering 48 appeals under section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981, four of which concern hearing-impaired children. Of these 48 appeals, 22 have been under consideration for 12 months or more. Appeals are complex and involve the consideration of a large number of documents and representations. The Department has recently revised its procedures in order to minimise the time taken to reach decisions on individual cases but has to balance the need for speed with the need for thorough and careful consideration of the details of each case. My right hon. Friend must ensure that, in line with the rules of natural justice, each party has the chance to present his or her version of the facts and be able to comment on the other's version. This process can involve several lengthy exchanges between parents, the Department and the LEA.

Reading Standards

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many 10-year-old children in state schools in England and Wales were recorded as experiencing reading difficulties in the school sessions *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1989-90.

Mrs. Rumbold: Such national data do not exist currently, although the national curriculum assessment arrangements will in due course provide information about the reading levels of pupils at seven, 11, 14 and 16.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the companies that have been contracted to build each of the city technology colleges so far designated.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information that the hon. Member requested is listed below:

	Company
Kingshurst phase 1	Miller Construction
phase 2	Wimpey
Djanogly, Nottingham	Norwest Holst
Macmillan College, Teesside	Wimpey
Bradford	Miller Construction

	Company
Tyneside	John Laing Construction Ltd.
Leigh, Dartford	Crispin Borst
Harris, Croydon	Walter Lawrence (City and Southern)
Britschool	Wallis Ltd.
Bacons	Woolf Construction

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the individual companies that have agreed to sponsor city technology colleges, indicating in each case the amount of money promised.

Mrs. Rumbold: The principle sponsors of the city technology colleges announced to date are as follows:

City technology college	*Sponsor*	*Amount £ million*
Kingshurst	Hanson Industries	1·00
Djanogly, Nottingham	Mr. Harry Djanogly	1·10
Macmillan College, Teesside	BAT Industries	1·00
Bradford	The Dixons Group plc	1·10
Emmanuel College, Gateshead	The Reg Vardy Foundation	1·00
Sylvan	The Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust	1·25
Leigh, Dartford	Mr. G. N. Leigh	1·00
Britschool	The British Record Industry Trust	1·10
Bacons	Southwark Diocesan Board of Education	1·50
Haberdashers' Aske's, New Cross	The Robert Aske Charity	3·20
Corby	Mr. H. de Capell Brooke	1·10
Derby	The Landau Foundation	1·15
Telford	The Mercers' Company Tarmac plc	1·00 1·00
Wandsworth	ADT	1·00

In addition, a further 80 companies/individuals have pledged over £9 million to the programme as a whole. Discussions are continuing with other prospective sponsors, and I am confident that these talks will provide further sponsorship.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Political Parties (Funding)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the introduction of state funding for political parties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Passport Offices

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many days have been lost through sickness at each of the passport offices in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is shown in the table for the financial year 1989-90 and for the period 1 April to 8 July 1990.

	Total days lost April 1989-March 1990	*Total days lost 1 April 1990-8 July 1990*
London	3,538	828
Liverpool	5,749	1,399
Peterborough	2,997	918
Newport	3,782	1,140
Glasgow	4,876	1,305
Belfast	347	199

Passport Office, London

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he has taken to make the passport office waiting room in Petty France more congenial.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A comprehensive refurbishment of the passport office waiting room in Petty France is now almost complete. The work has included redecoration and the replacement of floor covering, seating and lighting. Improved toilet facilities and other amenities have also been provided, and consideration is being given to some pictorial displays.

Child Care

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the ministerial group on women's issues, 1989 and 1990 five-point plans on child care.

Mr. John Patten: In April 1989 the ministerial group on women's issues discussed and agreed the following five-point plan designed to encourage the development of a range of high-quality child care options:

1. to amend the then Children Bill so as to improve the registration and enforcement arrangements for day nurseries, child minders and playgroups;
2. to encourage the providers of child care and employers to consider the need for a voluntary accreditation scheme, which would provide information about the availability of child care facilities and guarantee the quality of the provision;
3. to issue guidance to local education authorities and school governors in England, encouraging the use of school premises for after school and holiday play schemes;
4. to give further support to the voluntary sector through pump-priming of projects and encouragement of partnerships between employers and the voluntary sector;
5. to give further encouragement to employers to use the tax reliefs available to provide child care facilities.

Having implemented the April 1989 plan, the group approved a follow-up programme of action in February 1990:

1. to issue new guidelines and regulations to local authorities on day care services for children under eight years, as part of the implementation of the Children Act 1989;
2. the Department of Health to work with local authorities to help them improve their practice on the registration of day care services;
3. to encourage the development of information services on child care for both parents and employers;
4. to continue to encourage employers to become involved in providing help with child care for their staff;
5. to continue to set an example to employers, by developing a range of flexible working patterns and child care facilities to assist civil servants who choose to combine paid work and family responsibility.

Domestic Fires

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is planned by the Government to reduce the risk to human life caused by fires in domestic property.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Department regards fire prevention publicity and education as an important element in helping to reduce and minimise the risk to human life in domestic fires. Our proposals for fire prevention activity were described in the reply I gave to a Question from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 11 June at column *17*. In addition, a mobile information unit for the elderly on fire prevention and fire safety will be used to tour major urban retail market areas. A television filler film dealing with fire safety for young children will be produced later this year.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of complaints received by the Police Complaints Authority originating from Newham in the last two years; and how many *(a)* were investigated and *(b)* are being investigated.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* We have no such information. Under the provisions of part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, there are matters for the Police Complaints Authority and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. I understand from the commissioner that this information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A, category B, and category C inmates were serving their sentence in each prison region in England and Wales for the latest date available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The latest information readily available centrally is given in the table.

Population[1] of adult male sentenced prisoners in local and training prisons in England and Wales on 31 December 1989: by Prison Service region and security category of prisoner.

Prison Service Region	*[2]A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*Not recorded*	*Total population*
Midland	62	422	3,284	1,126	413	5,307
North	209	1,859	4,242	1,361	1,218	8,889
South East	125	1,947	3,820	1,445	2,136	9,473
South West	65	861	2,151	866	838	4,781
All regions	461	5,089	13,497	4,798	4,605	28,450

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.
[2] Including prisoners provisionally placed in category A.

Pregnant Prisoners

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women who have been known to be pregnant have been sentenced to prison in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor *[pursuant to his reply, 9 May 1990, c. 142]:* I regret that incorrect information was contained in that answer. The reply should have read as follows:

The information requested is not available. However, the annual reports on the work of the prison service record the number of pregnant females temporarily removed to outside hospitals for delivery and returning to establishments afterwards. The figures are:

	Numbers
1988-89	63
1987-88	75
1986-87	62
1985-86	71
1984-85	[1]70
1983	70
1982	51
1981	74
1980	75
1979	74

[1] Covers 15-month period.

Additionally, there were eight deliveries within prison service establishments between 1 January 1979 and 31 March 1989:

	Numbers
1988-89	2
1987-88	1
1985-86	1
1984-85	1
1983	1
1982	1
1979	1

Child Emigrants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about child emigrants; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 9 July at columns *209-10*.

ENVIRONMENT

Owner-occupation

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of owner-occupation in Britain and in each European Community country.

Mr. Chope: The available information is as follows:

	Percentage of owner-occupied housing	Year
Belgium	61	1981
Denmark	56	1987
France	51	1984
Germany	41	1985
Greece	72	1982
Ireland	76	1981
Italy	64	1986
Luxembourg	60	1982
Netherlands	44	1985
Portugal	56	1981
Spain	76	1980

Corresponding estimates for Great Britain are 58 per cent. for 1982 and 66 per cent. for 1989. Figures for the various countries are not all compiled on a comparable basis and should be interpreted with caution.

Homelessness

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest available figure for homelessness; and what the figure was in 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 27 June, *Official Report* column *276*.

Housing (Young People)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has undertaken of the availability of affordable housing for young people.

Mr. Micheal Spicer: Various projects in my Department's research programme bear on aspects of availability and affordability.

Rights of Way

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the director of the Ramblers Association to discuss rights of way in the countryside.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside last met representatives of the Ramblers Association, including the director, on 8 February, when they had a useful and productive discussion on a wide range of access issues.

Beaches

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the present standard of cleanliness of the beaches in Britain.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In 1989 a total of 76 per cent. of our bathing waters met the standards set in the EEC bathing water directive compared with only 51 per cent. in 1986. Over the next 10 years, around £2·9 billion will be invested to bring all of our bathing waters up to standard and to treat all significant discharges of sewage.

Common Land

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to come to a decision on common land before the summer recess.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend still hopes to make an announcement soon on the Government's intentions on common land legislation but cannot commit himself to do so before the summer recess.

Ancient Monuments

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 so as to make it an offence to remove, without consent, any item of historical or archaeological interest from the site of a scheduled ancient monument; and if he will consider less formal measures relating to finds made on an unscheduled site.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment proposes to amend the 1979 Act when a suitable legislative opportunity arises. He is also considering the most appropriate measures for finds made on unscheduled sites.

Wetlands Conservation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) of 25 June, *Official Report*, column *39*, he will raise at the special session of the United Nations Environmental Programme the problem of wetlands conservation as a priority evolving environmental issue, in relation to Halvergate marshes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I see no need to raise the subject of wetlands conservation at the UNEP governing council since such issues were recently discussed in some depth at the fourth conference of the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance in Montreux, Switzerland.

Since 1987 Halvergate marshes have been afforded the protection provided by designation of the Broads as an environmentally sensitive area under article 19 of EC regulation 797/85. In 1989 a substantial proportion of the marshes was given additional protection by inclusion in the second tier of the ESA scheme, which imposes more restrictions on operations by participating farmers.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a table listing all buildings which are protected by grades I and II status.

Mr. Trippier: Local planning authorities hold copies of the lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest in their areas and are required to make them available for public inspection free of charge. A complete set of lists is similarly available for inspection at the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, Fortress house, Savile row, London W1. Since there are now over 435,000 listed buildings in England, with the lists being constantly added to or amended, the hon. Member will understand that publication of a single table listing all such buildings is not a practical proposition.

Quarry Dust Emissions

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those statutory functions presently discharged by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in respect of quarry dust emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Health and Safety (Emissions to the Atmosphere) Regulations 1983 prescribes certain classes of mineral works as requiring registration under section 9 of the Alkali Works etc. Regulation Act 1906. In these cases, the operator of the process must make an application to the Secretary of State in accordance with the Health and Safety (Emissions to the Atmosphere) Regulations 1989 for a registration. The regulations provide for the advertising of the application and for both it and any subsequent registration granted to be available on a public register maintained by the relevant local authority. These registrations are granted, on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment, by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Before granting a registration, the operator of the process must, by virtue of section 5(1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 demonstrate that he is using best practicable means for preventing the emission into the atmosphere from the premises of noxious or offensive substances and for rendering harmless and inoffensive such substances as may be so emitted.

Part I of the 1974 Act also provides the necessary powers for the appointment by the Secretary of State of inspectors and inspection of registered processes. It also provides for the serving of improvement notices where operators are failing to comply with the terms of their registration and for subsequent legal action for failure to comply with the terms of such a notice. The pursuit of formal legal remedies would normally only be undertaken when discussions between the operator and the inspectorate had failed to secure the necessary improvements.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the National Rivers Authority to discuss progress on implementing anti-pollution measures.

Mr. Trippier: I met the chairman of the National Rivers Authority on 9 July to discuss a range of issues relating to the water environment. Since then I have announced that an additional £11 million will be made available to the authority this financial year, if required, over and above the £93 million grant-in-aid already agreed. This decision will enable the authority to continue its planned capital programme and to carry out its pollution control and other functions, in line with the Government's commitment to maintaining the quality of the water environment.

Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was paid by the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation in redundancy payments to the general manager, the estates officer (Warrington), and heads of the architecture, marketing, landscaping and interior design departments.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* In accordance with its contractual obligations Warrington and Runcorn development corporation made the following redundancy payments:

	£
General Manager	78,955
Chief Architect and Planner	44,433
Sales Manager	32,354
Marketing Manager	25,248
Chief Landscape Architect	34,390

The estates officer (Warrington) did not receive a redundancy payment. The development corporation did not have an interior design department.

Recycling

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities that have made written submissions on the subject of recycling credits; and if he will make those submissions available to the public on request.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The information requested is given in the table. The submissions cannot be made available without the agreement of the individual authorities concerned since they were not sought on the basis that they would be published.

Avon
Woodspring DC
Bedfordshire
Mid-Bedfordshire DC
Berkshire
Berkshire CC
Wokingham DC
Corporation of Slough
Buckinghamshire
Buckinghamshire CC
Cambridgeshire
Cambridgeshire CC
East Cambridgeshire DC

Cheshire
Congleton BC

Cleveland
Cleveland CC
Middlesbrough BC

Clwyd
Alyn & Deeside DC
Wrexham Maelor BC
Borough of Rhuddlan

Cornwall
Borough of Restormel

Cumbria
South Lakeland DC

Devon
Devon CC
Teignbridge DC

Durham
Durham CC

Dyfed
Ceredigion DC
Borough of Dinefwr

East Sussex
East Sussex CC
Wealden DC

Essex
Essex CC
Brentwood DC
Rochford DC
Colchester BC

Gloucestershire
Gloucester CC
Tewkesbury BC

Greater London
London Waste Regulation Authority
North London Waste Authority
West London Waste Authority
City of London
Barking and Dagenham LBC
Barnet LBC
Bromley LBC
Croydon LBC
Hackney LBC
Harrow LBC
Kingston-upon-Thames LBC
Richmond-upon-Thames LBC
Sutton LBC
City of Westminster

Greater Manchester
Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority
Trafford MBC

Gwent
Borough of Blaenau Gwent

Gwynedd
Aberconwy BC

Hampshire
Hampshire CC
Eastleigh BC
Rushmoor BC
Basingstoke and Dean BC
Test Valley BC
City of Portsmouth

Hereford and Worcester
City of Worcester

Hertfordshire
Borough of Watford
City and District of St. Albans

Humberside
Humberside CC
Borough of Beverley

Isle of Wight
Isle of Wight CC

Kent
Tonbridge and Malling BC
Swale BC
Maidstone BC

Lancashire
Lancashire CC
Preston BC
Burnley BC
South Ribble BC

Leicestershire
Harborough DC
Melton BC

Lincolnshire
South Holland DC

Merseyside
Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority

Norfolk
Norfolk CC
North Norfolk DC
Norwich City

Northumberland
Berwick-upon-Tweed BC

North Yorkshire
North Yorkshire CC

Nottinghamshire
Nottinghamshire CC
Newark and Sherwood DC
City of Nottingham
Mansfield DC

Oxfordshire
Oxfordshire CC
Cherwell DC
City of Oxford

Shropshire
North Shropshire DC

Somerset
West Somerset DC

South Yorkshire
Barnsley MBC

Staffordshire
Newcastle-under-Lyme BC
South Stafford DC
City of Stoke-on-Trent

Surrey
Borough of Epsom and Ewell
Spelthorne BC

Tyne and Wear
Gateshead MBC
South Tyneside MBC
Borough of Sunderland

Warwickshire
Warwickshire CC
North Warwicks BC
Rugby BC

West Glamorgan
Neath BC

West Sussex
West Sussex CC
Mid-Sussex DC
Arun DC

West Yorkshire
West Yorkshire Waste Management

Wiltshire
West Wiltshire DC

European Football Competitions

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the text of the memoranda sent to the European Football Association by the Minister for Sport recommending the return of English clubs to European football.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* I am arranging for copies of my letter to the president of UEFA and the report which accompanied it to be placed in the Library of the House. As the report indicates, the information contained in annexes A and B was provided by the police to the Home Office. The information in annex C was provided by the Italian authorities.

River Mersey (Waste Discharges)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in encouraging industries which discharge waste into the River Mersey to establish treatment facilities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* Encouraging the proper discharge of waste into the Mersey by private industry is a key aim of the Government's Mersey Basin campaign. The campaign is making good progress and many of the known major dischargers have programmes of remedial work and effluent management plans. As an example my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside opened the third and final phase of an effluent treatment programme at Bridgewater Paper Company in Ellesmere Port on 2 July. At the national level the National Rivers Authority is already the regulatory body and watchdog to safeguard water resources; and the Environmental Protection Bill when enacted will provide for continuing improvements in emission standards as techniques and technology improve.

River Mersey (Oil Spillage)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the oil spillage on the River Mersey on 12 July.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the financial help he will be awarding to Wirral council following the clean-up operation of oil which leaked from a Kuwait Petroleum Company tanker on 12 July;

(2) if, following the major spillage of oil from a Kuwait Petroleum Company tanker, he will set up an inquiry to consider the question of responsibility and compensation.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* On Thursday 12 July, an estimated 30 tonnes or so of Kuwaiti crude oil was spilled into the River Mersey at the Tranmere oil terminal of Shell Ltd. during tank cleaning operations on the United Kingdom registered MV Tonbridge owned by the Kuwaiti Oil Tanker Company. The marine pollution control unit—MPCU—of the Department of Transport were informed immediately and carried out an aerial reconnaissance of the scene. Under the terms of the Mersey oil spill plan, Mersey and Cheshire fire brigades directed operations to contain the spill and Wirral borough council prepared to carry out a beach cleaning operation using equipment made available by MPCU and on the basis of advice provided by an MPCU expert at the scene. Shell UK Ltd. also commissioned oil recovery and containment operations by specialists from the commercial oil spill service centre at Southampton. Other relevant agencies such as the Nature Conservancy Council and National Rivers Authority were informed and advised on remedial action as appropriate.

As a result of this action, some oil has been recovered and the remainder widely dispersed, partly as a result of wind and tides. By the weekend, only small quantities were being deposited on the shoreline mainly in the Rock Ferry area close to the tanker terminal on the south bank of the river. Remaining slicks of oil in the river contained mainly a light sheen which was expected to disperse rapidly. No significant impact on areas of importance to wildlife has been reported. The clean-up operations have been scaled down and I applaud the rapid response of all the parties concerned to minimise the impact of this incident.

Meeting the costs of the clean up operation is a matter for the vessel owners and insurers under the 1969 international convention on civil liability for oil pollution damage. Liability for this accident has been accepted by the Kuwaiti Oil Tanker Company and the clean-up action taken has been approved by the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation. It is for local authorities and other parties seeking to recover costs to submit claims accordingly.

Housing

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to reverse the fall in dwellings started in Great Britain between May 1989 and May 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* My right hon. Friend's responsibilities extend only to England. We have nearly doubled public expenditure provision for the Housing Corporation, and enabled housing associations to use private finance; this will make possible a near-doubling of their output over the next three years. Output of dwellings by private builders is determined by the market; there has been a temporary downturn in response to tight monetary policy, which is the only way to get on top of inflation.

City Grants

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria his Department uses for awarding city grants within the private sector.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The criteria used in awarding city grants to the private sector are set out in section two of my Department's city grant guidance notes, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the methods used by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to monitor the disposal of radioactive waste; and what is the current level of monitoring staff in post and the number at the same date in each of the past three years.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* Details of methods used for monitoring radioactivity in the environment including those employed by HMIP, are contained in the following HMSO publications which are available in the Library:

1. "Sampling and Measurement of Radionuclides in the Environment". (Details of the HMIP monitoring programme are shown in the Appendix headed "Establishment F" on page 119).
2. "Monitoring of Radioactivity in the UK Environment".
3. "The Assurance of Quality in Environmental Radionuclide Analyses".

Available information on professional staffing levels in HMIP and prior to that in HM radiochemical inspectorate over the past three years is contained in the Department's management information system returns—MINIS 8-10—also available in the Library. The MINIS 11 report covering 1989-90 will be placed in the Library in due course.

Community Charge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his latest estimates of the numbers of people who have been exempted from the poll tax for each category of exempt persons.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* Estimates of numbers of exempt persons were published in the Population Report (England) laid before the House on 11 January 1990. I shall publish further estimates when data are available from local authority returns.

Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that the guidance notes being prepared by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for part A and B processes of the Environment Protection Bill are comprehensive in respect of what constitutes excessive cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* These notes will not address what constitutes excessive cost. A draft of the guidance setting out the Government's interpretation of the concept of best available techniques not entailing excessive cost—BATNEEC—was placed in the Library on 26 April 1990.

Tenants' Incentive Scheme

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authorities are participating in the tenants' incentive scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list, for each local authority participating in the tenants' incentive scheme *(a)* the amount offered to tenants, *(b)* how many council houses have been vacated and *(c)* the total number of tenants applying to take part in the scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans he has to increase the participation rate in the tenants' incentive scheme.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[pursuant to his reply, 21 June 1990, c. 639]:* The table sets out details of 89 local authorities which have been given approval to operate cash incentive schemes in 1990-91, the maximum expenditure to be incurred, and the grants to be made available to households. Details of vacancies created by these schemes and of grant applications will be supplied to my Department by the local authorities concerned at the end of the year.

Cash incentive schemes can be very valuable in helping existing tenants to move into homes of their own while releasing vacancies for reletting to homeless families. The Department encourages local authorities whose areas would benefit from a cash incentive scheme to bring forward proposals for approval. Once a scheme has been approved, details are published by the local authority and tenants are invited to make applications for grant.

Local authority cash incentive schemes approved 1990-91
89 schemes; maximum expenditure £41·6 million; maximum number of vacancies 2,700

Local authority	*Maximum expenditure 1990-91*	*Maximum number of households assisted*	*Maximum grant for each household*
	£		£
London			
Barnet	600,000	30	20,000
Brent	1·8 million	150	13,000
Bromley	1·5 million	120	13,000
Camden	200,000	20	20,000
Croydon	500,000	33	22,000
Ealing	2·2 million	140	25,000
Enfield	1 million	55	20,000
Hackney	1 million	50	20,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	540,000	30	18,000
Haringey	1·5 million	100	20,000
Harrow	1 million	50	25,000
Havering	150,000	10	16,000
Hillingdon	2·25 million	150	15,000
Hounslow	150,000	20	15,000
Islington	1 million	50	25,000
Kensington and Chelsea	750,000	70	13,000
Lambeth	400,000	25	20,000
Lewisham	1 million	70	15,000
Merton	2 million	140	15,000
Redbridge	3·92 million	140	28,000
Richmond	300,000	30	15,000
Southwark	300,000	34	10,000
Wandsworth	1·95 million	100	22,000
Westminster	2 million	100	20,000
Eastern			
Aylesbury Vale	400,000	20	20,000
Harlow	150,000	15	10,000
Huntingdon	150,000	12	13,000
Luton	200,000	15	13,000
Maldon	100,000	8	12,500
Peterborough	100,000	20	5,000
Rochford	100,000	9	11,250
South Bucks	40,000	4	11,000
St. Albans	150,000	6	25,000
Watford	200,000	15	13,500
East Midlands			
Charnwood	100,000	10	10,000
East Northants	102,000	17	6,000
South Kesteven	500,000	62	8,000
South East			
Adur	100,000	10	10,000

Local authority	Maximum expenditure 1990-91 £	Maximum number of households assisted	Maximum grant for each household £
Arun	50,000	5	10,000
Basingstoke and Deane	250,000	10	25,000
Brighton	301,500	15	20,000
Canterbury	300,000	15	22,500
Cherwell	300,000	25	12,500
Dover	220,000	10	22,000
East Hampshire	100,000	10	10,000
Elmbridge	240,000	12	20,000
Fareham	107,475	5	21,495
Gillingham	70,000	5	15,000
Gravesham	100,000	10	10,000
Hart	200,000	8	25,000
Hastings	200,000	20	10,000
Havant	150,000	10	15,000
Horsham	250,000	14	17,000
Hove	500,000	50	10,000
Lewes	250,000	25	10,000
Maidstone	500,000	20	25,000
New Forest	250,000	15	17,000
Oxford	500,000	33	15,000
Portsmouth	1,000,000	50	20,000
Reading	300,000	15	20,000
Reigate and Banstead	300,000	15	20,000
Rother	400,000	17	23,000
Runnymede	100,000	8	14,000
Rushmoor	100,000	14	8,000
Shepway	200,000	9	21,600
Slough	500,000	38	13,000
Southampton	200,000	14	15,000
Spelthorne	200,000	8	24,000
Tandridge	252,000	20	12,000
Test Valley	100,000	10	10,000
Tonbridge and Malling	500,000	20	25,000
Tunbridge Wells	250,000	11	24,000
Vale of White Horse	150,000	10	15,000
Wealden	200,000	10	20,000
West Oxfordshire	100,000	5	20,000
Woking	135,000	10	13,500
Worthing	240,000	16	15,000
South west			
Exeter	50,000	5	10,000
Kennet	100,000	10	10,000
Purbeck	75,000	10	10,000
Mendip	120,000	12	10,000
North Cornwall	45,000	6	7,500
Poole	50,000	7	7,500
Salisbury	100,000	10	10,000
South Somerset	100,000	10	10,000
Taunton Deane	200,000	20	10,000
Teignbridge	7,500	1	7,500
West Midlands			
Stafford	300,000	40	10,000
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Hambleton	100,000	12	10,000

HEALTH

Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what income the agreement between his Department and Porton International Ltd. involving the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research has generated in each full year of its existence.

Mr. Dorrell: There are no agreements between the Department and Porton International plc but there are various agreements between the public health laboratory service board and companies in the Porton International group concerning the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, one of which is an agreement on distributorship and marketing of certain products. The amount of income directly generated by this agreement cannot be separately identified, but total receipts from companies in the Porton International group are as follows:

Year ending	£
March	
1985	6,300
1986	165,644
1987	824,525
1988	1,404,613
1989	1,647,370
1990	2,719,150
Total	6,767,602

Porton International

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account he will be taking in considering the bid from Porton International Ltd for the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Porton of any previous advice offered by his Department to companies in the Porton International group about the centre.

Mr. Dorrell: We will naturally bear in mind the content of earlier discussions.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings have been held between representatives of the Department and representatives of Porton products Ltd or Porton International Ltd since January 1984; and whether any of these meetings were attended by Ministers in the Department.

Mr. Dorrell: There have been a number of meetings between representatives of the Department and representatives of Porton International plc and its associated companies since January 1984. Ministers were present when appropriate.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects a new fermentation unit to be installed at the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research; and what has been the cause of the delay in its installation.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The arrangements for the installation of a new fermentation unit at the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research depend primarily on the centre's future functions and ownership. Until these matters are determined, it would not be sensible to proceed with the installation of a new unit.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *672*, on current licences held by the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, now many of the licences are covered by the right of marketing and distributorship agreement between Porton Products and the public health laboratory service.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* Eighteen of the licences relate directly to products or procedures in the distributorship and marketing agreement.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what valuations of plant, equipment, collections and good will have been carried out at, or on behalf of, the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research; and on what dates.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* A valuation of the land, buildings, plant and fixed equipment at the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research was completed on 14 March 1990. A valuation of other equipment is currently in hand.

In-patients

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of in-patients treated in *(a)* 1982 and *(b)* 1988-89 for all the district health authorities in the northern region, giving the percentage change in each case.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table.

In-patient cases treated[1], Northern Region Health Authority, 1982 and 1988-89

Health Authority	*1982*	*1988-89*	*Change*	
			Number	*Per cent.*
Hartlepool	14,539	18,857	4,318	30
North Tees	21,082	23,833	2,751	13
South Tees	40,552	55,464	14,912	37
East Cumbria	20,618	25,764	5,146	25
South Cumbria	17,313	22,483	5,170	30
West Cumbria	13,572	15,682	2,110	16
Darlington	14,987	18,858	3,871	26
Durham	15,825	18,991	3,166	20
North West Durham	12,216	12,603	387	3
South West Durham	14,127	17,620	3,493	25
Northumberland	24,973	28,433	3,460	14
Gateshead	18,336	20,685	2,349	13
Newcastle	72,968	92,094	19,126	26
North Tyneside	14,842	20,387	5,545	37
South Tyneside	14,558	17,604	3,046	21
Sunderland	45,559	51,675	6,116	13
Northern RHA	376,067	461,033	84,966	23

Source: SH3 return 1982 SH3a return 1988-89
[1] Discharges and Deaths.

Salmonella

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many outbreaks of salmonella have occurred in national health service hospitals in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The provisional totals for 1989 and to the week ending 13 July 1990 for reports to the public health laboratory service communicable disease surveillance centre of outbreaks of salmonellosis in national health service hospitals in England and Wales are nine and three respectively. Totals for previous years for comparison are 1986 = 19; 1987 = 11; 1988 = 11.

Alzheimer's Disease

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who are suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other dementia who are aged *(a)* under 40 years, *(b)* 50 to 60 years, *(c)* 60 to 70 years, *(d)* 70 to 80 years, *(e)* 80 to 90 years and *(f)* over 90 years; and what proportion that figure is per 1,000 of the population in each band.

Mr. Dorrell: The only information available centrally is the number of hospital episodes. The table shows estimated number of finished consultant episodes—ordinary and day case—in National Health Service hospitals and units in England, for the 1988-89 financial year where the diagnosis was senile and presenile dementia —ICD 290—and the corresponding rates per 1,000 population.

Finished consultant episodes (ordinary admissions and day cases) and treatment rates for ICD 290 to National Health Service Hospitals and Units, in England, during 1988-89

	Aged less than 45	*Aged 45 to 64*	*Aged 65 to 74*	*Aged 75 to 84*	*Aged over 85*	*Total*
Males						
Hospital episodes	100	1,000	4,000	9,100	3,200	17,400
Population (Millions)	15·18	5·03	1·87	0·94	0·17	23·19
Rate (per 1,000)	0·01	0·20	2·13	9·69	19·08	0·75
Females						
Hospital episodes	100	1,000	4,800	15,100	10,300	31,300
Population (Millions)	14·72	5·14	2·34	1·64	0·51	24·35
Rate (per 1,000)	0·01	0·19	2·05	9·23	20·17	1·29

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the mental illness specific grant, respite care and Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

Mr. Dorrell: It is the Government's policy that all people suffering from mental illness, including Alzheimer's disease and similar dementias, should benefit from an appropriate range of services, including respite care. The Government will introduce a specific grant to social services authorities from 1 April 1991 to encourage them to increase the level of social care available to this group of clients.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what methodology is used to assess the incidence of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government are not aware of any studies to assess the incidence of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia.

Bracken

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the letter of 22 May, POH 3/2342/31, to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what has been the response to the recommendation made by his Department's independent advisory committee on the carcinogenicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment for long-term research into bracken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has commissioned research to study the possible transmission of carcinogens from bracken into the human food chain. It is hoped that the results of the study will be available next year. The Department of the Environment is funding research into the distribution, growth and spread of bracken in the United Kingdom.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is available to him on the adequacy of interpreter services provided by local authorities for people with disabilities who are unable to speak English and, in particular, for those who have additional communication handicaps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Comprehensive information about interpreter services provided by individual local authorities is not held centrally, but it is unlikely that interpreters are appointed solely to help disabled people. A number of local authorities have interpreter and translator posts, to deal with a wide range of business, funded under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966. Departmental guidance encourages social services departments to consider the use of professional interpreters where appropriate and the departmentally-funded race equality unit compiled a list last year of some 30 translation and interpretation units run or funded by local authorities. People with additional communication problems tend to look for help to health authorities, a few of which have appointed either multilingual staff to work with speech therapists or speech therapists who themselves speak other languages.

World Health Organisation Food Agency

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the circulars issued by the World Health Organisation food agency in Geneva since 1983; and what action has been taken on the basis of each one by his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: The World Health Organisation has no single agency with sole responsibility for food. However, through a variety of routes the World Health Organisation issues advice and information from time to time on matters related to food. In each case this is carefully considered, in the light of specialist scientific opinion, for its implications for food and food safety policy in this country.

Etidronate

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there are any plans to license prescription of the drug Etidronate; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Product licences for Sodium Etidronate were granted in 1987 for use in the treatment of Pagets disease and hypercalcaemia.

Welfare Milk Scheme

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effect of the implementation of the revised welfare milk scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has kept the effects of the amendments to the welfare milk reimbursement scheme under constant review since their implementation in January. My noble Friend Baroness Hooper has been in correspondence with the main organisations in the dairy and retail trade and has met representatives of the milk marketing boards and the Dairy Trade Federation—DTF. Departmental officials have also had a number of meetings with the DTF branches of the National Dairymen's Association and other interested bodies.

Arrangements to share the cost of discounted reimbursement prices are already in operation between most processors and distributors. Similar arrangements between processors and producers have yet to be agreed between the Dairy Trade Federations and the milk marketing boards. The boards have indicated that the effect of the Welfare Food (Amendment) Regulations January 1990, can be taken into account under the established joint committee procedure for negotiating changes in the board's selling price.

Most recently, the Dairy Trade Federation made formal proposals to the Department for future discounted reimbursement arrangements for welfare milk supplies. We have now authorised negotiations to proceed on the basis of these proposals. The first meeting took place this week.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table for each of the district health authorities in England showing the cost of administrative and clerical staff as a proportion of net revenue expenditure, respectively, for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 8 June 1990]:* Information derived from the 1988-89 annual accounts of district health authorities in England has been placed in the Library.

The administrative and clerical staff group within the national health service covers a diversity of grades including catering, laundry and other managers and certain ambulance officers as well as administrative, clerical and secretarial staff as such. A number of hospital staff are employed at local levels on clerical and secretarial grades but in fact provide essential support in various departments and without them patient treatment cannot effectively take place. Some such staff work in direct support of clinicians and as ward clerks, releasing qualified staff to carry out tasks for which they are trained.

Private Patients (Bad Debts)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for each district health authority, regional health authority and special health authority, the amount written off in respect of bad debts from *(a)* private in-patients and *(b)* private out-patients for the latest available year.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 14 June 1990]:* The information requested derived from the 1988-89 annual accounts—the latest available—of regional and district health authorities in England together with those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals has been placed in the Library. Sums written off in a particular financial year may include amounts due from earlier years.

We expect health authorities to take all reasonable action to collect their debts. For 1988-89 the total sums written off in respect of private patient debts—£575,819 in-patients and £157,206 out-patients—represented approximately 1 per cent. of the equivalent income figures —£62,422,151 and £14,473,125 net of sums written off—for that year and which represented a valuable resource for the health authorities concerned.

Food Hygiene

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about progress on the proposed amendments to the Food Hygiene Regulations.

Mr. Dorrell: I have today laid before Parliament the Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations 1990—S.I. 1431. These will introduce for the first time a system of temperature controls throughout the food chain, and especially during storage, distribution and retail sale in order to minimise the opportunity for growth of pathogenic micro-organisms such as listeria and salmonella. There will be a phased implementation of the provisions to allow all businesses time to ensure that their refrigeration equipment can keep food at the required temperatures.

From 1 April 1991 all foods covered by the Regulations must be kept at or below 8 deg. Centigrade. The foods concerned include all ready prepared meals, soft cheeses, cooked meats, pates and prepared salads.

From 1 April 1993, the foods which are most at risk of contamination with listeria must be kept at or below 5 deg. Centigrade. These foods include soft cheeses, pates and other prepared foods which are to be eaten without further cooking.

From 1 April 1992, small delivery vehicles—less than 7·5 tonnes gross weight—will be required to deliver foods in the controlled categories within the 8 deg. Centigrade limit but the regulations as laid will exempt small delivery vehicles making local deliveries from complying with the 5 deg. Centigrade requirement. This provision will be kept under review as the technology develops which would allow small delivery vehicles to comply.

In all cases there is a 2 deg. Centigrade tolerance to the specified temperatures to allow for the defrost cycle or for the temporary breakdown of the equipment, movement of the food or a step in processing.

There are exemptions from these temperature provisions for example for canned food and dehydrated foods. Freshly prepared foods do not have to comply with the temperature requirements for limited periods of time.

The regulations also require foods which are to be served hot to be kept at or above 63 deg. Centigrade.

The regulations contain detailed provisions, so that everyone affected will know what is required of them, including manufacturers, retailers, caterers, distributors and enforcement officers, the Department of Health is consulting on guidelines for that purpose. These will give details of the foods which are subject to the temperature controls and suggest ways of monitoring refrigeration equipment to ensure that the temperatures are being met. Copies of the draft guidelines will be made available in the Library of the House.

The temperature control provisions introduced by these regulations are a further step forward in ensuring the safety of our food. They are the first statutory temperature controls for most food businesses. We intend to keep their operation and effectiveness under review in the light of experience and any related European Community measures subsequently introduced.

Hospitals

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of *(a)* hospital beds, *(b)* nurses, *(c)* consultants and *(d)* all administrative staff in the national health service hospitals in (i) England and (ii) the Basildon and Thurrock health authority or its predecessor for each of the years 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell *[pursuant to the reply, 6 July 1990, c. 710-12]:* I regret that one of the tables published contained an error. The corrected table for Basildon and Thurrock DHA is as follows:

Basildon and Thurrock DHA[1]

Year	*Average daily number of available hospital beds*[2]	*Discharges and deaths*[2]	*Hospital nursing and midwifery staff (WTE)*[3]	*Hospital medical and dental consultants (WTE)*[4]	*Administration and clerical staff (WTE)*
1960	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1966	2,360	14,930	n/a	n/a	n/a
1970	2,430	19,010	n/a	n/a	n/a

Year	Average daily number of available hospital beds[2]	Discharges and deaths[2]	Hospital nursing and midwifery staff (WTE)[3]	Hospital medical and dental consultants (WTE)[4]	Administration and clerical staff (WTE)
1975	1,860	22,920	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980	1,880	29,450	[5]1,820	n/a	[5]310
1985	1,950	33,300	2,140	n/a	490
1988	1,720	33,710	1,970	n/a	520

[1] All figures are rounded to the nearest ten (10).
[2] For years 1966 and 1970 the data is for Tilbury and South East Essex and South Ockenden hospital management committee.
[3] There was a change in nurses' working hours in 1980-81 from 40 to 37·5 hours per week. This has not been taken account of in the calculations.
[4] Figures are not available as consultant's contracts ae not directly held by non-teaching district health authorities.
[5] Due to reorganisation of district boundaries in 1982, 1980 district data is not directly comparable to later years.
n/a = not available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Offences

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give separately for magistrates courts and Crown courts for *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* for 1989 the number of cases involving non-scheduled offences in which pleas of not guilty were entered; in how many of these cases verdicts of not guilty were returned; and in how many of these cases trial was by jury.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]: (a)* Figures for 1988 are:

	Magistrates courts	Crown courts
Plea: Not guilty	4,696	188
Verdict: Not guilty	3,209	91

(b) Figures for 1989 are:

	Magistrates courts	Crown courts
Plea: Not guilty	4,006	144
Verdict: Not guilty	3,072	91

All Crown court cases involving non-scheduled offences where not guilty pleas were entered were tried by jury. Figures for magistrates courts include all offences with a plea of not guilty and therefore include a small number of 'terrorist-type' offences.

Prison Population

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the size of the prison population in Northern Ireland at the end of 1989, divided into terrorist-type offenders and other offenders categorised by sex in the groups: under 18 years old, 18 to 25 years, 25 to 30 years, 30 to 40 years, 40 to 50 years, 50 to 60 years and over 60 years; and if he will give a breakdown of the length of sentence being served by each age group under the headings (i) up to three months, (ii) over three months and up to six months, (iii) over six months and under 12 months, (iv) over 12 months and under 18 months, (v) over 18 months and up to four years, (vi) over four years and up to eight years, (vii) over eight years, and (viii) life.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* The size of the prison population at 28 December 1989 was 1,371, including 16 female prisoners.

The statistical tables detail the breakdown by sex and age. Statistical information is given for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, information on terrorist-type offenders is not readily available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Sentenced male prison population, 28 December 1989

Sentence group	Ages: Less than 18 years	18 to under 25 years	25 to under 30 years	30 to under 40 years	40 to under 50 years	50 to under 60 years	60 years plus	Total
Up to 3 months								
Scheduled	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	3
Non-scheduled	0	12	3	2	1	0	0	18
3 to 6 months								
Scheduled	0	5	2	1	1	0	0	9
Non-scheduled	5	16	7	7	6	0	0	41
6 to 12 months								
Scheduled	1	7	2	1	0	0	0	11
Non-scheduled	3	43	14	15	5	1	1	82
12 to 18 months								
Scheduled	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
Non-scheduled	1	8	2	1	1	1	1	15
18 months to 4 years								
Scheduled	1	101	34	26	4	0	0	166
Non-scheduled	3	30	20	22	14	4	1	94

Sentence group	Ages: Less than 18 years	18 to under 25 years	25 to under 30 years	30 to under 40 years	40 to under 50 years	50 to under 60 years	60 years plus	Total
4 to 8 years								
Scheduled	0	64	56	46	8	1	1	176
Non-scheduled	0	11	12	20	10	2	2	57
Over 8 years								
Scheduled	0	51	85	91	16	4	0	247
Non-scheduled	2	5	7	11	8	3	1	37
Life								
Scheduled	0	24	46	252	68	12	3	405
Non-scheduled	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	16	378	292	498	142	29	10	1,365

Sentenced female prison population, 28 December 1989

Sentence Group	Ages: 18-Under 25	25-Under 30	30-Under 40	40-Under 50	50-Under 60	Total
Up to 3 months						
Non-Scheduled	0	0	1	0	0	1
3-6 Months						
Scheduled	0	2	0	0	0	2
6-12 Months						
Non-Scheduled	0	1	1	0	1	3
18 Months-4 Years						
Scheduled	1	0	0	0	0	1
4-8 Years						
Scheduled	1	0	0	0	0	1
Over 8 Years						
Scheduled	0	1	1	0	0	2
Life						
Scheduled	1	2	1	2	0	6
Total	3	6	4	2	1	16

Notes:
1. Age refers to age of prisoner on 28 December 1989.
2. Includes YOC prisoners.
3. Life includes those detained at pleasure of the Secretary of State.
4. Includes fine defaulters and civil prisoners.

School Closures

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many schools in Northern Ireland of less than 50 pupils closed in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:-

	Number
1975	16
1980	10
1985	10
1989	2

Our policy remains to support the rationalisation of small schools since this is in the best educational interests of pupils. However, in considering proposals for rationalisation we take into account the likely effects on local communities, particularly in isolated areas.

Fair Employment

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* those firms and employers which are registered with the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Commission for each district council in the county of Tyrone; and if he will indicate for each such firm and employer the number of employees;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* those firms and employers which are registered with the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Commission for each district council in the county of Fermanagh; and if he will indicate for each such firm and employer the number of employees;

(3) if he will list in the *Official Report*, those firms and employers which are registered with the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Commission for each district council in County Londonderry; and if he will indicate for each such firm and employer the number of employees;

(4) if he will list in the *Official Report* those firms and employers which are registered with the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Commission for each district council in County Down; and if he will indicate for each such firm and employer the number of employees;

(5) if he will list in the *Official Report* those firms and employers which are registered with the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Commission for each district council in County Antrim; and if he will indicate for each such firm and employer the number of employees;

(6) if he will list in the *Official Report* those firms and employers which are registered with the Northern Ireland

Fair Employment Commission for each district council in the county of Armagh; and if he will indicate for each such firm and employer the number of employees.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. I am advised, however, that the Fair Employment Commission has provided all Northern Ireland Members of Parliament with a draft of its alphabetical register of concerns indicating the number of employees in each concern.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the Fair Employment Commission to release information on community composition from individual monitoring returns from employers.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The commission has not yet announced its intentions in relation to releasing such information.

ACE Project (Londonderry)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the ACE project sponsored by the Inner City Trust in Londonderry falls within the Northern Ireland fair employment legislation.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* As a sponsor under the Action for Community Employment programme the Inner City Trust, Londonderry is the employer of ACE workers. Consequently the trust's ACE project falls within the Fair Employment (NI) Acts 1976 and 1989.

Housing (Repairs and Improvements)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of *(a)* repair and *(b)* improvement grant applications (i) approved and (ii) refused by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in each district council area in each year since 1980.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The matters raised are for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Information on the individual grant types or of approvals and refusals of grant in district council areas is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Employment Training

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has received a report by Camden training centre on long-term savings in the social security budgets arising from their training provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have not, as yet, received a copy of the report.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research has been done on the savings for social security budgets arising from the employment training and other Government training schemes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The monitoring of the employment training and of other Government training schemes, including all aspects of expenditure on them, is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many Independent Living foundation grants were made to people *(a)* under 75 years and *(b)* 75 years or over in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security pursuant to his answer on 4 July, *Official Report*, column *607*, what increases in national insurance contribution rates would be needed to pay for a basic retirement pension of £58·65 for a single person and £94·05 for a couple if the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund were reintroduced at the same rate as in 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There would be no increase needed in national insurance contributions were the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund to be reintroduced at its 1979 level. However a supplement at that level is equivalent to, for example, nearly 5p in the pound on basic rate income tax in 1990-91.

TRANSPORT

Trading Standards Officers

145. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from trading standards officers on the need for further legislation to tackle unroadworthy vehicles.

146. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from trading standards officers on the need for further legislation to tackle unroadworthy vehicles.

Mr. Atkins: Trading standards officers want us to strengthen that part of the Road Traffic Act 1988 which makes it an offence to sell unroadworthy vehicles. We agree and propose to amend the Act at the earliest legislative opportunity.

They have also asked for powers to inspect used cars on dealers' premises. This requires special expertise and we have pointed out that these powers are already available to authorised examiners including examiners from the vehicle inspectorate. The vehicle inspectorate is keen to respond to any requests from individual trading standards officers.

M2 Motorway

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about proposals for widening the M2 motorway; and when consideration will be given to making it three lanes each way as far as Faversham.

Mr. Atkins: The scheme to widen the M2 between junctions 1 and 3 was extended earlier this year to include the section between junctions 3 and 4. In the light of this the programme for the whole scheme is being reviewed.

Meanwhile my Department's consultants are continuing to investigate possible options for carrying out proposed widening.

My Department has no plans at present to widen the M2 beyond junction 4 to Faversham but the need to do so will be kept under review.

Newport Docks (Traffic Controls)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the safety implications of Associated British Ports' intermittent discontinuing of traffic controls on Newport docks and the River Usk estuary.

Mr. McLoughlin: The operation from Newport pierhead of a radio information service for vessels is a matter for Associated British Ports. I understand that this information service is at present operated for 24 hours a day on weekdays, and also at the weekend whenever vessels are using Newport docks. During the periods of operation the service is available at the request of Newport harbour commissioners also to vessels using the River Usk. Vessels are in any event obliged to comply with the Collision Regulations as modified by harbour byelaws relating to navigation within the area of the relevant harbour authority.

Car Telephones

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he i as on regulations prevailing in other European Community countries to restrict the use of car telephones by drivers of moving vehicles.

Mr. Atkins: I deplore the use of hand-held telephones by drivers while their vehicle is moving. A survey conducted last year by the European Commission found that no member country had specific legislation controlling the use of in-car telephones. Like the United Kingdom, our European partners found that their general offences of driving without proper control or attention gave police adequate powers for dealing with irresponsible drivers.

A249 (Improvements)

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest forecast for the programme for the improvement of the A249 from the M2 to the Kingsferry bridge.

Mr. Atkins: Draft proposals for the Iwade bypass—Bobbing-Kingsferry—were published in March. They will need to be considered at a public inquiry—we hope towards the end of the year. Thereafter, the programme will depend on the progress that can be made with the statutory procedures, but subject to that I hope it will be possible to start work in 1993 for completion by about 1995. The present programme for the improvement of the adjoining section of A249 between the A2 and M2 is about six months behind that for the Iwade bypass.

DVLC (Information)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list *(a)* the persons or types of persons that may obtain names and addresses from Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre files in Swansea and *(b)* the number of disclosures of names and addresses that they have received over the last year; what action his Department takes if it discovers that a recipient of information should not have received the name and address; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: *(a)* Regulation 15 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 requires the Secretary of State to provide, free of charge from the vehicle register, names and addresses of vehicle keepers to the police and to local authorities for use in connection with an offence. This information must also be made available to those who can show "reasonable cause" for their inquiry—generally matters relating directly to the use of the vehicle—and pay the prescribed fee.

Information from the drivers' register at DVLC is provided to the driver, a third party who has the driver's consent, the police, other law enforcement agencies and others registered for disclosure under the Data Protection Act 1984. Names and addresses alone are rarely disclosed.

(b) In the financial year 1989-90, there were about 13 million disclosures from the vehicles register and about 1·3 million from the drivers register. A complete breakdown is not readily available but the tables attached show an estimated breakdown of disclosures from both the vehicles and drivers registers.

Name and address disclosures—Financial year 1989-90

	Number
VEHICLES REGISTER	
Inquiries by tape interchange	
Metropolitan Police Central Ticket Office	1,687,789
Police, Ticket Offices, Local Authorities	3,493,634
Vehicle Manufacturers' Safety Recalls	6,031,531
Manual inquiries	
Police	166,263
Local Authorities and Government Departments	1,385,469
Public/insurance companies and finance houses	252,696
TOTAL	13,017,382
DRIVERS REGISTER	
Police and Courts	1,000,000
Internal DVLC enquiries which, inter alia, are used to provide information to drivers, third parties (with the driver's consent) and other Government Departments including Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue	295,000
Other parts of the Department of Transport and the statutory licensing authorities in the traffic areas	40,000
TOTAL	1,335,000

If the Department discovers that there has been an invalid disclosure of information the action it takes depends on the circumstances of the case. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind perhaps he will let me have details.

Rear Seat Belts

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy with regard to the compulsory wearing of seat belts in the rear of cars; and what are the latest figures for deaths of, and serious injuries to, unrestrained rear seat passengers.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988, a total of 307 rear seat passengers who were unrestrained or not reported as having been

restrained were killed and 3,756 seriously injured. Research shows that some two-thirds of these casualties could have been saved if all rear seat passengers wore seat belts.

Mandatory wearing by children was introduced in September 1989. Now that the majority of cars have rear belts fitted, the time is approaching when it would be reasonable to consider the introduction of mandatory wearing by adults.

Newbury Bypass

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is now able to give the likely route for the Newbury bypass.

Mr. Atkins: Following a public inquiry between June and November 1988 into the draft proposals for a bypass of the A34 at Newbury, my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for the Environment are announcing their joint decision tomorrow. I have arranged for my hon. Friend to receive a copy of the decision which is being sent to all those who submitted objections and representations to the draft proposals and to those who attended or were represented at the inquiries.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Between 11 November 1987 and 1 July 1990 the Department received 18,145 subject access inquiries, of which 18,122 were inquiries made of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's 86 million driver and vehicle licence records held there on computer; 303,400 transactions are handled each day at the Agency. No prior estimate had been made of the number of subject access inquiries. We have no plans to reconsider the levels of fees charged.

London Underground

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of station staff on London Underground by category, for each of the years 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter which falls within the day-to-day management responsibility of London Underground Limited.

Congestion (London)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what immediate steps his Department will be taking to alleviate London's congestion problems;

(2) if he will make a statement on London's congestion problems.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are determined to ensure that London has the transport system it needs to remain a pre-eminent financial and business centre.

The number of people commuting to work in central London has increased over the last eight years, reflecting the success of the Government's overall economic policies and the transformation of Docklands. This has sharply increased demand for rail and underground services. There has been a slight increase in road traffic.

To meet this demand, we have backed a £2·2 billion programme of investment by London Transport over the next three years—nearly double in real terms investment for the last three years.

British Rail plan to invest £1·2 billion in their Network SouthEast sector over the next three years, a 30 per cent. increase in real terms over the previous three years.

It is not our policy to make it easier for commuters to drive to work in central London. Our priorities for the road system are to improve the north circular road and provide better access to east London and docklands, to tackle accident blackspots and bottlenecks, to support more effective parking controls and to get traffic out of environmentally sensitive areas. This work is estimated to cost nearly £3 billion over the next 10 years.

We shall shortly be consulting on detailed proposals for priority routes and other measures to enable traffic in London to flow more freely and safely. Particular attention will be given to measures to make bus travel more attractive.

M40

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details in the *Official Report* of the problems which have arisen on the unopened section of the M40 motorway between Gaydon and Banbury; whose financial responsibility the rectification of these problems will be; whether rectification of the problems will delay the opening of this particular section of the motorway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We have identified a problem of heave in the lime stabilised capping layer at some location on the M40 Banbury IV contract under construction between Gaydon and Banbury. Investigations are being carried out into the cause and extent of the problem. Financial responsibility for any necessary remedial works will be for determination under the contract in the light of the ongoing investigations. Any remedial works which may be necessary are not expected to delay the opening of the scheme.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Industrial Investment

147. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the per capita level of industrial investment in 1989 in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on the comparable figures for West Germany, France, the Netherlands and Italy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Following are the relevant data:

	Industrial[1] investment in 1989 $ per capita
United Kingdom	1,987
United States	2,057
Germany	2,474
France	2,096

	Industrial[1] investment in 1989 $ per capita
Italy	[2]
Netherlands	[2]

[1] Defined as private non-residential investment.
[2] Not available.
Sources: OECD Quarterly National Accounts.
OECD Main Economic Indicators.
CSO Economic Trends.

Balance of Trade

148. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the balance of trade in *(a)* the first quarter of 1990 and *(b)* the first quarter of 1979.

149. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the balance of trade in *(a)* the first quarter of 1990 and *(b)* the first quarter of 1979.

150. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the balance of trade in *(a)* the first quarter of 1990 and *(b)* the first quarter of 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information may be found in table A3 of the Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics and its 1989 mid-year supplement available from the Library of the House, or on the Central Statistical Office database which may be accessed through the Library.

Earnings

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many taxpayers he estimates earned more than £18,200 and less than £23,705 in 1989-90; and how much revenue his Department derived from taxing this band;

(2) how many taxpayers he estimates earned between *(a)* £16,000 and £17,000, *(b)* £17,000 and £18,200 and *(c)* £20,000 and £23,705 in 1989-90; and how much revenue his Department derived from taxing each band.

Mr. Ryder: Estimates for 1990-91 are as follows:

Earnings from employment, 1990-91

Earnings band	*Numbers of taxpayers[1] with: earnings in the band*	*earnings above the band*	*Liability to income tax on earnings in the band[2]*
£ pa	*thousands*	*thousands*	*£ billion*
£16,001-£17,000	800	4,050	1·1
£17,001-£18,200	750	3,300	1·1
£18,201-£20,000	600	2,700	1·3
£20,001-£23,705	1,150	1,550	1·8

[1] Taxpayers aged under 65, husbands and wives counted separately.
[2] Treated earnings as the lowest slice of income.

The estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional.

Taxation

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will restore immediately the tax incentive for ship owners placing new orders.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no plans to do so. The present capital allowances regime is already more generous for ships than commercial depreciation. Ships have an economic life of 15-20 years, but for tax purposes they can be substantially written off within eight years.

Shipping

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Government will take steps to provide the British shipping industry with assistance equal to that provided by other nations for their tonnage.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no present plans to do so. Many of the countries who assist shipping have rates of corporation tax which are higher than the United Kingdom's.

Mortgage Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the median mortgage qualifying for MIRAS and the current annual cost of servicing it.

Mr. Ryder: In 1990-91 the estimated median outstanding mortgage is £25,500. At an interest rate of 15·3 per cent. The interest payment net of basic rate tax relief on an endowment mortgage of this size would amount to £2,926 per year.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount of mortgage finance raised each year since 1979 on the security of dwellings for purposes other than buying that dwelling.

Mr. Ryder: Full information is not available in the form requested. However, information for 1985 and subsequent years on net advances by building societies secured on residential property is published by the Central Statistical Office in Financial Statistics, June 1990, table 6.9. Information on building society advances secured on dwellings is also contained in Table 7 of the annual report of the Building Societies' Commission for 1987-88 and corresponding tables in previous reports of the commission and the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies. Corresponding information is not published for banks and other mortgage lenders.

Privatisation

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his target for privatisation proceeds in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Treasury has this morning sold 68 million ordinary shares in British Gas plc, realising a total of £149,727,500.

Of those 68 million shares, 54 million Ordinary Shares were sold to SG Warburg and Co, Ltd. at a price of 219·75p per share. This price was the result of a competitive tender amongst selected market makers, and represented the highest unconditional bid in that tender. Separately, 14 million ordinary shares were sold to British Gas Employee Shares Trustees Ltd. at a price of 221·875p per share. Stamp duty/stamp duty reserve tax will be paid by the purchasers.

Under the terms of the 1986 British Gas offer for sale the Government retained a number of shares to meet bonus share entitlements. The bonus shares issue took place in January 1990. The shares sold today represented

that part of those originally retained which proved surplus to requirements. The Government stated, in the prospectus for the 1986 Offer, that it would sell any surplus shares.

The Treasury consulted British Gas plc prior to the sale. The Treasury was advised on this sale by NM Rothschild & Sons Ltd.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy continues to hold a special share in British Gas. His Department also retains a small number of ordinary shares in order to meet any unresolved bonus share entitlements.

The almost £150 million raised by this sale will contribute to the £5 billion target for privatisation proceeds this year.

WALES

GCSE Examinations

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, in rank order, the percentage of all pupils gaining a GCSE pass A to C in *(a)* mathematics, *(b)* English, *(c)* a modern European language and *(d)* Welsh for each education authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the percentages of all pupils in schools gaining GCSE grades A to C in the given subjects is contained in the tables.

In order to avoid double counting of pupils sitting more than one foreign language examination the percentages of those taking French and German are given separately.

Percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grade A to C in English, Summer 1989[1]

Welsh counties	*Percentage of pupils*
Dyfed	44·0
South Glamorgan	39·7
Powys	38·7
Gwynedd	36·2
West Glamorgan	35·4
Gwent	34·4
Mid Glamorgan	34·0
Clwyd	29·3

[1] As a proportion of pupils in all schools.
Source: Welsh Joint Education Committee. In the summer examinations of 1989, the WJEC accounted for 95 per cent. of GCSE examinations sat by pupils in Welsh centres.

Percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grade A to C in mathematics, Summer 1989[1]

Welsh counties	*Percentage of pupils*
Clwyd	35·8
South Glamorgan	35·0
Powys	33·3
West Glamorgan	32·3
Dyfed	31·3
Gwent	30·8
Gwynedd	28·9
Mid Glamorgan	28·5

[1] As a proportion of pupils in all schools.
Source: Welsh Joint Education Committee. In the summer examinations of 1989, the WJEC accounted for 95 per cent. of GCSE examinations sat by pupils in Welsh centres.

Percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A to C in French, Summer 1989[1]

Welsh counties	*Percentage of pupils*
Gwent	16·6
Dyfed	15·4
South Glamorgan	15·0
Powys	14·2
Clwyd	12·1
Gwynedd	11·6
Mid Glamorgan	9·0
West Glamorgan	5·7

[1] As a proportion of pupils in all schools.
Source: Welsh Joint Education Committee. In the summer examinations of 1989, the WJEC accounted for 95 per cent. of GCSE examinations sat by pupils in Welsh centres.

Percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A to C in German, Summer 1989[1]

Welsh counties	*Percentage of pupils*
South Glamorgan	4·7
Gwent	4·5
Dyfed	3·4
Powys	3·3
Clwyd	2·6
Gwynedd	2·6
Mid Glamorgan	1·6
West Glamorgan	1·3

[1] As a proportion of pupils in all schools.
Source: Welsh Joint Education Committee. In the summer examinations of 1989, the WJEC accounted for 95 per cent. of GCSE examinations sat by pupils in Welsh centres.

Percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A to C in Welsh as a first language, Summer 1989[1]

Welsh counties	*Percentage of pupils*
Gwynedd	15·3
Dyfed	7·5
Clwyd	2·0
Powys	1·9
South Glamorgan	1·9
West Glamorgan	1·8
Mid Glamorgan	1·5
Gwent	—

[1] As a proportion of pupils in all schools.
Source: Welsh Joint Education Committee. In the summer examinations of 1989, the WJEC accounted for 95 per cent. of GCSE examinations sat by pupils in Welsh centres.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each family practitioner committee in Wales the budget his Department has allocated to it for the current financial year.

Mr. Grist: About 90 per cent. of the financial provision for family practitioner services is not cash limited and not subject to allocation. However, each family practitioner committee is responsible for managing two separate cash allocations. Each has an allocation to meet their current revenue administration costs. A further cash allocation has been delegated to FPCs towards the costs of practice staff employed, and premises improvements undertaken, by general medical practitioners.

The cash limits issued to FPCs at the outset of this financial year are detailed in the tables.

Table 1
Family practitioner committee administration revenue allocation

Family practitioner committee	*Cash allocation (net) £'000*
Clwyd	769
Dyfed	695
Gwent	871
Gwynedd	579
Mid Glamorgan	1,013
Powys	402
South Glamorgan	990
West Glamorgan	689

Table 2
Practice premises and staff allocation

Family practitioner committee	*Cash allocation £'000*
Clwyd	2,323
Dyfed	3,541
Gwent	3,614
Gwynedd	2,218
Mid Glamorgan	3,833
Powys	1,532
South Glamorgan	3,492
West Glamorgan	2,413

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has received two requests for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act. It did not attempt to estimate the number of requests which might be received, and at present there are no plans to reconsider the level of subject access fees.

Health Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to require health authorities in Wales to provide full information and to consult local communities on *(a)* planning of services and *(b)* financial planning on an annual basis.

Mr. Grist: No. The Community Health Council Regulations 1985—SI 1985 No. 304—require health authorities to consult community health councils on any substantial development of, or variation in, the services provided in the district. In addition, the regulations require health authorities to provide such information about the planning and operation of health services in the district as a CHC may reasonably need in order to carry out its duties.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the individuals and bodies which have commented on his proposal to reduce the number of community health councils in Wales; and how many were for a reduction and how many against a reduction.

Mr. Grist: The table lists the individuals and bodies who responded to the consultation paper "Review of Community Health Councils in Wales". Of those who expressed an opinion on the matter, 184 were against the proposed reduction in the number of community health councils and 14 were in favour.

League of Friends of St. David's Hospital
St. Davids Foundation
Ynys Mon Muscular Dystrophy
Soroptomist International of Dolgellau and District
National Old Age Pensioners Association of Wales
Soroptimist International—Aberystwyth and District
Age Concern Wales
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme—Isle of Anglesey
Brecon Hospital League of Friends
Little Aston Womens Institute
Gwynedd Drugs Council
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)—South Wales
League of Friends of the West Wales General Hospital
Brecknock Association for the Welfare of the Blind
Health Visitors Association
The Board of Mission Church in Wales Centre
League of Friends of the Barry Hospitals
The Schizophrenia Association of Great Britain
Age Concern—Clwyd
League of Hospital Friends, Conwy and Groesynyd
Ynys Mon Volunteer Bureau
MIND—Rhymney Valley and District Association
Mid Glamorgan Association of Voluntary Organisations
Age Concern—West Glamorgan
Morgannwg Hospital League of Friends
Raynauds Association Trust
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Llangynwyd Old Age Pensioners Association
MIND—North Wales Development Project
Wales Council for the Blind
Gwynedd Voluntary Services
Gwynedd Society for the Disabled
MENCAP—Llanelli and District
Neath Hospital Society of Friends
Port Talbot Borough Council
Preseli-Pembrokeshire District Council
Connahs Quay Town Council
West Glamorgan County Council
North Wales Association of Town Councils
Meirionnydd District Council
Mid Glamorgan County Council
Alyn and Deeside District Council
Newport Borough Council
Ceredigion District Council
Chepstow Town Council
Buckley Town Council
Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council
Dyfed County Council
Llansanffraid-Glan Conwy Community Council
Blaenau Gwent Borough Council
Gwent County Council
Llangattock Community Council
Lliw Valley Borough Council
Gwernaffield Community Council
Swansea City Council
Delyn Borough Council
Amlwch Town Council
Llanrwst Town Council
Powys County Council
Chirk Town Council
Islwyn Borough Council
Llanfynydd Community Council
Rhuddlan Borough Council
Arfon Borough Council
Penarth Town Council
Neath Borough Council
Llangynidr Community Council
Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor
Rhymney Valley District Council
Holyhead Town Council
Penyffordd Community Council
Argoed Community Council
Saltney Town Council
Taff Ely Borough Council
Shotton Town Council

Hawarden Community Council
Vale of Grwyney Council
Powys Association of Town and Community Councils
Llandough Community Council
Rhosllannerchrugog Community Council
Montgomeryshire District Council
Holywell Town Council
Bronllys Community Council
Torfaen Borough Council
Croesyceiliog and Llanyrafon Community Council
Colwyn Borough Council
Gwynedd County Council
Llangybi Community Council
New Radnor Community Council
St. Athen Community Council
Radnorshire Borough Council
Dolgellau Town Council
Llantwit Major Town Council
Rhoose Community Council
Gwynedd County Council
Isle of Anglesey Borough Council
Barry Town Council
Broughton and Bretton Community Council
Old Radnor Community Council
Carmarthen District Council
City of Bangor Council
Pontypool Community Council
Llanelli Borough Council
St. Harmon Community Council
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council
Ogwr Borough Council
South Glamorgan County Council
Beaumaris Town Council
Wales Association of Community and Town Councils
Rhondda Borough Council
The Council of Welsh Districts
Ffestiniog Town Council
Gwent County Council
Newport Borough Council
Caerwent Community Council
Caldicot Town Council
Chepstow Town Council
Cwmbran Community Council
Llanvaches Community Council
Michaelston-Y-Fedw Community Council
Raglan Community Council
Llangefni Town Council
National Association of Local Councils
Tawe Uchaf Community Council
Ystradgynlais Community Council
Bro Machno Council
Mathern Community Council

West Glamorgan Family Practitioner Committee
Powys Family Practitioner Committee
Clwyd Family Practitioner Committee
Pembrokeshire Health Authority
South Glamorgan Family Practitioner Committee
Gwynedd Health Authority
Dyfed Family Practitioner Committee
Gwent Family Practitioner Committee
Mid Glamorgan Family Practitioner Committee
Gwent Health Authority
South Glamorgan Health Authority
Clwyd Health Authority
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority
West Glamorgan Health Authority
Powys Health Authority

Clwyd South Community Health Council
Arfon/Dwyfor Community Health Council
Joint Committee of Mid Glamorgan Community Health Councils
North Gwent Community Health Council
Brecknock and Radnor Community Health Council
Aberconwy Community Health Council
Pembrokeshire Community Health Council
Clwyd North Community Health Council
Llanelli/Dinefwr Community Health Council
Cardiff Community Health Council
Carmarthen/Dinefwr Community Health Council
Neath and Port Talbot Community Health Council
Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales
Ceredigion Community Health Council
South Gwent Community Health Council
Vale of Glamorgan Community Health Council
Swansea and Lliw Valley Community Health Council
Ynys Mon Community Health Council
Meirionnydd Community Health Council
Association of Welsh Community Health Councils
Montgomery Community Health Council
Ms. Susan Murray, New Radnor, Powys
Councillor June Stanton, Swansea
Mr. R. J. Dean, Brecon, Powys
Mr. A. Challoner, Bodelwyddan, Clwyd
British Medical Association—Welsh Office
Mr. R. Davies, Caernarfon, Gwynedd
Councillor H. Pearce-Geary, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd
Mr. R. John, Cardiff, South Glamorgan
Diocese of Llandaff Council for Social Responsibility
Royal College of Nursing—Welsh Board
Welsh Nursing, Midwifery Committee
Clwyd Federation of the Parent-Teacher Association
Llandough Women's Institute
Vale of Glamorgan Social and Democratic Party
Albert Road Methodist Church and Community Centre, Penarth
National Health Service Retirement Fellowship
T & GWU Retired Members Association
Welsh Hospitals and Health Services Association
Gwent College of Higher Education
The Methodist Church, Newport Gwent Circuit
Isle of Anglesey Federation of Women's Institutes
Cardiff and District Cooperative Party
Cardiff Labour Women's Council
Blackwood and District Trades Council
Liaison Committee of Royal Colleges and Faculties in Wales
Bishop of St. Asaph
Vale of Glamorgan Trades Union Council
Conway Liberal Democratic Party
Welsh Consumer Council
Llandrindod Hospital League of Friends
Llandaff Society—The Civil Trust for Wales
Cardiff South and Penarth Constituency Labour Party
Mr. C. Fawcett, Penmaenmawr, Gwynedd
Mr. O. P. Galpin, Llandudno, Gwynedd
Pensioners Voice—Llandudno
Llandudno Hospital League of Friends
Glyndwr District Council
Association of District Councils—Clwyd and Gwynedd Branch
Miss K. Smith, Llandudno Junction, Gwynedd
North Wales Society for the Blind
Henryd Community Council
Llandudno Town Council
Islwyn Labour Party
Mrs. B. N. Craven, Llandudno, Gwynedd

Mr. Keith Raffan MP
Mr. Dafydd Wigley MP
Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones MP
Mr. Ted Rowlands MP
Mr. Barry Jones MP
Mr. Alex Carlile QC MP
Mr. Joe Wilson MP
Mr. Martin Jones MP
Dr. John Marek MP
Mr. Wyn Griffiths MP
Mr. Richard Livesey MP
Mr. Alun Michael JP MP

Myodil

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement setting out the history of the use of Myodil in hospitals in Wales, the symptoms that have arisen for some patients, the steps taken by the national

health service in Wales to tackle and alleviate such problems and his latest assessment of continuing problems for individuals and families in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my letter of 27 April, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, to which there is nothing I can usefully add.

Older Housing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what sum of money his Department is to make available for environmental landscaping in areas of older housing in Wales *(a)* in the present financial year and *(b)* in the 1991-92 financial year; and whether such sums are included in his Department's budget for the renewal areas scheme.

Mr. Grist: Environmental works promoted by local authorities in general improvement areas and housing action areas have attracted exchequer support of £274,375 in the current financial year. In addition, credit approvals of £26 million have been made available for enveloping and group repair schemes both in the statutory action areas and in the new renewal areas. A further £1 million is available to supplement financial commitments made by local authorities on particular activities in renewal areas. It is not at this stage possible to anticipate the level of resources which may be available in future years.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been provided to each local authority in Wales in order to develop the renewal areas scheme for older housing in Wales *(a)* so far this financial year and *(b)* prior to April; and for what purposes this money was provided.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 17 July 1990.

Community Care

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the implementation in Wales of the proposals in the White Paper, "Caring for People".

Mr. David Hunt: The Government are committed to the policies set out in the White Paper "Caring for People" which are designed to improve social care and related health services by ensuring that they are properly targeted to meet the needs of individual people. Nonetheless, in the light of the disappointing failure of many local authorities to budget for reasonable increases in expenditure, it would be unwise, and contrary to the interests of community chargepayers, to implement all the proposals of "Caring for People" simultaneously on 1 April 1991.

Our wholehearted commitment to the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper will be maintained through a programme of phased implementation, the full details of which will be discussed with the social services and health authorities and other interests in Wales, within the following framework.

We have well established and widely respected all-Wales strategies to secure the development of new patterns of services for people with mental handicaps and mental illnesses. We have already announced record levels of additional expenditure in support of those developments. Under the mental handicap strategy, grants from the Welsh Office will total £26·1 million in the current year, an increase of some £7·5 million compared with 1989-90. Under the mental illness strategy we are making available additional grant of over £2 million, on top of recurrent specific allocations for this purpose made since 1978-79 of over £13 million. These strategies will continue.

To combat drug misuse, we have made available £1·6 million this year to local statutory and voluntary agencies and £350,000 for the central prevention campaign and for needle and syringe exchange schemes. We are providing £150,000 of additional revenue this year for local projects to combat alcohol misuse. These initiatives will be maintained and will continue to support prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in residential and non-residential settings.

We have also already announced expenditure of some £300,000 this year and next to support demonstration projects in each county on the development of assessment and case management for individuals in need of care. In addition, my Department is making available £163,000 under a support programme for management development and post-qualifying training in personal social services. We are reviewing with the local authorities and the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work how this can be strengthened in the light of policy developments including the "Caring for People" White Paper.

As announced in the White Paper, from 1 April 1991 carefully targeted grants will be available to encourage the development of more flexible forms of domiciliary care for elderly people and those with physical or sensory disabilities. These will replace the current range of grants that the Welsh Office makes available for these and related purposes under the elderly initiative, the urban programme and the joint finance arrangements. Details will be announced shortly.

Also from next April, we propose that social services authorities will be required to establish the new inspection units and complaints procedures. Development work will continue on the new planning arrangements, assessment and case management procedures, and the realignment of commissioning and providing responsibilities within social services departments.

From 1 April 1992 we intend to implement the new planning arrangements and to continue with the remaining development work.

From 1 April 1993 we intend to introduce generally the new arrangements for assessment and case management, together with the changes in the financial arrangements for people needing public support for care. These will require the social services authorities to meet the costs of care whether in people's own homes or in residential care and nursing homes, where they decide that such care would be appropriate, and will involve the transfer of the relevant resources from the social security programme. Also from 1 April 1993 the tests of resources and personal allowances for people in local authority and independently run homes will be brought into line, and the White Paper proposals on preservation of benefit rights for people already in homes will be implemented.

Magnificent strides have been made over recent years by local agencies working with the Welsh Office on our existing strategies and initiatives, and in development work since the publication of the White Paper, to ensure a coherent framework and arrangements on the ground for the delivery of quality health and social care for those in

need. That work will continue and be enhanced under the phased programme for development which I have outlined. I am confident that the local and health authorities and other interests in Wales, including representatives of the voluntary and private sectors and of users and carers, will continue to work closely with the Welsh Office to ensure its successful implementation.

Toxic Waste Disposal

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to respond to the Welsh Affairs Committee's report "Toxic Waste Disposal in Wales", published on 28 March.

Mr. David Hunt: I am pleased to announce that the response has been published today.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Fees Office

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what was the total cost of running the Fees Office for the last three years for which figures are available, indicating separately staff salaries and use of 3 Dean's yard.

Mr. Beith: It is not possible to separate the costs of running the Fees Office from the Administration Department of which it is a constituent part. Expenditure in respect of the Administration Department made from sub-head A5 of the House of Commons administration vote in each of the years in question was as follows:

	Salary etc costs	*General administration expenses*[1]
	£	£
1987-88	1,259,350·40	21,083·67
1988-89	1,420,115·92	29,593·47
1989-90	1,571,996·78	59,527·02

[1] Excluding premium for Members' group personal accident insurance

Payments in respect of common services, for example, telephones, are made from other sub-heads of the vote and these costs cannot be apportioned between users.

Expenditure in respect of rent, fuel utilities and maintenance of No. 3 Dean's yard, which also accommodates Members and their staff was £320,000 in 1987-88, £380,000 in 1988-89 and £360,000 in 1989-90. Costs related to the Fees Office cannot be separately identified.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Merit Awards

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council, further to his reply of 5 July to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), *Official Report*, column 1131, what consideration he has now given to the provision of merit awards for right hon. and hon. Members.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no plans to implement a scheme of merit awards for Members, but the hon. Member's interesting suggestion poses the question of how the parameters of such a scheme would be defined and who would decide whether or not a Member qualified for such an award. It has been suggested that quality of performance is in inverse proportion to quantity.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Contracts (Value-for-money Inquiries)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that no contractual relationship exists between Messrs Biwaters and any firms of consultants Her Majesty's Government have employed on value-for-money inquiries, checks or audits on contracts assisted by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mrs. Chalker: At the time of commissioning the value-for-money checks on the two ODA-supported projects in which Biwater is involved, there were no contractual relationships between Biwater and either the firms or the individual specialist carrying out the VFM checks.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what value-for-money inquiry or checks have been carried out by which consultants acting for Her Majesty's Government on contracts between Thailand and Biwaters which have been assisted by the Overseas Development Administration;

(2) which firm or firms have been contracted to carry out the value-for-money inquiry audit or check required by the Overseas Development Adminstration on the British bid for the Green E'Sarn irrigation and forestry project in Thailand.

Mrs. Chalker: No firm offers of aid have been made in support of contracts between Biwaters and the Government of Thailand. Her Majesty's Government have been approached for concessional finance for the Green E'Sarn programme. We have indicated to the Government of Thailand our readiness in principle to consider this. Commercial negotiations have not reached the stage where a value for money investigation will be required.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date Sir William Halcrow and Partners were employed by Her Majesty's Government to carry out a value-for-money inquiry into contracts between Biwaters and Malaysia which received assistance from the Overseas Development Administration.

Mrs. Chalker: The value-for-money inquiry was commissioned by the Department of Trade and Industry on 2 December 1985.

Third-world Debt

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to alleviate the debt burden on sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

Mrs. Chalker: The Houston economic summit reaffirmed the international debt strategy under which

Governments provide financial assistance to those indebted countries who are pursuing agreed programmes of economic reform. This assistance is available through the IMF and World bank, bilateral donors such as the United Kingdom, and the rescheduling of official debts in the Paris Club. The United Kingdom has taken the lead in developing additional measures for the poorest countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, whose debt is mainly owned to official creditors. These measures include the cancellation of old aid debts, and the rescheduling of other official debt on concessional terms.

For middle-income countries, mostly in Latin America, whose debt is mainly owed to commercial banks, these banks are increasingly ready to allow a measure of debt reduction in the financing packages which they negotiate with these countries. A further incentive for such voluntary market-based debt reduction has been provided by last year's decision of the IMF and World bank to allow some of their resources to be used in support of such deals.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table listing gross British bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa from 1979 to 1989, in constant 1989 prices.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Gross bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa

£ thousands

Year	*Current prices*	*Constant (1989) prices*
1979	214,572	441,869
1980	243,894	420,176
1981	245,789	380,189
1982	234,760	337,407
1983	225,899	308,311
1984	249,808	325,849
1985	294,217	363,305
1986	267,816	320,025
1987	294,588	334,837
1988	400,351	427,367
[1]1989	496,202	496,202

[1] Provisional.

SCOTLAND

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all bathing beaches nominated by each of the river purification boards and the number and location of those which were subsequently approved as designated beaches by his Department.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The full list of bathing waters nominated by the river purification boards in 1985 is as follows:

Highland RPB
- Nairn
- Dornoch South
- Little Sand (Gairloch)
- Embo
- Burghead Bay
- Gairloch
- Gruinard South
- Thurso
- Dunnet Bay/Murkle Bay, Thurso
- Trinkie South Head, Wick
- Sinclair's Bay, Wick
- Brora
- Fortrose/Rosemarkie
- Morar/Traigh, Mallaig
- Back of Keppock/Bunacaimb, Arisaig
- Sango Bay/Balnakeil Bay, Durness
- Sangobeg, Durness
- Mellon Udrigle, Gruinard Bay
- Achnahaird Bay, Achiltibuie
- Clachtoll/Stoer, Lochinver
- Achmelvich, Lochinver
- Glenbrittle, Skye
- Farr Bay/Torrisdale Bay, Bettyhill
- Coldbackie, Tongue Bay
- Freswick Bay, John o'Groats
- Golspie
- Scourie
- Applecross
- Sand/Laide, Gruinard Bay
- Sandside Bay, Reay
- Loth, Crackaig, East Sutherland
- Portmahomack
- Melvich, Sutherland
- Talmine, Sutherland
- Hopeman
- Drumbeg, Lochinver
- Clashnessie Bay, Lochinver
- Strathy Bay
- Mellangaun, Loch Ewe
- Sanna Bay, Ardnamurchan
- Sheigra, Kinlochbervie
- Invernaver, North Sutherland
- Armadale Bay, North Sutherland
- Balintore/Shandwick
- Cromarty
- Ullapool

North East RPB
- Lossiemouth West and East
- Strathlene, Buckie
- Findochty
- Cullen
- Fraserburgh
- Banff Links
- Sandend
- Cruden Bay
- Ugie Mouth and Craigewan Sands, Peterhead
- Sandyends, Banff
- New Aberdour
- Lido, Peterhead
- Balmedie
- Newburgh Sands
- Aberdeen Beach
- St. Cyrus

Tay RPB
- St. Andrews, East and West
- Arbroath
- Carnoustie
- Montrose
- Monifieth
- Broughty Ferry
- Kinshaldy (Tentsmuir)
- Cambo (Kingsbarns)
- Lunan Bay
- Balcomie Links (Crail)
- St. Cyrus

Forth RPB
- Gosford Sands
- Kinghorn (Pettycur)
- Gullane Bay
- Aberdour (Silver sands)
- North Berwick
- Elie/Earlsferry
- Yellowcraigs
- Crail (Roome Bay)
- Portobello
- Whitesands Bay
- Largo Bay

Tweed RPB
- Pease Bay
- St. Abbs/Coldingham
- Eyemouth

Solway RBP
- Sandyhills
- Mossyard and Cardoness
- Brighouse Bay
- Carrick and Sandgreen
- Killantringan Bay
- Ardwell Bay
- Port Logan Bay
- Monrieth Bay
- Luce Bay Sands
- Southerness

Clyde RPB
- Ayr (South,
- Prestwick
- Largs (North)
- Troon (South)
- Maidens
- Barassie
- Troon (North)
- Irvine/Gailes
- Girvan
- Lunderston Bay
- Largs (South)
- Croy
- Saltcoats
- Milport
- Helensburgh
- Doonfoot
- Rothesay
- Stevenston
- Butlins (Ayr)
- Brodick
- Ganavan (Oban)
- Seamill—West Kilbride
- Fairlie
- Machrihanish
- Dunure
- Portenvoss
- Turnberry

The list of waters which were subsequently identified for the purposes of the bathing waters directive is as follows:
- Nairn (East Bench)
- Cullen
- Fraserburgh
- Aberdeen
- Montrose

Arbroath
Carnoustie
St. Andrews (West Sands)
Kinghorn (Pettycur)
Aberdour (Silversands)
Gullane
Yellowcraigs
North Berwick (Milsey Bay)
Dunbar (Belhaven Bay)
Pease Bay
Sandyhills
Girvan
Turnberry
Ayr (South Beach)
Prestwick
Troon (South Beach)
Irvine/Gailes (New Town)
Saltcoats/Ardrossan (South Beach)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that non-designated bathing beaches are monitored regularly and conform to the coliform bacteria standards of the European Community bathing water directive applied to designated bathing beaches.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is responsible for implementation of the bathing waters directive in Scotland (76/160/EEC) and therefore for ensuring that Scottish waters identified in terms of the directive are monitored regularly. Monitoring of non-identified waters is carried out by the river purification authorities as part of their statutory responsibilities to control aquatic pollution. Such monitoring is generally in line with that required by the directive for identified waters. Results of monitoring are published in the annual reports of the river purification boards, copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of designated bathing beaches in Scotland which met the recommended guideline standards as well as the minimum mandatory standards for coliform bacteria set by the European Community bathing water directive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1989, Cullen and Pease bay met the guideline (G) and mandatory (I) quality requirements specified in the bathing waters directive (76/160/EEC) for total coliforms. Pease bay met the G and I quality requirements for faecal coliforms.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department informed the European Commission of the results of the monitoring carried out by river purification boards in 1989 which showed the number of bathing waters which conformed to the mandatory standards for coliform bacteria set by the European Community bathing water directive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scotland's bathing water monitoring results for 1989 were reported to the European Commission by the office of the United Kingdom permanent representative to the European Communities on 8 February 1990, along with the results for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what criteria are applied in deciding which bathing beaches are designated; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to extend the number of designated bathing beaches in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for identifying Scottish bathing waters in terms of directive 76/160/EC lies with the Secretary of State for Scotland. The directive defines bathing waters as fresh or sea water where *(a)* bathing is explicitly authorised or *(b)* bathing is not prohibited, and is traditionally practised by a large number of bathers. The list of 23 bathing waters currently identified in Scotland was drawn up from nominations made by the river purification boards after consultation with district councils and was finalised following discussion with the European Commission.

There are no plans at present to amend the current list. The position is, however, kept under review and any future amendments would be made by my right hon. and learned Friend taking account of, amongst others, the following objective criteria suggested for this purpose by the European Commission:

(1) facilities for access to the beach
(2) sanitary equipment
(3) facilities for changing
(4) parking space for cars
(5) lifeguards on the beach
(6) first aid service
(7) kiosks and shops (mobile shops)
(8) water sports facilities (boats, surfing, swimming lessons)

Sewage Outfalls

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the numbers, percentages and locations of long sea sewage outfalls; and what are the quantities of treated and untreated sewage discharged at each location;

(2) if he will list the numbers, percentages and locations of sewage outfalls which discharge at or above the low water mark; and what are the quantities of treated and untreated sewage discharged at each location.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are approximately 800 local authority sewage outfalls in Scotland which discharge directly to estuaries or coastal waters. The detail sought is too lengthy for inclusion in the *Official Report*. A summary is, however, contained in the technical report "Sewage Works and Discharges Archive Report 1987" produced by the Scottish Development Department, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures showing the total quantities of treated and untreated sewage discharged into the sea off the Scottish coast.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1985, the latest year for which published information is available, approximately 755,000 cu m per day of sewage was discharged to Scottish estuarine and coastal waters. Of this, around 290,000 cu m per day was untreated and around 146,000 cu m per day received preliminary treatment. The balance received at least primary treatment.

Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what powers he has to enforce stricter emission standards for car exhausts; and whether he intends to use them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The enforcement of emission standards is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. Plans for reductions of emissions are contained in the written answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport on 8 June 1990, at column *722*.

Lochinver Harbour

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what decision he has now reached about the financing of the planned improvement works at Lochinver harbour.

Mr. Lang: This is a major and expensive project, the detail of which my Department is still considering. I or my noble Friend will write to the hon. Member when a decision is taken. I hope that will be very soon.

Youth Training

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations took place with Shetland islands council and Orkney islands council prior to the announcement of reductions in youth training funding for 1990-91 and the introduction of the new youth training contracts.

Mr. Lang: There has been a regular on-going dialogue between officials of the Training Agency and officials of Shetland islands council and Orkney islands council. In the period from January to May 1990 this included formal and informal consultations between officials about youth training funding for 1990-91 and the introduction of the new youth training contract.

Under-age Drinking

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many off-sales licensees lost their licences or had their licences temporarily suspended in connection with the sale of alcohol to persons under age in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children appeared before children's panels in each of the past five years in connection with under-age drinking.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Reading Standards

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many 10-year-old children in Scottish state schools were recorded as experiencing reading difficulties in the school sessions *(a)* 1979-80 and (b) 1989-90.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available.

Nurses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ensure that central records are kept detailing the numbers of state registered nurses who, on completion of their training, find employment within national health service hospitals, in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. The cost of compiling meaningful figures could not be justified as student nurses on completion of their training often find employment outwith the area of the health board in which they have trained.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to increase facilities for the profoundly mentally handicapped in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The provision of facilities for the care and support of mentally handicapped people in the community is the responsibility of local authorities. Since 1980 the total number of day centre places has increased from 5,096 to 7,242 (provisional) and the number of residential places from 1,093 to 1878 (provisional). Separate figures on the limited amount of provision made specifically for persons who are profoundly handicapped are not available centrally.

It is for local authorities to seek to expand provision as necessary in this and other areas of their responsibilities in accordance with the resources available to them. The proposals in the White Paper "Caring for People" indicate the need to work for an increasing proportion of facilities and other services in the community.

Casualty Departments

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that staffing levels within casualty departments in national health service hospitals in Scotland are increased; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A variety of factors must be taken into account in determining appropriate staffing levels. The Government encourage health boards to ensure that staffing levels in all hospital departments including accident and emergency departments are established through the application of structured assessment methods.

Birch Point

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress he has made in his investigations into the reasons for the movement of dumped materials outwith the Birch Point explosives disposal ground in the Firth of Clyde.

Mr. Lang: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland fisheries research vessel Clupea was diverted from her programmed duties to undertake an underwater survey in and around the Birch Point disposal ground between 14 and 18 May 1990. As investigation of the dumping operations and fishing activity at the site has also been undertaken.

Following consultations with the various regulatory bodies and other interested parties, including local fishermen's representatives, a report of the investigation and the findings of the survey is being finalised this week. The report will be published before the parliamentary recess and copies of the published report will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The initial investigation has confirmed that a further, closer survey of the dump site is needed. This will be undertaken by DAFS from 21 July to 5 August inclusive. In order for the survey to proceed all fishing activity in the area concerned will be prohibited for the duration of the survey. An order to this effect has been made under the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 and the fishermen have been advised.

Further guidance for fishermen in the Clyde area on what to do if explosive material is encountered in fishing gear is also in preparation in the light of the investigation and will be issued directly.

Community Care

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his plans for the implementation of the community care policies set out in the White Paper, "Caring for People".

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to advise islands and regional councils of the level of funding likely to be made available to them for 1991-92 for the implementation of their community care responsibilities under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mr. Rifkind: We are fully committed to the policies set out in the White Paper "Caring for People" which are designed to improve social care services for vulnerable people. However, we have decided that it has become necessary to phase in the proposals in the White Paper. This is to allow a fuller preparation for the major shift in financial responsibility and the organisational changes required and in particular to allow local authorities time to accommodate the change without any need to impose an excessive burden on their community charge payers. The arrangements for Scotland will be as follows.

On 1 April 1991 I will introduce the requirements for local authorities to set up the new arm's length inspection units for residential homes and the new complaints procedures. I will also introduce the new specific grant to accelerate the development of community services for people with a mental illness. The development of better services in the community for this group in particular is an important objective of our community care policy. In the first year I propose grant at 70 per cent. in relation to total costs of £3 million in order to provide increased community services for the mentally ill. We are already providing grants under existing powers for voluntary bodies providing services in the important field of drug and alcohol abuse and this will continue.

Local authorities and health boards have already made a valuable start on the planning and development work required for community care and I would want this momentum to be maintained. I would also want authorities to continue with the important task of staff training, which the new course on community care at Dundee university is designed to meet. This will lead to the next phase of implementation on 1 April 1992 when I intend to implement the new community care planning arrangements. Development work will continue in 1992 and the final phase will be the implementation of the new income support and housing benefit arrangements on 1 April 1993 together with preservation of benefit rights for people already in homes at that date. Until then the present income support payments for those in private and voluntary residential and nursing homes will continue.

I will have regard to the financial implications of these proposals in announcing the local authority settlement, which I intend to announce next week.

The changes set out in the White Paper involve a substantial and complex task for local authorities. I am sure that phasing in the arrangements give more time to all concerned—local authorities, health boards, the voluntary and private sectors—to co-operate in preparation. It will enable the process to be more effectively managed.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Industry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he will provide separate details of landings of cod from area VIIa by east coast Scottish, west coast Scottish, English, Welsh and Northern Irish vessels, in length bands, for the months of June 1990 and June 1989, indicating within each category the numbers of vessels and tonnages landed;

(2) whether he will provide separate details of landings of other area VII species by Scottish, English, Welsh and Northern Irish vessels, in length bands, for the months of June 1990 and June 1989, indicating within each category the numbers of vessels and tonnages landed;

(3) how many vessels declaring catches in area VII in June were spotted by the Royal Navy or by the fisheries inspection service in area VII; and how many of these vessels were witnessed fishing in areas IV and VI;

(4) whether he will provide a breakdown of the landings in area VII for all species during the month of June by the respective producer organisations and the non-sectors.

Mr. Curry: I regret that it would be too expensive to give a detailed response to the questions posed by the hon. Member. I will however make a general statement about the alleged misreporting of cod in the Irish sea and off the west coast of Ireland.

The non-sector's quota of cod in the Irish sea for 1990 is 1,858 tonnes. Approximately half of this quota was apparently taken by Scottish vessels and landed into Scotland during June and early July. In addition, landings into Scotland of cod reported as taken from the west of Ireland (areas VIIb and VIIc), have shown a marked increase in the second half of June. The Irish sea cod fishery has had to be closed to the non-sector as its quota for the year has already been exhausted.

The industry has stated its view that some Scottish vessels have been misreporting fish caught in the North sea or off the west coast of Scotland as coming from the Irish sea or off the west coast of Ireland, and has asked that catches should be reallocated from the latter to the former areas.

Fisheries Department accept that the circumstantial evidence points to some misreporting having taken place. The Irish sea cod fishery is traditionally a spring and winter fishery and high catches in summer are unusual. The pattern of landings this year is very different from past experience. Moreover the rate of uptake by the non-sector has not been paralleled by the sector. However, Departments cannot act to penalise a particular group of vessels or to compensate Irish sea fishermen affected on the basis of rumour or circumstantial evidence; they can act only following successful prosecution of offenders. Departments are examining all fishing documents and, if they can secure hard evidence of misreporting, they will prosecute.

In the meantime, Departments are looking ugently at ways of limiting misreporting in future, and hope to be able to set up a system later this year. I know that the industry has in the past rejected tougher enforcement measures in view of their cost and inconvenience, but if it is serious about limiting misreporting, I hope that it will now accept the need for firm action.

If a system to limit misreporting can be established quickly, Departments will try to obtain more quota from another member state with the aim of reopening the Irish sea cod fishery to the non-sector later this year. However, such a swap would depend on the successful identification of another United Kingdom stock to offer in exchange.

Pesticides

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's policy in respect of the safety in respect to foodstuffs of the products alachlor, aldicarb and pyrethrin, and aflatoxin: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Advisory Committee on Pesticides is currently reviewing alachlor and aldicarb. The pyrethrins are included in the routine review programme.

Aflatoxin is a naturally occurring food contaminant; the Food Advisory Committee is considering the statutory limit which should be set for nuts and nut products.

EC Grants

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the recipients in the United Kingdom who have received grants from the European Community to the value of £8 million.

Mr. Curry: The United Kingdom has been awarded grants of £9·2 million by the European Commission under regulation 355/77 for 43 projects designed to improve the marketing and processing of agricultural and fisheries produce. A further £300,000 has been awarded for five projects to improve fishing port facilities.

Full details on these grants were issued in a press release on 6 July 1990. A copy was lodged in the Library of the House at that time and sent to Members directly concerned including my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body).

Organic Fruit and Vegetables

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he plans to take to reduce dependency on imports to satisfy demand for organically produced fruit and vegetables.

Mr. Curry: I am keen that British farmers should claim as large a share as possible of the small but growing market for organic produce. The hon. Member will know from the answer that he received to an earlier question, on 16 January, at column *215*, that the Department already offers a wider range of support for organic production.

Hens

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to implement the recommendations of the draft of the European convention published by the Council of Europe in 1971 in respect of minimum space requirements for hens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We have no such plans. This draft has been overtaken by the final convention for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, published in 1976, and the recommendation made under it on 21 November for laying hens.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has conducted any research to establish how much space a caged hen requires in order to perform all her natural functions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There has been much research into the space requirements of laying hens both in this country and in other member states of the European Community. This work is continuing. During the review of the battery hens directive, we will be pressing the Commission to take account of this research which indicates that a significant increase in the minimum space allowance for caged birds is required.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek to bring poultry within the provisions of the Protection of Birds Act 1954; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The provisions of this Act have been superseded by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Provisions for laying hens kept in battery cages are covered by Community law. It is my intention that all laying hens should be so covered. The battery hens directive requires the Commission to report on all systems of keeping laying hens by the end of 1992 and to bring forward appropriate proposals.

Protection of Farm Animals

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to implement the 1976 convention on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, in respect of poultry, pigs, and veal calves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The specific recommendations made under the convention with respect to poultry and pigs have been implemented in this country by means of the appropriate codes of recommendations for the welfare of livestock. There is as yet no recommendation for veal calves but our ban on the traditional veal crate came into force at the beginning of this year.

Yucca Plant

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the use of products of the yucca plant on livestock farms.

Mr. Curry: Our technical advisers inform us that yucca extract is used in animal feed as a natural flavour enhancer. It is also reported to have a beneficial effect on protein utilisation. When included in feed it has the effect of deodorising slurry.

Bees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the health of bees in maintained.

Mr. Curry: The Importation of Bees Order 1980 prohibits imports of honey bees except under licence from countries of high bee health status. In addition Ministry bees officers inspect colonies in this country which have a history of disease or where disease is suspected. From 1992 the European Community Commission has proposed that national bee health measures should be replaced by European Community controls. Discussions are at an early stage and we shall continue to press for the best possible safeguards.

Field Drainage Grants

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been paid by way of field drainage grants for each year since 1981.

Mr. Curry: Grant paid on field drainage in England under the main capital grant schemes for the years 1981 to 1989 inclusive was as shown in the table:

Year	*£ million*
1981	17·8
1982	28·7
1983	29·2
1984	32·0
1985	18·1
1986	9·5
1987	3·7
1988	2·5
1989	2·0

Source:
MAFF statistics.

Livestock Holdings

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many field officers there are currently in the state veterinary service to inspect livestock holdings and to advise on animal welfare matters.

Mr. Maclean: There are currently 259·5 veterinary officers in the state veterinary service whose duties include animal welfare.

Fur Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what specific welfare inspections are made by state veterinary officers during October and November of each year to ensure that the killing of mink and arctic fox on fur farms is humane.

Mr. Maclean: Ten welfare visits to fur farms were made during October and November last year. These were carried out to check on welfare standards generally and were not specifically directed to slaughter methods.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fur farms received animal welfare inspections by state veterinary officers in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Maclean: The total number of welfare inspections of fur farms undertaken by state veterinary officers in each of these years was:

Year	*Inspections*
1987	25
1988	18
1989	18

Mink Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink farms are sited within *(a)* 10, *(b)* 20, *(c)* 30, *(d)* 40 and *(e)* 50 miles of environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Maclean: It is not possible to answer this without incurring disproportionate cost.

Registered Holdings

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many registered holdings in England are eligible for less-favoured area payments.

Mr. Curry: All 21,500 holdings in the LFA are eligible for enhanced rates of investment grant. A total of 14,400 claims for payment of HLCAs were submitted in 1989.

Farm Animal Welfare Council

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make Farm Animal Welfare Council publications available to hon. Members through the form entitled "Demand for HMSO non-Parliamentary Publications".

Mr. Gummer: This is already the case.

Implementation Committee

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the national implementation committee; what is its remit; and if he will list the members and their qualifications.

Mr. Gummer: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the Implementation Advisory Committee. As announced by my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) during the report stage of the Food Safety Bill on 7 June at column 893, its terms of reference are

"To advise Departments on draft codes of practice to be issued for consultation under Section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990, covering the execution and enforcement of the Act and regulations and orders made under it."

The members of the committee are:

Mr. C. Cockbill
Food Standards Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Mr. M. Corbally
Principal Environmental Health Officer, Institution of Environmental Health Officers

Mr. E. Davison
Capital Grants and Animal Health and Food Standards Division, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland

Mr. M. Dimambro
City Environmental Health Officer, Cambridge

Mr. H. Farrand
Director Environmental Services, Coventry

Mr. B. Curtis
Environmental Health Officer, Department of Health

Mr. B. Kelly
Director of Environmental Health, Glasgow

Mr. D. Lord
Public Analyst, Lancashire

Miss L. Neville-Rolfe
Food Legislation Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Mr. J. Parker
Environmental Health and Food Safety Division, Department of Health

Mr. E. Ramsden
Director Environmental Services, Swansea

Mr. D. Walker
Deputy Chief Trading Standards Officer, Shropshire

Mr. B. Williams
Chief Trading Standards Officer, Gloucester

Mr. R. Wright
Director Consumer and Environmental Services, Barnsley

Extensification Schemes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why Morvern and Ardnamurchan are excluded from the areas eligible to participate in the pilot extensification schemes for beef and sheep.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

The pilot extensification schemes are being limited to areas served by the Borders and Highland area offices of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. Morvern and Ardnamurchan, although within the Highland region, are covered by a different area office.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what overall reduction in Royal Air Force flying hours resulted from changes in navigator training syllabuses in each of the last three years; and what impact this has had on the amount of low flying conducted by the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Neubert: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what areas of the United Kingdom are specifically designated for nap of the earth flying by Army helicopters.

Mr. Neubert: No areas of the United Kingdom are specifically designated for nap of the earth flying by Army helicopters; such flights are conducted in designated low-flying areas in accordance with the relevant military regulations.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many air misses have occurred between two military aircraft in low-flying area 7 in each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: The number of air misses between two military aircraft in low-flying area 7 in each year since 1979 is as follows:

	Number
1979	0
1980	1
1981	0
1982	2
1983	1
1984	1
1985	0
1986	1
1987	0
1988	0
1989	0

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if pilots booking into and out of low flying areas are permitted any leeway in meeting their booked entry and exit times.

Mr. Neubert: Yes, in most cases.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if United States air force pilots certified to fly at 300 ft are permitted to fly at 250 ft in the United Kingdom low-flying system without additional low level stepdown training.

Mr. Neubert: United States air force pilots who need to train at 250 ft in the United Kingdom low-flying system are trained as necessary to certify them to fly at under 300 ft.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date that part of the Glamorgan transit area in the vicinity of Usk was abolished; what was the specific reason for its abolition; and if he will list the parliamentary constituencies over which low flying is newly permitted, or within which the area available for low flying is extended, as a result of this measure.

Mr. Neubert: It is not our practice to release detailed information on flying restrictions in individual areas. As part of the continuous monitoring of the United Kingdom low-flying system, however, a programme of reviews of avoidance areas is carried out and changes made when necessary, reflecting changes on the ground, and aimed at spreading low flying more evenly and enhancing flight safety, while at the same time reducing, where possible, the disturbance to those on the ground.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the regulations concerning the height at which low-flying aircraft should cross coastlines in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 12 June 1990 at column *139*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist to permit automatic terrain-following radar flying in areas of the United Kingdom other than the highlands restricted area.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 20 July 1989 at column *317*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those areas of the United Kingdom which have newly been made available for military low flying since 1979; and if he will specify the date on which each area was made available.

Mr. Neubert: I regret that the information requested could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the criteria used by the military low flying management group in determining which special rules zones or special rules areas around civil airports should be designated as avoidance areas for military low flying and which should not.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing further to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member on 20 July 1989 at column *317*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if pilots are permitted to make bookings into low-flying areas by radio, while airborne.

Mr. Neubert: Pilots are not generally permitted to book into low-flying areas by radio whilst airborne.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the regulations concerning overflight by low-flying military aircraft of assemblies of large numbers of people.

Mr. Neubert: Aircrew are generally instructed to avoid overflying such assemblies at low level.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what level in his Department approval must be sought for low-flying by jet aircraft between the hours of 11 pm and 7 am; what records are kept of such applications for approval, and decisions thereon; what criteria are used to grant or refuse permission for such flying; and if permission for such flying activity has ever been refused.

Mr. Neubert: The level at which approval is given and the records kept will depend on the activity concerned. Every effort is made to keep such flying to the minimum necessary to meet essential training requirements and permission is refused if this condition is not met.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the stipulated vertical and horizontal distances by which military aircraft are required to avoid sites notified under the civil aircraft notification procedure.

Mr. Neubert: The avoidance criteria adopted will depend on the type of aircraft, its conspicuity and its indicated air speed.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to introduce one-way flow control of low-flying aircraft in the Bwlch Llyn Bach valley between Minffordd and Cross Foxes.

Mr. Neubert: A one-way flow control system already exists in the Bwlch Llyn Bach valley.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any Royal Air Force stations in Britain are permitted to operate their own aircraft in local low-flying areas without notifying RAF West Drayton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: For certain low flying areas, the functions of the tactical booking cell at RAF West Drayton in respect of either all or part of the low-flying activity in these areas are delegated to a local centre, which may be an RAF station.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions are in force concerning the transit of large formations of aircraft through choke points in the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Mr. Neubert: Large formations of aircraft are instructed to avoid flying through recognised choke points in the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are in force to ensure that locations which are in use as simulated targets for toss or dive attack are not selected as simulated targets for level pass attacks.

Mr. Neubert: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what date the minimum vertical separation from cloud for visual flying operations in the United Kingdom low-flying system was reduced from 1,000 ft. to 500 ft.

Mr. Neubert: The present rules for vertical separation from cloud were introduced in June 1982.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum number of aircraft permitted to

operate at low level at any one time in the hilly areas of the Lake District; to what parts of low-flying area 17, this applies; and if he will list any changes made to this maximum number since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: No more than 20 aircraft (excluding helicopters) are permitted to book into low-flying area 17 at any one time during the period 07.00 to 18.00 local time Monday to Friday. No changes have been made to this figure since its introduction in 1987.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those range danger areas within which military aircraft are permitted to descend below 250 ft minimum separation distance during the run-in to a simulated target; and if he will list the minimum permitted height in each case.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to my letter to him of 28 July 1989, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the measures taken to ensure that the regulations of the United Kingdom low-flying system are properly understood, briefed, and adhered to by United Kingdom-based United States air force air crews.

Mr. Neubert: No. I am satisfied that United Kingdom-based United States air force air crews, like their Royal Air Force counterparts, are made fully aware of the relevant regulations and of the importance of adhering to them.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the regulations concerning emergency climb-outs from low level when below controlled or regulated airspace; and what records are kept of resulting unauthorised penetrations of such airspace by military aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: Air crew are instructed to report any unauthorised penetrations of regulated or controlled airspace that may occur during climb-out from the United Kingdom low-flying system but very few occur. Separate statistics for such incidents are not maintained.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum period of notice required by RAF West Drayton of pilots intending to book into a low-flying area.

Mr. Neubert: There is no specified period of notice but advance bookings must be confirmed on the day of the flight.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the regulations concerning the maximum number of aircraft in a formation in the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Mr. Neubert: The number of aircraft in a tactical formation at low level is determined by aircraft role and the type of exercise being carried out. However, formations do not normally consist of more than eight aircraft.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those areas of the United Kingdom where attacks on simulated targets are prohibited.

Mr. Neubert: No. All aspects of sorties, including simulated attacks, must however be planned in accordance with the general regulations applying to the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the standard radius of lateral avoidance for avoidance sites marked on low flying charts and listed in the United Kingdom military low-flying handbook.

Mr. Neubert: Avoidance criteria adopted in any case will depend on the site concerned.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if towns and villages which carry low-flying avoidance status, other than those located within avoidance areas, are marked as sites to be avoided on the printed low flying charts supplied to pilots.

Mr. Neubert: All significant built-up areas, whether or not carrying formal avoidance status, are marked on low-flying charts.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the areas of the United Kingdom that are designated as data link areas for United States Air Force training with the GBU-15 missile system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information is classified.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the regulations concerning inverted flying at low level.

Mr. Neubert: I am not aware of any regulations which specifically refer to inverted flying at low level.

Inspectorate of Air Safety

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United States Air Force officers have served in exchange postings at the Royal Air Force inspectorate of air safety in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Royal Air Force records show that no USAF officers have served on exchange postings with the RAF inspectorate of flight safety in the last 10 years.

Lasers

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the areas of the United Kingdom where the use of aircraft-borne laser designators, rangers or markers is permitted; what regulations govern their use; and what changes have been made in these regulations since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following ranges in the United Kingdom are cleared for use by aircraft-borne laser designators, rangers or markers: RAF Tain, RAF Cowden, RAF Rosehearty, RAF Donna Nook, RAF Holbeach, RAF Pembrey Sands, RAF Jurby Head, RAF Wainfleet, the Royal Navy ranges at Cape Wrath and Garvie Island, the Army range at Otterburn and the MOD(PE) ranges at West Freugh and Larkhill.

A number of joint and single-service publications, together with air weapons range orders, cover the use of laser designators, rangers and markers at ranges in the United Kingdom. These regulations are regularly updated.

Norton Air Force Base, California

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force officers served in exchange postings at the directorate of aerospace safety, United States force inspection and safety centre, Norton air force base, California, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Royal Air Force records show that no officers have served in exchange postings with the directorate of aerospace safety at the United States force inspection and safety centre, Norton air force base, California in the last 10 years.

MOD Hospitals

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by country and region the Ministry of Defence hospitals in the United Kingdom which had consultant obstetric and/or general practitioner maternity beds in 1980, 1985 or the most recent year for which figures are available and give the numbers of beds of each type in each hospital and in each year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of the eight service hospitals in the United Kingdom, four have consultant-led obstetric units. There are no general practitioner maternity beds in United Kingdom service hospitals.

The statistical historical information on available bed numbers for 1980 and 1985 relates only to the overall number of beds for each hospital and is not broken into specialties. The details of the current allocation of service hospital beds to obstetrics, based on 1989 figures, are shown in brackets:

NHS region and hospital	*Number of beds*			*Obstetric beds*
	1980	*1985*	*1989*	*1989*
South West Thames				
Cambridge Military Hospital, Aldershot (Army)	[1]220+65	256	265	(66)
East Anglia				
The Princess of Wales Royal Air Force Hospital Ely	142	174	176	(22)
Wessex				
Princess Alexandra Royal Air Force Hospital Wroughton	170	154	182	(16)
Oxford				
Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Hospital Halton	280	271	231	(10)

[1] The 65 bed Louise Margaret Maternity Hospital Aldershot was amalgamated into the CMH Aldershot in 1984.

Army Costs

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total annual cost of *(a)* the regiments listed in his reply of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *326*, in total and *(b)* the British Army as a whole.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A figure for the total cost of the regiments and corps listed in my reply to the hon. Gentleman of 14 June is not held in the form requested and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost. The Ministry of Defence does not plan or account for its expenditure on a service basis and a figure giving the cost of the Army as a whole could, again, be obtained only with disproportionate effort. However, tables 2.2 and 2.3 in volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" provided information concerning the cost of key elements of the British Army.

Surplus Materials (Destruction)

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, by item and value, surplus stocks of clothing and other non-armament and weapon materials currently or recently ordered to be destroyed rather than offered for public sale.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of the fight against terrorism all surplus clothing with the exception of non-camouflage foul weather gear and footwear is now mutilated and sold as rags. Annual receipts are about £50,000. We estimate that the market value of the clothing before mutilation would be about £700,000 per annum.

In compliance with health and safety and control of pollution legislation the majority of hazardous materials are also destroyed, although under guidelines specified by the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities some materials classed as hazardous are sold.

It would not be possible to give the detailed information requested without disproportionate cost.

Radar Installation (Pembrokeshire)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received since 1 June about the allegations of a causal relationship between certain forms of cancer and exposure to magnetic fields and any implications for the siting of an over-the-horizon radar installation at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 April, *Official Report*, column 69, if he will give details of the proposed safety exclusion zone for the over-the-horizon radar installation at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire, including security fencing, lighting and staffing costs.

Mr. Alan Clark: Our current plans are that the proposed safety exclusion zone should be delineated by a wire-mesh fence, about 4 ft high, at a distance of about 1,100 ft to the front and sides of the transmitter aerials. It will be prominently signed in both Welsh and English, and will be contained well within the MOD boundary of the site. There are no plans to illuminate it. I regret that the costs of maintaining the safety exclusion zone and fence cannot be isolated from the estimated costs of maintaining the installation as a whole.

Frigates

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he is having with other NATO countries about a replacement frigate programme.

Mr. Neubert: Discussions are proceeding at official level with France to determine the potential for collaboration. We plan to broaden these discussions to include those other nations that are members of the family of anti-missile systems programme, currently Italy and Spain, should they wish to do so.

"Options for Change"

32. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given in his "Options for Change" review to the amount of low flying carried out by Royal Air Force fast jets.

63. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given in his "Options for Change" review to the amount of low flying carried out by RAF fast jets.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The amount of low-flying training carried out by the RAF will continue to reflect operational requirements.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

House Buyers (Protection)

12. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to protect house buyers from misleading property descriptions following his review of the Trade Descriptions Act.

Mr. Forth: As I indicated to the House in a written answer on 19 April, it is the Government's intention to proceed with a package of measures in this area, including the amendment of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to apply its provisions to descriptions of real property. My Department consulted widely on a review of the 1968 Act as a whole, and are now considering the responses.

102. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to protect house buyers from misleading property descriptions following his review of the Trade Descriptions Act.

105. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to protect housebuyers from misleading property descriptions, following his review of the Trade Description Act.

Mr. Forth: As I indicated to the House in a written answer on 19 April, it is the Government's intention to proceed with a package of measures in this area, including the amendment of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to apply its provisions to descriptions of real property. My Department recently consulted widely on a review of the 1968 Act as a whole, and consultees were asked to comment particularly on the range of characteristics of such property which should be included in its scope. The responses are currently being studied.

Steel Industry

16. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of British Steel to discuss the future of the steel industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend's predecessor last met the chairman of British Steel on 5 June.

21. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Steel to discuss the future of steel production in the United Kingdom.

47. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Steel to discuss the future of Ravenscraig.

48. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Steel to discuss the future of Ravenscraig.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend's predecessor met the chairman of British Steel on 5 June. He has no plans at present for a further meeting.

84. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Steel to discuss the future of steel production in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend's predecessor met the chairman of British Steel on 5 June. He has no plans at present for a further meeting.

110. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Steel to discuss the future of steel production in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend's predecessor met the chairman of British Steel on 5 June. He has no plans at present for a further meeting.

128. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has met the chairman of the British Steel Corporation to discuss the future of the steel industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend's predecessor last met the chairman of British Steel on 5 June.

Business Grants, West Midlands

22. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of his Department's grants to businesses in the west midlands to date in the current year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Up to the end of June, my Department had made payments of grant to businesses in the west midlands of £15·84 million, mainly in the form of regional selective assistance, support to research and development and assisted consultancy under the enterprise initiative.

CBI

23. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the president of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry.

28. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Confederation of British Industry to discuss levels of economic growth.

95. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Confederation of British Industry to discuss levels of manufacturing investment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Ministers and officials of my Department keep in touch with the CBI on a wide range of business matters.

45. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to meet the secretary

general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the expansion of British exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Ministers and officials of my Department keep in touch with the CBI on a range of issues relevant to business.

Girobank

24. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the sale of Girobank to the Alliance and Leicester Building Society.

115. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the sale of Girobank to the Alliance and Leicester Building Society.

Mr. Forth: I have nothing to add to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 2 July at column *427*.

Environmentally Friendly Goods

25. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take action to prevent firms misrepresenting goods as environmentally friendly.

87. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take action to prevent firms misrepresenting goods as environmentally friendly.

Mr. Forth: On 9 January in response to a question on environmental labelling, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said that we would be looking at the possibility of a code of practice on environmental claims and of amending the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. My Department went to consultation on 10 January inviting the views of consultees on the most appropriate measures which might be taken to control environmental claims.

The representations received during the consultations are still under consideration.

Unsafe Garden Equipment

26. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will consider measures to protect consumers from unsafe garden tools and machinery.

37. **Mr. Geoffrey Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will consider measures to protect consumers from unsafe garden tools and machinery.

Mr. Forth: The existing Consumer Protection Act 1987 already provides a general duty on suppliers to ensure that products, including garden tools and machinery, are safe. Where these products are electrically powered, they would also be subject to the Low Voltage Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1989 which implement the EC Low Voltage Directive, covering the basic safety requirements of electrical equipment traded throughout the European Community. In addition, the EC Machinery Safety Directive, which provides more detailed requirements on the guarding and safety of all mechanised equipment, will be implemented into United Kingdom legislation by the end of 1991, coming into force on 31 December 1992.

Timeshare

27. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what policy changes he intends to make as a result of the Office of Fair Trading report on timeshare.

Mr. Forth: The Director General of Fair Trading's report on timeshare was published on 3 July. I shall be looking very carefully at his recommendations for legislation.

Eastern Europe

29. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what initiatives he is taking to encourage trade with eastern Europe.

64. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any new proposals to develop trade between the United Kingdom and the countries of eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union.

71. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any new proposals to develop trade between the United Kingdom and the countries of eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union.

96. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he is taking to encourage exports to east European countries; whether he plans any increase in his Department's activity in this sphere; and if he will make a statement.

124. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any new proposals to develop trade between the United Kingdom and the countries of eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union.

Mr. Redwood: My Department is taking active measures to develop commercial opportunities in east Europe through direct contact with east European trade authorities, data dissemination and publicity.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's predecessor last week headed a trade mission to Czechoslovakia and then travelled on to Hungary for top level meetings. In recent months, I and DTI Ministerial colleagues have led parties of businessmen to these countries as well as to the USSR, Poland, Romania and the GDR. We have also received several incoming delegations and been in close touch with the FCO about the use of their know-how fund for eastern Europe.

Public Houses

30. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the total number of public houses in the United Kingdom of each of the six major brewing companies.

51. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the total number of public houses in the United Kingdom of each of the six major brewing companies.

63. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the total number of public houses in the United Kingdom of each of the six major brewing companies.

93. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the total number of public houses in the United Kingdom of each of the six major brewing companies.

Mr. Redwood: At the end of 1988, according to the MMC, the figures were:

	Number
Allied Breweries Limited	6,678
Bass plc	7,190
Courage Limited	5,002
Grant Metropolitan plc	6,419
Scottish and Newcastle Breweries plc	2,287
Whitbread and Company plc	6,483

Under the Supply of Beer Orders by November 1992 brewers owning more than 2,000 pubs must release from ties at least 50 per cent. of those in excess of 2,000. The Director General of Fair Trading will be monitoring progress towards this requirement.

66. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received from *(a)* tenants of national brewers, *(b)* small independent brewers and *(c)* others since 1 May regarding the operation of the new system giving tenants greater freedom to buy products outside the tie; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1 May I have received three representations on behalf of tenants of national brewers, one letter on behalf of small independent brewers, and five letters from others, of which four were from or on behalf of a large brewer.

Office of Fair Trading

31. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the investigations currently being conducted by the Office of Fair Trading.

34. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the investigations currently being conducted by the Office of Fair Trading.

130. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the investigations currently being conducted by the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) on 10 July at column *138*.

Kingfisher/Dixon Takeover Report

32. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much compensation he estimates his Department paying in the wake of the early release of the Kingfisher/Dixon takeover report.

35. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much compensation he estimates his Department paying in the wake of the early release of the Kingfisher/Dixon takeover report.

Mr. Redwood: I will continue to consider claims received before the end of this month for losses incurred on the morning of 23 May by those buying Dixons shares, selling Kingfisher shares or dealing in traded options. I will then be able to estimate more accurately the cost. Payments will be on the basis of one half of the differences between the price at which the shares or options were bought or sold on Wednesday morning 23 May, and the prices ruling when trading was resumed shortly after 1 pm. I will take into account corresponding gains from selling Dixons shares or buying Kingfisher shares, or from hedging positions in the options market.

European Single Market

33. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the proportion of total European single market trade which will be British-originated in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Given the changes which will follow the completion of the single European market, I cannot make a useful estimate of the proportion of total single European market trade which will be British-originated in 1992. The United Kingdom's share of EC trade was 8·9 per cent. in 1973, the year of our accession. It has risen to 13·1 per cent. in 1983 and stood at 11·4 per cent. in 1988. These figures assume current membership of the EC at each date.

Footwear and Textile Industries

36. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the current state of the footwear and textile industries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Both industries continue to experience mixed fortunes with varying performance in different product areas. I am pleased to note, however, that exports of footwear reached record levels in volume terms in the 12 months to March 1990, with exports of 25 million pairs of footwear, an increase of over 10 per cent. in volume and 12 per cent. in value terms. Exports of textiles and clothing products also rose by 14 per cent. by volume and 18 per cent. by value between the first quarters of 1989 and 1990.

55. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet his European counterparts to discuss the textile industry.

61. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet his European counterparts to discuss the textile industry.

69. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet his European counterparts to discuss the textile industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to meet his EC colleagues on several occasions during the course of this year to discuss progress in the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations, which cover the future of trade in textiles and clothing.

108. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current state of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade textiles talks on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Redwood: The chairman of the GATT negotiating group on textiles and clothing has produced a chairman's report for consideration by the trade negotiations committee in Geneva next week. This is designed to take into account various negotiating positions and therefore contains a significant number of alternative options. Many of these differences of view are unlikely to be resolved until

nearer the end of the negotiations in December, but the European Community will continue to press for a progressive phaseout of the MFA over a transitional period and on the basis of strengthened GATT rules and disciplines.

112. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the level of imports of footwear from the far east.

Mr. Redwood: Figures for the first four months of the year show an increase of 5 per cent. in imports of footwear from the far east compared with the same period in 1989. The footwear industry, as my hon. Friend is aware, has been seeking action by the European Community to restrict imports from Korea and Taiwan. In regulation 1735/90 published on 27 June the European Commission introduced prior surveillance of most footwear imports from these sources. The Regulation also refers to undertakings by Korea and Taiwan to limit their exports to traditional trade flows within specified quantitative limits. The licensing system will provide early warning of the level of imports.

142. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to ensure that no unilateral concessions will be made by the European Economic Community without agreement by the other countries on strengthening of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade rules and disciplines in relation to the multi-fibre arrangement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The European Community, with United Kingdom support, is continuing to press strongly for the liberalisation of trade in textiles to be accompanied by the strengthening of GATT rules and disciplines and the opening of producer markets. The Community will need to take a view before the end of the Round on the acceptability of the likely final package. In the meantime the Community needs to play an active part in shaping the framework agreement on trade in textiles and the Government will work to ensure that any proposals put forward properly reflect United Kingdom and Community interests.

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received from the textile and clothing industries about barriers to United Kingdom exports; if he will pursue the reduction of such barriers in the Uruguay round negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Ministers in my Department frequently receive representations from the textile industry about foreign barriers to United Kingdom exports, both directly and through hon. Members. It is one of the EC's main aims in the Uruguay round to achieve a reduction by all parties in their tariff and non-tariff barriers and we are pursuing this vigorously in the negotiations.

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet his counterparts from other European Community countries to discuss trade in textiles and clothing; if he will take steps to ensure that integration of this trade into the normal rules of the general agreement on tariffs and trade takes place only on the basis of strengthened rules and disciplines; and if he will press for a transition period for such integration sufficiently long to demonstrate the effectiveness of these strengthened rules and disciplines in removing distorted conditions of trade.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to meet his EC colleagues on several occasions during this year to discuss progress in the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations. The EC, while committed to returning trade in textiles and clothing to GATT rules, is continuing with United Kingdom support to press strongly for this liberalisation to be accompanied by the strengthening of GATT rules and disciplines. The idea of a transitional period for returning textiles trade to GATT is accepted in the negotiations. Its length has yet to be determined and in any discussions the United Kingdom will have regard to the arrangements for strengthening rules and disciplines as well as the need to ensure that the benefits of liberalisation are not unduly delayed.

Electronic Equipment

38. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received in the past three months about the export of electronic equipment.

127. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received in the past three months about the export of electronic equipment.

Mr. Redwood: My officials have had frequent contact with Trade Associations and companies in the electronic equipment sector during the past three months and a number of representations have been received. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on individual licensing matters.

123. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of electronic equipment sold in the United Kingdom comes from overseas.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) earlier today.

Trading Standards Officers

39. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of trading standards officers to discuss consumer matters.

44. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of trading standards officers to discuss consumer matters.

68. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of trading standards officers to discuss consumer matters.

Mr. Forth: I met representatives of local authority trading standards officers on three occasions in 1989 to discuss consumer matters and my officials have frequent meetings with trading standards officers.

90. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from trading standards officers on the safety of retail goods.

Mr. Forth: In the course of discussions and correspondence with trading standards officers, I have received representations on a wide range of subjects relating to product safety.

Manufacturing Industry

40. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to set up a body to oversee manufacturing industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no plans to set up a body to oversee manufacturing industry.

Credit Union Movement

41. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action his Department has taken to encourage the growth of the credit union movement in inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

76. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action his Department has taken to encourage the growth of the credit union movement in inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

137. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action his Department has taken to encourage the growth of the credit union movement in inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department has not taken any action to support credit unions in the inner cities.

National Enterprise Board

42. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much the National Enterprise Board cost in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1989; and whether he will make a statement about its future.

94. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much the National Enterprise Board cost in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1989; and whether he will make a statement about its future.

135. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much the National Enterprise Board cost in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1989; and whether he will make a statement about its future.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The National Enterprise Board was formed in late 1975 and there are therefore no figures for this year. In 1979 the net cost to the Exchequer was £222·4 million made up of £253·8 million of public dividend capital, subsequently repaid, repayment of loans and interest totalling £30·6 million and £0·8 million of taxes paid. In 1989 the Board remitted £1·3 million in taxes and £2 million in dividends to Her Majesty's Government.

Since 1981 the board has, with the National Research Development Corporation, operated as the British Technology Group. The Government consider that it would be appropriate for the British Technology Group to be transferred to the private sector when suitable arrangements can be made.

Independent Financial Advisers

43. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received about the draft European community rules on capital adequacy of independent financial advisers.

Mr. Redwood: I have received a number of representations from organisations and firms in the independent financial intermediaries sector about capital adequacy requirements, including the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association, the British Insurance and Investment Brokers Association, the Insurance Brokers Registration Council, the Life Insurance Association, and IFA Promotion Ltd. These representations have been helpful in clarifying their members' concerns that the proposed EC Capital Adequacy Directive may impose inappropriate minimum capital requirements. I share this concern. The United Kingdom will continue to press for capital requirements to be related to risk, and for levels of initial capital that do not act as barriers to market entry.

NRDC

46. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much the National Research and Development Corporation cost in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1989; and whether he will make a statement about its future.

57. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much the National Research and Development Corporation cost in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1989; and whether he will make a statement about its future.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The National Research Development Corporation does not represent a cost to the Exchequer. In 1975 the Corporation remitted £3·9 million to Her Majesty's Government; in 1979, £9·4 million and in 1989 £9·6 million.

Since 1981 the corporation has, with the National Enterprise Board, operated as the British Technology Group. The Government consider that it would be appropriate for the British Technology Group to be transferred to the private sector when suitable arrangements can be made.

Short-termism

49. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to make any proposals to control the short-termism in British industry.

120. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to make any proposals to counter short-termism in British industry.

Mr. Lilley: Like my right hon. predecessor, to whom I pay tribute, I recognise the importance of this. Companies' ability to invest for the long term is a function of their profitability. The profitability of British industry has returned of late to the highest levels for 20 years and business investment has reached record levels.

Rover Group

50. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he expects to meet the European Commission to discuss the sale of the Rover Group.

75. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he expects to meet the European Commission to discuss the sale of the Rover Group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no plans to do so.

74. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to visit the Rover Group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no immediate plans to do so.

88. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will examine the records of previous privatisations to determine whether any arrangements similar to those recently vetoed by the European Economic Community in the case of the sale of Rover to British Aerospace have been made in relation to any other company.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The National Audit Office investigates all significant privatisations and decides whether it is necessary to report to the Public Accounts Committee as it did in the case of the Rover Group.

141. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to respond to the European Community's recent communication on the sale of the Rover Group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones).

Fibre Optics

52. **Mr. Dicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies have been made of the cost of creating a national fibre optic network.

56. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies have been conducted of the cost of creating a national fibre optic network.

113. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the cost of creating a national fibre optic network.

Mr. Forth: The study by the PA Consulting Group, "Evolution of the United Kingdom Communications Infrastructure" (HMSO 1988), which was commissioned by my Department, contains estimates comparing the costs of development of the communications infrastructure under various scenarios. The report includes an estimate that over the period 1991-2010 the creation and maintenance of a national fibre optic grid would cost approximately £82 billion, compared to £61 billion for a network that might be expected to result from a continuation of what the study describes as the current system of lightly regulated competition.

EC Industry Ministers

53. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which meetings of the European Community's Industry Ministers he has not attended in the past year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have attended each of the Industry Council meetings during the last year, with the exception of the 28 May 1990 meeting, which was attended by Sir David Hannay, the United Kingdom permanent representative to the European Communities.

Supervisory Bodies

54. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to establish any new bodies to oversee industry.

129. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to set up any new official bodies to oversee British manufacturing industry.

Mr. Hogg: I have no plans to establish any new bodies to oversee industry.

114. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to establish any new bodies to oversee industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no plans to establish any new bodies to oversee industry.

Link Projects

58. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made in the setting up of Link projects in the current financial year.

97. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made in the setting up of Link projects in the current financial year.

118. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made in the setting up of Link projects in the current financial year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since the beginning of the current financial year 10 more Link projects have been announced, bringing the total number of active projects to 65. In addition by 29 May 1990 another 12 projects were through all stages of technical approval, bringing the total number of projects having gained technical approval to 57, and a further 50 full proposals are at the technical approval stage. There are many more projects in the pipeline.

Environmental Protection

59. **Mr. Allan Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new proposals to encourage British industry to take further measures to protect the environment.

131. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new proposals to encourage British industry to take further measures to protect the environment.

Mr. Forth: I shall continue to encourage British industry to respond positively to the challenges and opportunities presented by environmental issues. My Department's environmental unit offers advice, and where appropriate assistance, on such issues including the development of improved environmental technology, waste management and recycling. It also keeps fully abreast of the impact of all environmental issues on business efficiency and competitiveness and contributes accordingly to the development of environmental policy and regulation.

Transputers

60. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications for export licences for transputers have been refused in the past six months.

78. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications for export licences for transputers have been refused in the past six months.

86. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications for export licences for transputers have been refused in the past six months.

134. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications for export licences for transputers have been refused in the past six months.

Mr. Redwood: A licence is required to export transputers to any destination under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989, as amended. An export licence has been refused for transputers during the last six months and several export licence applications have been withdrawn.

Airline Competition

62. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet Sir Leon Brittan to discuss promoting competition in the provision of European air services.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will meet Sir Leon Brittan as and when necessary for discussion of a wide range of topics.

Post Office

65. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Post Office to discuss the quality of postal services.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not yet had the opportunity to meet the chairman of the Post Office, Sir Bryan Nicholson.

Regional Policy

67. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his regional policy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government remain committed to an effective regional policy and will continue to make the necessary resources available.

83. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to introduce new regional policies.

132. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to introduce new regional policies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to introduce new regional policies. The Government remain committed to an effective regional policy and will continue to make the necessary resources available.

RECHAR

70. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response his Department has given to the European Commission's recent request for details of the additional policy instruments and financial support to be made available to local authorities to ensure that the RECHAR allocation can be fully utilised.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No such request has been received.

126. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of local authorities to discuss progress with RECHAR; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Officials of my own and other Departments have been in close touch with local authorities and other local interests in the preparation first of the United Kingdom's list of proposed areas to be included in RECHAR and now of the operational programmes for the areas selected by the European Commission. During the course of my regional visits I have also met local authority representatives and RECHAR has been one of several issues raised by them. I have made representations to the European Commission about areas it has not selected and will do so in regard to programmes as may be necessary.

Dunsdale Securities

72. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the regulatory system since the collapse of Dunsdale Securities.

111. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the regulatory system since the collapse of Dunsdale Securities.

116. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the regulatory system since the collapse of Dunsdale Securities.

Mr. Redwood: I receive a considerable number of representations on a variety of topics relating to the regulation of financial services. The volume and type of representations have not changed since the collapse of Dunsdale Securities. We consider very carefully those which relate to the scope or framework of the regulatory system or to the powers under the Financial Services Act which the Government retain. Those which relate to matters which are the responsibility of the SIB or another regulatory authority are passed to the appropriate body.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the audited returns of Dunsdale Securities submitted to his Department between 1983 and 1988 included a source and application of funds statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* accounts filed at Companies House by Dunsdale Securities Ltd. for the years 1984 to 1988 include a source and application of funds statement; the accounts for 1983 do not.

Cars (Clocking)

73. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the most recent estimate by his Department of the number of cars which are clocked.

92. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the most recent estimate by his Department of the number of cars which are clocked.

Mr. Forth: My Department does not produce such estimates.

British Telecom

77. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current value of the Government's shareholding in British Telecom.

100. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current value of the Government's shareholding in British Telecom.

144. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current value of the Government's shareholding in British Telecom.

Mr. Forth: HM Government currently hold 2,941 million ordinary shares in British Telecommunications plc. The shareholding has a value of some £8,900 million at current market prices.

TUC

79. **Mr. Carr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the general secretary of the Trade Union Congress to discuss the performance of British manufacturing industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no plans to meet the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress at present. However, Ministers and officials of my Department has frequent contacts with other bodies, where the TUC is represented, on a wide range of business matters.

Insurance

80. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, under the relevant European Community directives, British insurance companies will be able to canvas for life insurance and for the insuring of cars, houses and other items of individual property insurance within the European Economic Community after 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: There is already freedom of establishment for insurance within the European Community, and United Kingdom insurers established in other member states may advertise there on the same basis as local insurers. The Commission's aim which we strongly support, is also to achieve full freedom for companies to sell insurance on a service basis. The Commission have therefore announced their intention of proposing two further directives, one for life and one for non-life insurance, which will allow insurers to advertise and sell their products anywhere in the Community either on a services basis or from a local branch, on the basis of a single authorisation from their home state supervisor. These directives are however unlikely to come into force until after 1992.

125. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress he is making towards the establishment of a free market for the sale by British companies of *(a)* general insurance and *(b)* life assurance products within the European Community.

Mr. Redwood: As regards general insurance, three single market directives came into force on 1 July and a common position on a fourth (on motor insurance services) was agreed at the internal Market Council on 20 June. The most important of these directives, on Non-Life Insurance Services, established freedom to sell most forms of commercial insurance across frontiers in the Community.

As regards life assurance, a common position was adopted on 29 June on the draft life assurance services directive, which will allow the sale of life insurance across frontiers in cases where the policyholder has taken the initiative in seeking insurance, either directly or through a broker, from a company in another member state.

These directives are important steps towards a free market, but many restrictions remain. I therefore strongly support the announced intention of the Commission to produce two further directives, one each on general insurance and life assurance. These will allow insurers to advertise and sell their products anywhere in the Community, either on a services basis or from a local branch, on the basis of a single authorisation from their home state supervisor.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to publish the names of the companies that have notified him of their intention to take control of insurance companies; when he expects to announce the decision he reaches on whether they are fit and proper to take such control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: No. The Department's consideration of cases under section 61 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 which deals with changes of control of insurance companies is confined entirely to the regulatory issue of whether the proposed controller is fit and proper. In order to form a view on that question, the Department considers all relevant information, much of which is confidential. It would be inappropriate for the Department to disclose that the procedures had been launched or to reveal the stage which they had reached.

Where a change of control involves a public bid, it would be normal for any necessary regulatory consent to be a condition of the offer, and for that fact to be disclosed when a firm intention to make an offer is announced, and in the offer document. If the course taken by the regulatory procedures gave rise to price-sensitive information, it would be for the bidder to disclose the relevant facts. The Department must concentrate on its task of judging fit and properness under the law; the bidder or target company on any legal or other requirements which may apply to them to make available all necessary information.

Provided that all the necessary regulatory consents are available, the market should determine the outcome of a proposed takeover.

Departmental Expenditure

82. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the expenditure of his Department in 1989; and what is the planned expenditure for the current year, in real terms.

99. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the expenditure of his Department in 1989; and what is the planned expenditure for the current year, in real terms.

Mr. Forth: The expenditure of my Department in 1989-90 was £1,275·9 million. The planned expenditure for 1990-91 is £1,088·0 million at 1989-90 prices.

109. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much his Department spent in 1989-90 expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product; and what was the comparable figure for the Japanese Ministry for International Trade.

Mr. Lilley: Expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry last year was 0·24 per cent. of gross domestic product whereas general expenditure by Japan's Ministry of International Trade was equivalent to only 0·17 per cent. of Japanese gross domestic product even though its responsibilities are wider.

ECGD

85. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding the trade sale of the Insurance Services Group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Redwood: A number of representations and expressions of interest have been received. However, this issue is a matter of commercial confidence. No decisions have yet been taken on the question of ownership.

Libya

89. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the major category of goods exported to Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Machinery and transport equipment (SITC section 7) accounted for 56 per cent. of all United Kingdom visible exports to Libya in 1989.

Consumer Guarantees Bill

91. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further representations he has received on the Consumer Guarantees Bill.

136. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further representations he has received on the Consumer Guarantees Bill.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 17 May 1990 at column *459*. Since then my Department has received a number of further representations about the Consumer Guarantees Bill, from both individuals and various organisations. It would not be appropriate to give details of those representations without the permission of the individuals and organisations concerned.

Departmental Staff

98. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to reduce the number of staff in his Department.

133. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to reduce the number of staff in his Department.

Mr. Forth: Manpower projection for my Department to 1992-93 were set out in chapter 4 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1004) published in January 1990. These envisaged a fall in total manpower from 11,933 in 1990-91 to 11,876 in 1992-93. The then Secretary of State subsequently announced, in his written reply of 21 February, a reduction of some 100-150 posts as a result of the reorganisation of the Department's "market" divisions. Final figures for 1991-92 and projections for future years will be settled later this year following the conclusion of the current Public Expenditure Survey round.

Grants to Industry

101. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total cost of grants in aid to industry in the last financial year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The whole of my Department's programme expenditure is aimed at encouraging wealth creation by British industry and commerce, partly through the provision of grants and services to the private sector.

Grants paid direct to private sector firms in 1989-90 totalled some £520 millions net of relevant receipts. They included regional development grants, regional enterprise grants, selective assistance, support for the aerospace and shipbuilding industries and support for research and development.

In addition, my Department spent some £105 millions on export promotion and consultancy initiatives, which provide services direct to the private sector.

Departmental Structure

103. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has for the future structure of his Department.

Mr. Lilley: I am proud to have been given responsibility for this great Department of State. I plan to consolidate recent changes in the Department's structure, building on the fine traditions which the DTI and its precursor Departments have established over two centuries in helping markets work and promoting enterprise.

Trade with Europe

104. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet his European counterparts to discuss Britain's trade with the rest of Europe.

117. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet his European counterparts to discuss Britain's trade with the rest of Europe.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Ministers meet their European counterparts on a regular basis to discuss a range of issues of common interest.

Taiwan

106. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received regarding access for British exporters to the Taiwanese market.

Mr. Redwood: My Department receives frequent representations from individual companies and trade associations about the few remaining obstacles to access to the Taiwanese market for British exporters.

The most frequent complaints have been about protectionist duties on Scotch whisky, about the favour shown to United States suppliers for public sector projects, and about the difference between the exhaust emission standards applied to domestic and imported vehicles.

The authorities in Taiwan are well aware of United Kingdom concerns. Her Majesty's Government themselves have no formal dealings with the authorities there but the British Overseas Trade Board's area advisory group for Taiwan, the Anglo-Taiwan Trade Committee, takes every opportunity to draw our concerns on these matters to their attention, both in Taipei and London.

Money Advice Funding Working Party

107. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further representations he has received on implementing the recommendations of the Money Advice Funding Working Party.

Mr. Forth: I have received no such representations. The Money Advice Funding Working Party, under the chairmanship of Lord Ezra, did not make any specific recommendations addressed to Government. I have however welcomed the report, in particular its main conclusion, that the private sector could and should make a greater contribution to the funding of money advice.

Exhibition, Kiev

119. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effects of the British exhibition in Kiev in terms of the promotion of United Kingdom trade and exports.

Mr. Redwood: British exports to the Soviet Union are up 35 per cent. so far this year but we believe this largely reflects orders taken some 18 months to two years ago. Given that such time lags are normal in trade with the Soviet Union, it would obviously be premature to assess the effects of last month's British trade exhibition in Kiev.

The trade exhibition was part of a month-long British presence in Kiev comprising more than 25 different events, the centrepiece being an FCO exhibition depicting life in modern Britain. More than 40 British companies took part in the trade exhibition and accompanying seminar programme, which ran from 4-14 June and demonstrated British expertise in areas of major potential for business in the Ukraine.

I can assure my hon. Friend that the trade exhibition, like the British month as a whole was a considerable success. Participating companies were delighted with the attention which they received from business visitors and I am confident that they will follow this up vigorously to convert these leads into the basis for increased economic co-operation, including British exports to the Soviet Union.

Exporters (Assistance)

121. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new proposals to help British exporters.

Mr. Redwood: My Department offers a wide range of advice and support to assist United Kingdom exporters which many firms make use of. We continue to monitor the performance and relevance of our services to ensure they fully meet the needs of our customers.

The continuing growth of the volume of our exports, reflecting the strong position of United Kingdom industry, is encouraging.

81. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new proposals to help British exporters.

Mr. Redwood: My Department offers a wide range of advice and support to assist United Kingdom exporters which many firms make use of. We continue to monitor the performance and relevance of our services to ensure they fully meet the needs of our customers.

The continuing growth of the volume of our exports, reflecting the strong position of United Kingdom industry, is encouraging.

Hallmarking

122. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to ensure that the British system of hallmarking is safeguarded when legislation to harmonise hallmarking is introduced.

140. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to ensure that the British system of hallmarking is safeguarded when legislation to harmonise hallmarking is introduced.

Mr. Forth: The EC Commission has recently indicated that it intends to put forward proposals on the control and marking of precious metals. We shall seek to maintain an adequate level of protection for the consumer in the United Kingdom in discussion on any proposals which are put forward.

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to ensure the continued mandatory hallmarking of silver cutlery made in Britain following the creation of the single European market.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 17 July 1990]*: The European Community Commission has recently indicated that it intends to put forward proposals on the control and marking of precious metals. We shall seek to maintain an adequate level of protection for the consumer in the United Kingdom in discussions on any proposals which are put forward.

Shipbuilding

138. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the prospects of the shipbuilding industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The future of the United Kingdom's shipbuilding industry depends on its ability to win orders in the face of international competition. Substantial support is provided by the Government to assist the industry to return to normal competitive conditions.

Innovation Advisory Board

139. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement about the report entitled, "Innovation: City Attitudes and Practices" by the Innovation Advisory Board of his Department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The report "Innovation: City Attitudes and Practices" was prepared by the Innovation Advisory Board as a discussion paper for the conference on innovation and short-termism held in London on 25 June. The proceedings of that conference are due to be published shortly.

I understand that the Innovation Advisory Board is considering follow-up action from the conference and I am at present awaiting its recommendations.

Investment

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on short-termism in British finance and industry.

Mr. Lilley: Like my right hon. predecessor, to whom I pay tribute, I recognise the importance of this issue. Companies' ability to invest in the long term is a function of their profitability. The profitability of British industry has returned of late to the highest levels for 20 years and business investment has consequently reached record levels.

Financial Reporting Council

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the individual amounts contributed by accountancy firms criticised by the inspectors towards the establishment and running of the Financial Reporting Council.

Mr. Redwood: The financial contribution of the accountancy profession to the Financial Reporting Council is made by the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies and the source of the funding is a matter for the bodies constituting that committee.

British Airways

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he received any communication from the Commission of the European Community as a result of the visit by its officials to the offices of the chairman and chief executive of British Airways when they examined their private papers and personal bank statements.

Mr. Lilley: No. It is not usual for the Commission to report on visits made in the course of competition investigations.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether there was any communication between the Commission of the European Community and his Department before officials of the Commission carried out a search of the offices of the chairman and chief executive of British Airways to examine their private papers and personal bank statements.

Mr. Lilley: In accordance with usual practice, the Commission notified the Office of Fair Trading in advance about the proposed visit to British Airways on 23-24 February, which had already been arranged with the company, and an official from the office accompanied the Commission officials on the visit. So far as we can establish, no personal bank accounts were examined nor were other private papers called for.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Department has records of three subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act, all received over the period since November 1987. No prior estimates were made on expected applications.

In view of the small number of requests and the absence of complaints there are no plans to review the subject access fee. The Department does not charge staff for access to their records.

Chinese Bicycles

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the ratio is of Chinese bicycles imported into the European Community to the level envisaged under present generalised system of preferences rules; and what proportion of these imports enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: There are no fixed limits on imports of Chinese bicycles under the generalised system of preferences at the present time.

Full details of Community imports of Chinese bicycles under the GSP for the first half of 1990 are not yet available from the European Commission. My Department will write to my hon. Friend with this information as soon as it becomes available.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will press for a review of *(a)* general systems of preference status of Chinese bicycle imports and *(b)* China's undeveloped nation status for trading purposes.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans at present to seek a review of the status of Chinese bicycle imports within the EC, or China's current status as a beneficiary under the GSP. My Department will, however, continue to monitor the situation regarding the imports of Chinese bicycles.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to formulate his response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report of the inquiry at which Mr. Nigel Harris of the AUEW, Mr. Alan Harris, Mr. Bill Menzies and the hon. Member for Linlithgow gave evidence.

Mr. Redwood: The Secretary of State will formulate his response when he receives the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which is expected by 3 August.

Import Penetration (EC)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish a table showing the latest figure for import penetration from the European Economic Community as a percentage of home demand on the same basis as in table 15.10 of the Monthly Digest of Statistics; and if he will add the figures for 1970 and 1979 on a broadly comparable basis.

Mr. Redwood: My Department does not make regular estimates of import penetration ratios for particular groups of trading partners. However, estimates broadly comparable to those published in the Monthly Digest of Statistics are as follows:

EC imports as a proportion of home demand (manufacturing)

	Percentage
1970	5
1979	12
1988	19

Computers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of United Kingdom exports of computers consists of re-exports.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not readily available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the United Kingdom content of United Kingdom exports of computers in 1973, 1979, 1985 and the latest year for which an estimate is feasible.

Mr. Forth: Information on which to base a reliable estimate is not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has completed his review of the computer industry; and whether he intends to publish his findings.

Mr. Forth: A voluntary exercise has been undertaken to collect figures for the "balance of trade" in electronic and IT goods of some of the larger IT companies in the United Kingdom. The results will be published soon.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the Civil Aviation Authority will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The report is published today. In contrast to its more wide-ranging 1983 report, the commission was asked to focus its attention particularly on the authority's arrangement for managing its investment programme and for identifying and implementing improvements in efficiency.

The commission found that the authority was not pursuing a course of conduct which operated against the public interest.

The commission recognised the authority's achievement in maintaining its excellent safety record in the face of the marked growth of air traffic in recent years. While disappointed that the authority had initially been slow to implement the recommendations of its 1983 report, the commission found that the new management team appointed from 1986 onwards was now tackling the authority's problems. For example, an extensive investment programme is under way and there had been a market recent improvement in the authority's record of project control.

The commission made a number of recommendations, giving particular priority to:

(a) the implementation of effective corporate manpower planning, in particular to address the shortage of air traffic control officers;

(b) the use of corporate planning to illustrate trends in performance;

(c) implementation of improvements in project management to the authority's suggested time-scale;

(d) greater transparency in and explanation of charges.

The authority will be producing a preliminary response to the commission's findings within three to four months, in the light of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will make a statement.

Company Registers

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has for introducing regulations under section 143 of the Companies Act 1989 on the inspection and copying of company registers; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My Department issued a consultative document today on the issues to be covered by regulations under section 143.

A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. Further copies are available from my Department by telephoning 071-215 3093 or writing to DTI, room G07, 10-18 Victoria street, London, SW1H 0NN.

The deadline for comments is 14 September 1990.

Industry Council

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what matters will be discussed at the European Community Industry Council to be held on 21 September.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* At the moment, no agenda has been formally agreed for the 21 September meeting of the Industry Council.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans to attend the European Community Industry Council proposed for 21 September.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* At the moment, it is my intention to attend the 21 September meeting of the Industry Council.

Companies Act Investigations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1980 the number of reports under the Companies Acts completed, the number published after completion and the cost of such investigations, showing separately the costs of those reports published from the costs of reports not published.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* Following is the information:

	Completed reports	Published final reports	Published interim reports	Unpublished final reports	Unpublished interim reports
1980	14	4	2	8	0
Costs £000	575	[3]575	—	—	—
1981	10	6	0	3	1
Costs £000	1,218	1,218	—	—	—
1982	2	0	1	1	0
Costs £000	—	—	—	—	—
1983	3	0	0	3	0
Costs £000	—	—	—	—	—
1984	2	0	1	1	0
Costs £000	[1]149	—	149	—	—
1985	5	2	1	1	1
Costs £000	[1]400	—	—	400	—
1986	5	0	1	4	0
Costs £000	[1]184	—	—	[1]184	—
1987	7	3	0	4	0
Costs £000	3,153	[2]1,259	—	[3]1,894	—
1988	7	4	0	1	2
Costs £000	[4]1,875	[4]1,875	—	—	—
1989	7	1	0	3	3
Costs £000	[4]1,588	1,088	—	[3]500	—
1990	1	0	0	1	0
Costs £000	[1]1,243	—	—	1,243	—

Notes:

[1]Costs of investigations to interim report stage are not readily available.

[2]The cost of investigations by Departmental officers and in one case by outside inspectors is not readily available. The number of reports completed each year for which cost of investigations are available is shown in brackets after the cost.

[3]The decision whether to publish 13 of the unpublished reports completed since 1985 remains under consideration.

[4]Reports were not necessarily published in the same year they were completed.

Financial Institutions

143. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board to discuss the other self-regulatory organisations.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board to discuss a range of topics concerning the regulation of financial services as frequently as is necessary. No date has been fixed for the next meeting of this sort.

Financial Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the persons who have conducted investigations on his behalf under the Financial Services Acts.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The following individuals have either been authorised under section 106 or appointed as inspectors under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986 by the Secretary of State to carry out investigations:

B. R. Addison FCA
D. Anton FCA
M. Austin-Smith
B. R. Bacon
J. M. Barney FCA
R. M. Beales
J. M. Beckett
D. M. Blair
J. A. Blair-Gould
M. Boohan FCA
D. Botterill FCA
D. R. Brailsford
A. Bray FCA
M. Bromley-Martin
Sir Henry Brooke
M. J. Burton
A. H. F. Campbell FCA
K. S. Carmichael CBE FCA
D. Caruth
R. L. Crocombe
P. Crozier
C. J. Dent
M. J. Deveson
Dr. A. Evans QC
His Honour Judge Fabyan Evans
M. O. Feltham
G. Flather QC
J. A. Gardner
D. Gorick
M. R. A. Haan FCA
A. D. Harverd FCA
Miss H. Helbron QC
P. L. Heslop QC
W. M. Hoffman FCA
O. M. Holmes FCA
G. Hulbert FCA
A. H. Isaacs
A. Issard-Davies
P. Jennings
M. Kalisher QC
J. B. Katto
B. A. Kemp FCA
G. N. Kennedy
T. G. R. Lawrence FCA
M. H. Lawson
G. S. Lawson Rogers
R. P. G. Lewis FCA
J. Lindsay QC
N. R. Lyle
M. McIver
R. H. MacIntyre FCA
D. J. MacLeod FCA
J. Mann
Mrs. B. J. L. Mills QC
J. C. Morton FCA
A. Muir
T. Nash
T. W. Owen
Professor J. Percy FCA
D. Perry
N. Purnell QC
A. C. Rapazzini FCA
E. E. Ray CBE FCA
A. S. Ridler FCA
D. V. Robertson FCA
P. Rook
J. Scannell

P. D. J. Scott QC
P. R. Siddons MA FCA
The Hon. Justice Simpson
S. M. Solley QC
Mrs. L. J. Stern
P. J. Stilling FCA
A. Sutton FCA
J. Thompson
R. T. Turner FCA
R. C. Turton
Miss J. H. Ungar
S. P. Waller
M. Wheeler FCA
R. P. Wilkinson
P. G. B. Willsher
B. L. Worth FCA
I. P. Yeatman
R. G. A. Youard
L. D. Ziman

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the ministerial meetings with officials of (1) the Securities and Investments Board, (2) the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association, (3) the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, (4) the Securities Association and (5) the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* During the past year I have met officials from the Securities and Investments Board on five occasions; from the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association five times; from the Securities Association three times; from the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation twice and from the investment Management Regulatory Organisation once. Over the same period my right hon. Friend the previous Secretary of State met officials from the Securities and Investments Board and the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association each on one occasion, and the Securities Association twice.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies entered into receivership in each year since 1980; and what information he has on the number of such cases in which the previous annual audit statement was unqualified.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The number of companies in Great Britain notified to Companies House as entering receivership since 1980 were:

	Number
1980	1,498
1981	1,741
1982	2,949
1983	3,063
1984	2,322
1985	2,130
1986	2,141
1987	1,466
1988	2,037
1989	1,841

No information is available on the number of receivership cases where the previous annual audit statement was unqualified.

Vietnam

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many British companies trade with Vietnam; and what information he has on the position in other European Community member states.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The DTI does not maintain a comprehensive list of individual British or EC companies which trade with Vietnam. The table compares the United Kingdom's share of exports from OECD countries to Vietnam with those of the rest of the European Community.

European Community countries' exports to Vietnam 1986-1989

	1986		*1987*		*1988*		*1989*	
	Value	*Percentage*	*Value*	*Percentage*	*Value*	*Percentage*	*Value*	*Percentage*
OECD total[1]	312·00		312·00		372·00		346·00	
France[2]	34·33	(11·0)	37·3	(12·0)	51·73	(13·9)	91·78	(26·5)
Germany	9·48	(3·0)	13·43	(4·3)	16·22	(4·4)	14·99	(4·3)
Netherlands	3·46	(1·1)	7·87	(2·5)	11·24	(3·0)	9·04	(2·6)
Spain	0·31	(0·1)	0·05	(0·0)	4·48	(1·2)	7·67	(2·2)
United Kingdom	1·88	(0·6)	4·25	(1·4)	3·94	(1·1)	6·72	(1·9)
Italy	5·15	(1·7)	11·64	(3·7)	11·47	(3·1)	5·05	(1·5)
Belgium/Luxembourg	1·66	(0·5)	3·44	(1·1)	1·82	(0·5)	2·02	(0·6)
Denmark	0·79	(0·3)	0·36	(0·1)	3·58	(1·0)	1·27	(0·4)
Portugal	—	(0·0)	0·05	(0·0)	0·13	(0·0)	—	(0·0)
Greece	—	(0·0)	0·06	(0·0)	—	(0·0)	—	(0·0)
Ireland	0·07	(0·0)	0·04	(0·0)	0·01	(0·0)	—	(0·0)

[1] Value in US$ million.
[2] Provisional figure.
Note: Countries listed *in order of 1989 market share.*
Source: OECD Series A.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what cover the Export Credits Guarantee Department gives to British companies wishing to trade with Vietnam; what information he has on export credits provided by other European Community states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* Cover from the Export Credits Guarantee Department is available for short-term business subject to payment being made on terms of cash against documents out of an irrevocable letter of credit confirmed before shipment by a bank in the United Kingdom. Some other member states provide similar support.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what support Her Majesty's Government gives to British companies wishing to trade with Vietnam.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]*: Financial support from Her Majesty's Government for British companies wishing to trade with Vietnam is limited to short-term (180 days) export credit cover available from the Export Credits Guarantee Department on the basis of payment made on terms of cash against documents out of an irrevocable letter of credit confirmed before shipment by a bank in the United Kingdom. The resumption of medium and long-term cover, withdrawn in 1982 following repayment defaults, will be reviewed when Vietnam has negotiated a debt rescheduling arrangement with the IMF. This policy is broadly in line with other European export credit agencies.

Through the BOTB, the DTI continues to offer a wide range of services to assist United Kingdom companies trading with Vietnam including general market information, briefing seminars and financial support for companies visiting Vietnam as part of DTI-sponsored trade missions or exhibitions.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 19 July 1990

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

EC Officials (Search Warrants)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions in the current year courts have issued warrants to officials of the European Community to search the offices of companies in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There have been no instances during the current year of United Kingdom courts granting orders in connection with the search of company premises by officials of the European Community under the EC rules on competition.

Legal Aid

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list those categories of alleged offence which qualify for international legal aid.

The Attorney-General: International legal aid is available under the provisions of the European agreement on the transmission of legal aid applications for civil, commercial and administrative cases. This agreement provides for the transfer of legal aid applications between signatory states. The treatment of applications is governed by the rules of the legal aid schemes of the recipient states and varies from state to state.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given in his "Options for Change" review to the amount of low flying carried out by RAF fast jets.

Mr. Neubert: The amount of low flying training carried out by the RAF will continue to reflect operational requirements.

Royal Clarence Yard, Gosport

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the Royal Clarence yard at Gosport.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In common with the rest of the naval estate, the cost effectiveness of the Royal Clarence yard is continually monitored.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: A total of 21,985 subject access requests have been received by the major pay and personnel database centres in the Ministry of Defence; all were from current, past and potential employees. The figures so far are considered to be roughly in line with the forecast of between 0·01 and 0·1 per cent. of the target population per annum. The subject access fee charged is not being reconsidered.

Al Yamamah Agreement

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the date of the conclusion of the Al Yamamah agreement with Saudi Arabia and the dates of the conclusion of subsequent modifications of that agreement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The original formal understanding and the memorandum of understanding between Her Majesty's Government and the Saudi Arabian Government concerning Project Al Yamamah were concluded, respectively, in 1985 and 1986. A further formal understanding was concluded in 1988.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates and places of meetings about the Al Yamamah agreement with Saudi Arabia and officials or representatives of his Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: My officials are in constant touch with representatives of the Saudi Arabian Government during which a wide range of issues concerning the Al Yamamah agreement are reviewed and discussed.

Menwith Hill

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current agreement under which Menwith Hill base is occupied and controlled by the National Security Agency of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart) gave to the hon. Member on 27 April 1988, *Official Report*, column *203*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Company Taxation

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will identify the provisions by which, if under the proposed pay and file system no assessment has been made on a company within the normal six-year time limit, the tax already paid by the company under the pay rules of pay and file will be repayable to it; within what period from the end of such six-year period such tax will have to be repaid; whether interest will be payable on the repayment by the Revenue; and by what legal process the tax-paying company will be able to enforce such payment.

Mr. Ryder: As I explained in Standing Committee E on 21 June, *Official Report*, column 383, it would not necessarily be appropriate for tax paid by a company under pay and file to be repaid where an assessment was

not made within the normal six-year time limit. But where the company was then able to show that no assessment could be made, it would be entitled to claim repayment of the tax and interest would be due on the tax repaid.

Married Woman's Tax Allowance

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated cost to the Treasury in a full year of making the married woman's tax allowance transferable to *(a)* working husbands and *(b)* non-working husbands; and what is his policy on making such a move.

Mr. Ryder: The cost would be a little over £3 billion; some 95 per cent. would result from married women transferring unused personal allowance to husbands in paid employment. These estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are, therefore, provisional.

An arrangement of this kind would have some similarity to the system of fully transferable allowances for married couples described in the 1986 Green Paper "The Reform of Personal Taxation". In the light of the response to the Green Paper the Government decided not to go ahead with that proposal, but to introduce the present system of independent taxation incorporating the transferable married couple's allowance.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Customs and Excise officers at ports of entry to the United Kingdom have pay scales designed to reward proficiency in more than one language.

Mr. Ryder: Although pay scales are not designed to reward foreign language proficiency, Customs and Excise officers at ports of entry can be paid allowances in addition to basic salary, normally for a maximum of two languages but exceptionally for three where one language is Finnish, Greek, Arabic, Hungarian, Turkish, or any Asian or Slavonic language.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Customs and Excise officers at ports of entry to the United Kingdom are required to be able to speak foreign languages.

Mr. Ryder: Customs and Excise officers at ports of entry to the United Kingdom are not so required but some are proficient in foreign languages and receive appropriate allowances.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the report on eastern European economics entitled "End of the Cycle" by Morgan Stanley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: At present the Treasury and Cabinet Office library does not hold a copy of the report entitled "End of the Cycle" by Morgan Stanley. The library is trying to obtain a copy.

Government Departments (Staff)

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government Departments at 1 April.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On 1 April 1990 there were 562,388 staff in post in central Government Departments. Of these 495,233 were non-industrials and 67,155 were classified as being in industrial work.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools, Wandsworth

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what consultations he has had with Wandsworth borough council regarding parental choice of secondary schools;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the closure notices for Chestnut Grove, Walsingham, John Archer and Battersea Park comprehensive schools, issued by Wandsworth borough council;

(3) when he or his colleagues last met *(a)* the director of education of Wandsworth borough council and *(b)* the chairman of Wandsworth borough council education committee, regarding the closure of comprehensive schools in Wandsworth and the resulting pattern of school provision in Wandsworth;

(4) when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the Wandsworth education committee to discuss comprehensive school closures in Wandsworth.

Mrs. Rumbold: As part of a cycle of meetings with the inner London councils to discuss the progress they have made since they took over responsibility for education from ILEA on 1 April, I intend soon to meet representatives of Wandsworth local education authority. That meeting will include discussion of the authority's secondary reorganisation proposals, on which it is to issue a public consultation document. If consultation led to the publication of statutory proposals requiring the determination of the Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend would consider these in due course.

Haberdashers' Aske's CTC

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science with what persons he will enter into an agreement under section 105 of the Education Reform Act 1988, for the purposes of establishing and maintaining a Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Secretary of State will enter into an agreement with the Haberdashers' Aske's City Technology College Trust, which has not yet been formed. When it is formed the primary members of the trust will be persons nominated by those organisations including the Haberdashers' Company which intend to sponsor the CTC. Membership will include a nominee of the Secretary of State.

World Literacy Survey

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that the United Kingdom participates in the world literacy survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No proposal on this has been put to the Government, but I understand that the National Foundation for Educational Research—to which it was put—declined to participate on justified grounds. The national curriculum and the equivalent arrangements in Scotland and Northern Ireland, should in due course provide a much sounder platform for international comparisons.

City Technology Colleges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science in relation to each city technology college, what amount of earmarked annual grant or related payments were paid by his Department for the school year 1989-90; and for what purposes each element of earmarked annual grant was paid.

Mrs. Rumbold: Earmarked grants are the subject of specific bids for the colleges and relate to specific expenditure on:

a. consumables—the purchase, during the start-up period only, of a basic stock of library and text books, courseware, stationery and other consumable materials;
b. school meals—the provision of free meals for pupils who qualify, a subsidy in respect of those pupils who do not, and supervision costs;
c. pupil support—to cover the costs of school uniforms and school transport for disadvantaged pupils;
d. IT development—software and courseware for the incorporation and exploitation of IT throughout the curriculum and in the administration of the college; and
e. staff development—to provide for in-service training and curriculum development needs arising from the curriculum in CTCs.

The total EAG provision for the three colleges in the academic year 1989-90 is as follows:

	£
Kingshurst	143,000
Djanogly, Nottingham	213,000
Macmillan College, Teesside	204,000

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science in respect of each city technology college what amount of annual per capita grant or related revenue costs were paid by his Department for the school year 1989-90; what unit of cost per pupil was used in calculating the amount of such payments; how this was determined; and what enhancement of annual per capita grant was allowed under the terms of paragraph 11 of the model funding agreement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The annual per capita grant—APG—for the academic year 1989-90 for the three CTCs that are open is as follows:

	£
Kingshurst	927,000
Djanogly, Nottingham	871,000
Macmillan College, Teesside	852,000

The APG is determined by taking the unit cost for pupils under school leaving age, which for the academic year 1989-90 works out at £1,929, and for pupils over school leaving age, is £3,086. These are determined by the actual expenditure per secondary pupil in a group of 24 LEAs that maintain schools in similar areas to CTCs with an addition for central administration costs. Furthermore, an allowance is made for diseconomies of scale during the start-up period of a CTC while it works up to full pupil capacity. This provides for more teachers in year one than the overall pupil-teacher ratio would justify; more non-teaching staff in year one than the final target complement would imply pro rata; and an additional sum to reflect premises-related diseconomies.

Management Information Systems

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the criticisms in the report, "Computerised Management Information Systems in Further Education—A Study of Quality Assurance", of the two major suppliers of these systems.

Mr. Jackson: The Department plans to publish the findings of the project in the early autumn.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations his Department has received from suppliers mentioned in the report "Computerised Management Information Systems in Further Education—A Study of Quality Assurance" seeking to have the report modified or changed before its publication.

Mr. Jackson: Before accepting the completion of the project, the Department sought the suppliers' views on the factual accuracy of the project team's findings. The suppliers' replies highlighted some inaccuracies and indicated how they proposed to respond to the team's findings. These responses will be taken into account in the report due to be published in the autumn.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when his Department will publish the report entitled "Computerised Management Information Systems in Further Education—A Study of Quality Assurance", which was presented to his Department in December 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 10 July 1990, *Official Report*, column *186*.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he expects to be available to him, and what studies have been made and are being undertaken relating to governors of grant-maintained schools and proposed grant-maintained schools.

Mr. MacGregor: The views of the governors of grant-maintained schools are sought on a variety of issues. It is clear that they welcome their new status. In particular, governors welcome their greater independence and the freedom to decide their own priorities and to implement policies for achieving their goals. Many governors believe that their increased responsibilities make for a more satisfying and fulfilling role.

Student Loans

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the appointment of an independent person, pursuant to paragraph 3(5) of schedule 2 to the Education (Student Loans) Act 1990.

Mr. MacGregor: The Student Loans Company will appoint an independent assessor, whose function will be to investigate and report on disputes between the company and borrowers or intending borrowers under the loans scheme. The appointment of the assessor will be subject to my approval. The assessor will operate in accordance with an agreed set of procedures and terms of reference, a copy of which I have placed today in the Library of each House.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Welfare Inspections

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many animal welfare inspections were made by state veterinary officers in each of 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Maclean: The number of visits to farms specifically to carry out animal welfare inspections in each of these years was:

Year	*Inspections*
1985	6,064
1986	5,804
1987	5,219
1988	5,670
1989	3,902

The reduction in 1989 was due largely to the need to divert the effort of the state veterinary service to tackling the problems of BSE. However, veterinary officers continued to monitor welfare in the course of their visits to farms for other purposes.

Veterinary Investigation Centre, Polwhele

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tests for listeria were carried out at the veterinary investigation centre, Polwhele, Truro, in 1987, 1989 and to the most convenient date in 1990; and what percentage of these tests gave a positive response.

Mr. Maclean: The veterinary investigation service does not routinely carry out tests specifically for listeria. As a disease of animals, listeriosis is considered as a differential diagnosis when pathological material is submitted to a veterinary investigation centre by a practising veterinary surgeon.

In the period 1987 to 9 July 1990 the following diagnoses of listeriosis were made at Truro VIC either by microbiological examination or pathological examination or both:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*[1]1990*
Cattle	3	17	14	9
Sheep	7	6	8	10

[1] To 9 July 1990.

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many possible BSE samples were examined at the veterinary investigation centre, Polwhele, Truro, in each of the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 to date; and what percentage of these cases proved positive.

Mr. Maclean: There are two stages in the examination of brain material for BSE carried out in veterinary investigation centres.

(i) The removal of brain material for examination.
(ii) The histopathological preparation and miscroscopic examination of the selected tissues.

In respect of (ii) the VI centre at Polwhele acts as one of 11 designated centres for this purpose and as such the numbers examined do not necessary reflect the situation.

In 1987 to 9 July 1990 the VI centre at Truro carried out the following procedures:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*[1]1990*
(i) Removal of brain tissue	44	364·00	611·00	620·00
(ii) Histopathological examination	44	437·00	537·00	730·00
Percentage histopathological examination +ve	100	90·16	89·57	89·18

[1] To 9 July 1990.

Veterinary Investigation Centres

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many veterinary investigation centres are currently operated by his Department; and how many of these are currently under review as to their future retention.

Mr. Maclean: There are 19 veterinary investigation centres in England and Wales. The review of the veterinary investigation service was commissioned by the Minister with a view to improving the quality, efficiency and the cost effectiveness of the services provided by VI centres. As such the review considered the service as a whole. The report of this review has been submitted to Ministers but as yet no decision has been reached on any of the recommendations within the report.

North-East Salmon Review

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the north-east salmon review has been completed; and when he expects to publish the report.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) on 29 June, *Official Report*, column *388*.

Fishery Protection

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to change the arrangements for fishery protection at sea.

Mr. Curry: Yes. In order to maintain the patrol capability at the level I consider necessary to achieve effective deterrence and proper compliance with United Kingdom and Economic Community fisheries regulations, the Department has arranged to charter the Southella to carry out fishery enforcement duties within British fishery limits. The charter will run from the middle of this month. The ship is already converted for this work, having previously carried out similar duties for the Falkland Islands Government and the Commission of the European Communities. It will supplement the forces of the Royal Navy's fishery protection squadron.

Like the ships of the fishery protection squadron, Southella will operate under the direction of the Ministry's sea fisheries inspectorate. She will carry a team of

experienced inspectors who will carry out enforcement checks on both British and foreign fishing boats, mainly though not exclusively in the south-west approaches.

This civilian addition to the fishery enforcement capability is necessary because of a current shortfall in the availability of suitable naval ships this year. The requirements for next year will be reviewed in the light of the availability of Royal Navy vessels.

I commend the fishery protection squadron for the invaluable service it has given and continues to give in carrying out the fishery enforcement duties for the protection of fisheries and the ultimate benefit of all fishermen.

WALES

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 July to the hon. Member for Newport, West, *Official Report*, column *199*, what was *(a)* the percentage of polychlorinated biphenyl contaminated material, and *(b)* the tonnage of other toxic materials that were imported into Newport via the River Usk during the period 1 April 1989 to 31 March.

Mr. Grist: Of the 1,314 tonnes of hazardous waste recorded as imported into Newport via facilities on the River Usk, 479 tonnes or 36·45 per cent. was polychlorinated biphenyl contaminated material, and 835 tonnes was other material.

Hospitals (Salmonella)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he anticipates receiving a report on the cause of the salmonella outbreak at Ely hospital, Cardiff;

(2) when he next expects to meet the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority to discuss the salmonella outbreak at the Ely hospital, Cardiff.

Mr. Grist: Officials at the Welsh Office have already received a preliminary report from the health authority concerning the investigation and control of the salmonella outbreak at Ely hospital and further progress reports are awaited. At the present time my right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the chairman of South Glamorgan health authority to discuss this matter.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to institute better anti-salmonella preventive measures in hospitals and other institutions in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Food Safety Bill, which applies to hospitals and other institutions in Wales, will require higher standards in relation to the preparation and handling of food including the requirement for food handlers to receive a minimum level of training.

NHS Drugs

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the value of national health service drugs administered in Wales *(a)* in total and *(b)* in hospitals in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The net ingredient cost of all drugs and dressing administered by the NHS in Wales during 1988-89 was £160,154,164 of which the cost of drugs and dressing administered by district health authorities was £22,618,505 and £3,556,682 respectively.

Young Offenders

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received for the provision of a secure unit for young offenders below the age normally committed to prison; over what time span these representations have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: We have not received any representations which call for the provision of a secure unit for young offenders. However, we have received representations which draw attention to the availability of secure accommodation in Wales.

Housing Grants

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the arrangements for paying new housing capital grants.

Mr. Grist: New housing capital grants were introduced by part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The approval of Parliament for expenditure on these new grants is being sought in the main supply estimates for class XVI, vote 6—housing, other environmental services and welfare food, Wales. Pending that approval urgent expenditure, estimated at £22,733 million, will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce his proposals arising out of the Government's recent review of the operation of the new system of local government finance in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of a consultation paper which has been produced as a result of the review. The paper, which I shall be distributing shortly to interested bodies and individuals, sets out proposals with respect to the standard community charge, and certain other matters. Views are being sought on a number of changes which we are proposing to make in Wales. Similar consultations will also take place in England and Scotland. Comments on the proposals are invited by 28 September.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Conference, Paris

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who will be representing Her Majesty's Government at the second United Nations conference on the least-developed countries to be held in Paris in September; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I hope to lead the United Kingdom delegation to the second United Nations conference on the least-developed countries in Paris.

Rihand Power Station, India

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that no further British Government aid will be provided

for the Rihand power station project in India, involving British companies, unless flue gas desulphurisation technology is installed.

Mrs. Chalker: A thorough appraisal of the project, including its environmental impact, is a condition for the provision of British aid to the second stage of the Rihand power station in India. The appraisal will examine the impact on the Indian environment of the level of sulphur dioxide emissions from the plant and assess the environmental and economic costs and benefits of flue gas desulphurisation. Because of the low sulphur content of Indian coal, the level of sulphur dioxide emissions would be relatively small. In the light of the appraisal, we will ensure adequate environmental safeguards are taken in consultation with the Government of India.

Developing Countries (Aid)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase support for the least developed countries.

Mrs. Chalker: The British aid programme is focused on the poorest, including those classified as least developed. Within an aid programme that is planned to grow in real terms, the Government will increasingly support least developed countries which are well governed and implement sound economic policies.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the proportion of gross national product given in overseas aid for each year from 1980 to 1989 to *(a)* the original 31 least developed countries and *(b)* the current 42 least developed countries.

Mrs. Chalker: The proportion of GNP given as official development assistance to the 31 countries classified as least developed at the time of the first UN conference on the least developed, and the 42 countries currently classified as least developed from 1980 to 1989 was as follows:

Proportion of GNP given as official development assistance to LLDCs from 1980 to 1989

Year	*31 original countries Total per cent.*	*42 current countries Total per cent.*
1980	0·09	n/a
1981	0·12	n/a
1982	0·10	0·11
1983	0·09	0·14
1984	0·09	0·11
1985	0·10	0·11
1986	0·08	0·09
1987	0·08	0·10
1988	n/a	0·10
1989	n/a	n/a

Note: The total is made up of bilateral assistance and imputed multilateral assistance.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many accesses were made to each index of the police national computer over the last year; and how many of the access requests could search more than one index.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total number of accesses to each of the indices of the police national computer in the year to 30 June 1990 was as follows:

Index	*Number of Accesses*
1. Stolen and Suspect Vehicles 2. Vehicle Owners	21,370,168
3. Chassis/Engine Numbers	508,710
4. Fingerprints	200,917
5. Fingerprints (Scene of Crime)	13,658
6. Criminal Names	1,094,072
7. Wanted/Missing Persons	2,134,554
8. Disqualified Drivers	765,081
9. Convictions	902,277
10. Major Investigations	5,921
11. Crime Pattern Analysis	279,711

There have also been the following joint accesses:

	Number
To indices 6 and 9[1]	1,996,349
To indices 6, 7 and 9	1,687,245
To indices 6, 7, 8 and 9	8,265,989
To indices 4, 6 and 9	652,426

[1] All accesses to the criminal names index will in addition automatically generate information from the convictions application.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of accesses made to the police national computer by each constabulary over the last year; and what was the proportion of access requests made to the vehicle indexes of the police national computer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Force	*Numbers of transactions for the year up to June 1990*	*Proportion of transactions made to vehicle indices*
Avon and Somerset	928,045	60·5
Bedfordshire	376,446	66·9
British Transport Police	141,988	42·1
Cambridgeshire	375,627	60·7
Central	141,178	51·6
Cheshire	436,687	62·1
City of London	101,987	58·8
Cleveland	331,288	55·8
Cumbria	366,151	62·9
Derbyshire	448,074	61·1
Devon and Cornwall	730,000	55·6
Dorset	457,665	59·6
Dumfries and Galloway	106,837	59·0
Durham	350,553	53·1
Dyfed-Powys	241,976	48·3
Essex	892,740	60·1
Fife	137,425	56·4
Gloucestershire	359,446	68·0
Grampian	265,928	49·4
Greater Manchester	2,271,199	57·3
Guernsey	19,249	10·5
Gwent	187,118	46·3
Hampshire	877,175	59·4
Hertfordshire	463,569	46·5
Humberside	529,245	60·2
Isle of Man	20,547	52·9
Jersey	33,476	10·1
Kent	1,198,384	60·7
Lancashire	1,126,272	58·4
Leicestershire	397,810	55·4
Lincolnshire	267,208	61·3
Lothian and Borders	610,533	59·4
Merseyside	932,268	55·6
Metropolitan	7,597,182	48·4

Force	Numbers of transactions for the year up to June 1990	Proportion of transactions made to vehicle indices
Norfolk	392,549	63·5
North Wales	309,407	51·3
North Yorkshire	440,309	65·6
Northamptonshire	319,903	67·8
Northern	103,454	52·0
Northumberland	990,490	66·7
Nottinghamshire	650,988	71·8
South Wales	842,909	59·2
South Yorkshire	684,321	70·4
Staffordshire	398,871	58·4
Strathclyde	1,289,244	33·8
Suffolk	288,693	58·7
Surrey	370,132	61·8
Sussex	791,593	51·8
Tayside	318,767	50·7
Thames Valley	1,232,066	57·4
Warwickshire	312,924	68·7
West Mercia	498,609	57·5
West Midlands	2,240,914	62·8
West Yorkshire	1,407,148	54·6
Wiltshire	286,988	64·0

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current size of each category found in the stolen and suspect vehicle index of the police national computer; and what was the minimum and maximum size of each category in the index over the year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Category	Current	Minimum	Maximum
Confirmed lost or obtained by deception	397,420	307,408	397,420
Lost or Stolen	406,337	406,337	411,018
Obtained by deception	88	78	88
Found	28,284	28,284	28,572
Removed	13,035	12,980	14,063
Street to Street	121	121	162
Repossessed by Finance Company	0	0	0
Suspect	128	122	128
Police Vehicle	3,621	3,621	3,704
Blocked	6,328	6,323	6,410
Information	16,752	16,327	16,877
Seen	7,490	7,348	8,357

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current size of each index of the police national computer; and what was the minimum and maximum size of each index over the last year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Index	Current	Minimum	Maximum
Vehicle owners	43,846,016	41,386,599	43,846,016
Stolen vehicles	489,162	469,874	489,162
Chassis-engine numbers	823,393	791,850	823,393
Wanted/Missing persons	117,805	112,011	117,805
Cross reference	983,949	964,898	985,202
Disqualified drivers	375,708	367,864	377,057
Convictions	3,249,407	2,929,865	3,249,407
Criminal names	5,582,320	5,457,187	5,582,320
Fingerprints	4,094,626	4,004,441	4,094,626
Crime pattern analysis	110,214	103,149	110,214
Extremists crime index	1,202	1,118	1,202
Major investigations	328,426	326,360	328,426

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current size of each category found in the wanted and missing persons index of the police national computer; and the minimum and maximum size of each category in the index over the year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Category		Current
Wanted		33,031
Fails to Appear		33,083
Suspect		215
Impending Prosecution		49
Deserter		1,552
Locate		42,299
Missing		2,513
Found		13
Absconder	—from care	574
	—from hospital	66
	—from detention	2
	—from youth custody	134
	—from prison	934
	—from remand	5
	—from school	47
Recall	—from detention	0
	—from youth custody	1
	—from prison	320

A record of the minimum and maximum size of each category over the past year has not been maintained and the information is therefore not available.

Mr. D. J. Burrows

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy in respect of compensation for damage done to private property by convicted criminals who abscond from Her Majesty's penal establishments; what factors underlay his refusal to make payments to Mr. D. J. Burrows of Lakenheath, Suffolk, in respect of the damage done to his boat in October 1989 by two persons who had escaped from Hollesley Bay remand centre in Suffolk, and were convicted of breaking-in offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The Home Office does not accept general responsibility for loss or damage caused by absconders from penal establishments. The courts have upheld that Home Office liability applies only where an escape takes place which is attributable to the negligence of staff, when they are under a duty to take steps to prevent an escape. There must be some failure to take proper care on the part of the authorities. In the case of Mr. Burrows there was no evidence of negligence by the staff involved at Hollesley Bay colony and the Department cannot therefore accept any legal liability for the damage to his yacht.

In certain circumstances ex-gratia payments may be made to owners of property stolen or damaged. This ex-gratia scheme is operated regardless of whether the abscond was due to any fault on the part of the staff of the establishment concerned. It simply accepts that in some establishments the conditions are such as to permit absconding if the inmate is so minded and in these circumstances compensation has been paid, for the sake of good will, to members of the public particularly at risk when they suffer loss. The Department makes such payments only where the loss or damage is not covered by insurance.

Mr. Burrows' boat was covered by an insurance policy, but the insurance company declined to meet his claim

because, in breach of a policy condition, he failed to notify it until several months after the incident. The Department could have considered an ex-gratia payment to cover uninsured losses, such as an excess charge on the claim or a loss of no claims discount; but not to cover insured losses which Mr. Burrows has had to bear because of his failure to make a timely claim. Mr. Burrows was advised orally of the position on more than one occasion before he finally claimed from the insurance company. I am reviewing the case however to see whether the Department's actions contributed in any way to Mr. Burrows' delay in making a formal claim to his insurance company; and I will write to my hon. Friend.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During the period 11 November 1987 to 16 July 1990 the Department received 35 requests for subject access. It was not judged possible, at the time when the provisions came into operation, to make any firm advance estimate of likely take-up, but there was an indication, on the basis of experience in other European countries, that requests might be in the range 0·1 to 1 per cent. per annum of records held—that is, between 5,400 and 54,000 requests per year to be addressed to the Home Office. I have no plans to reconsider the subject access fees charged by the Department.

Asylum

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals and of which nationality have been granted asylum in the United Kingdom since 1 April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not yet available. Provisional figures for grants of refugee status in the second quarter of 1990 will shortly be provided to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Isle of Man Bank

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations have been received in connection with the failure of the Isle of Man bank.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since the collapse of the Savings and Investment Bank in the Isle of Man in 1982, a total of 52 representations have been received from, or on behalf of, 18 former investors with the bank. They have been informed that the matter is a domestic one within the jurisdiction of the Isle of Man.

Greater Manchester Police

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the report of the internal police inquiries into Greater Manchester police *(a)* following the collapse of the court proceedings against Kevin Taylor and *(b)* following the collapse of the court proceedings against Gerard Corley; and if he intends to publish the report.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Both these investigations are being carried out under the terms of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The reports will be submitted to the Police Complaints Authority and copied to the chief constable of Greater Manchester.

Young Offenders

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance is given to magistrates in deciding whether young offenders under 17 years of age should be confined in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. John Patten: The only juveniles under 17 who may be remanded to prison department establishments are 15 and 16-year-old boys who have been refused bail and certified by a court as being too unruly to be safely remanded to local authority care. The criteria governing the issue of unruliness certificates are laid down in the Certificates of Unruly Character (Conditions) Order 1977. The use of the sentence of detention in a young offender institution, which is available for some juveniles, is governed by the criteria in section 1 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982. Guidance to courts on the use of their powers is given from time to time by the Court of Appeal.

Minority Communities

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many meetings the responsible Minister has held in the last 12 months with members of the minority communities; how many of these meetings were with young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1 July 1989, I have held 30 meetings with individuals and groups from the minority communities, of which 14 have been with young people. The meetings have taken place not only in the Home Office but also in areas such as Birmingham, Bradford, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Nottingham.

In addition, I have attended two meetings of the Home Secretary's advisory council on race relations, the formal interdepartmental committee on which individual members of the minority communities can advise the Government on all aspects of race relations in Britain.

All these meetings have been an invaluable opportunity for me to learn about the issues that concern our minority communities. I have also been able to discuss ways of developing Britain as an integrated, multiracial society in which the minority communities can participate fully and freely without fear of prejudice and discrimination.

Forensic Pathology

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will announce the results of his consideration of the report of the working party on forensic pathology in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I have now carefully considered the report of the working party which had been examining the provision of forensic pathology services to police forces and coroners in England and Wales together with the

comments which I have received on it from 23 interested individuals and representative bodies. Without exception, those consulted have endorsed the report's principal findings and recommendations, particularly in relation to funding, accreditation, training and research, and have urged me to implement these urgently in order to reverse the recent decline of the service and ensure an adequate supply of forensic specialists in the future.

The main proposal of the report is that the supply of forensic pathology services should be regulated through the market—that is, the main users of these services, police forces, should contract with the suppliers, the pathologists, for the services they need at prices and on conditions to be agreed between them. The role of the Home Office would be to maintain the high quality of the service through new arrangements for accreditation, training and research.

I have decided to accept the working party's proposals and to introduce the new arrangements straight away, including the establishment of a policy advisory board to oversee the development of this vital part of our criminal justice system.

Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the youngest *(a)* boy and *(b)* girl being held in a prison in England and Wales on 9 July.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally on 31 May 1990, the latest date for which information is readily available, the youngest boy and girl held in a prison or remand centre were aged 15. Both had been sentenced.

Strangeways Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what extra financial allowance and additional days' leave were given to prison officers from prisons in England and Wales who were sent to Strangeways prison during the recent riot at that prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Prison officers sent to Her Majesty's prison Manchester during the recent emergency received an ex-gratia payment of £8 per hour in respect of additional hours worked. All staff involved in control and restraint deployment received five days' special leave with pay. Governors were asked also to grant a discretionary five days' special leave to any other staff who suffered particular stress at Manchester.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who will be charged the costs of supplying prison officers from prisons in England and Wales for duty at Strangeways prison during the recent riot at that prison; what was the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The costs of supplying prison officers for duty at Her Majesty's prison Manchester during the recent riot there are borne on the prisons vote—(class XI, 2).

The salaries of prison officers sent to Manchester are already paid by the prison service. The only additional salary costs are payments for additional hours worked in connection with the disturbance. These costs, together with transport and subsistence expenses, amounted to £545,094.

Prison Officers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support is given and by whom, to women prison officers now working in male prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Guidance to line managers in the prison service emphasises the importance of effective induction for staff who are new to an establishment, and line managers at all levels are expected to encourage and support their staff.

Murders

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the police clear-up rates for *(a)* all murders and *(b)* murders of gay men for the two most recent years for which he has figures.

Mr. John Patten: In cases of homicide it is not possible in the absence of a court decision to distinguish between offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide. In England and Wales in 1988 and 1989 the ratio of offences of homicide cleared up to offences of homicide recorded in the same years was 96 and 92 per cent. respectively. Some offences are recorded and cleared up in different years. Statistics of homicide recorded and cleared up in 1988 are published in table 2.8 "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1988"—Cm. 847—and for 1989 in table 6 of "Home Office Statistical Bulletin 10/90". Records available centrally on the sexual status of homicide victims are incomplete. The available information shows six homosexual men to have been victims of homicide in 1988 and 1989; all these cases were cleared up.

Prisons (Incidents)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each of the reported serious incidents that have taken place in prisons in England and Wales between 1 January and 9 July.

Mr. Mellor: The following numbers of incidents between 1 January and 9 July 1990 are recorded as having been reported by prison service establishments under the broad headings shown, excluding incidents under headings categorised as minor.

	Number
Escapes	53
Attempted escapes	7
Escapes from escort	46
Attempted escapes from escort	3
Recapture/surrender of escaped inmates	50
Assaults—on staff	48
—on inmates	77
—on other	8
Deaths of inmates, believed to be suicide	21
Other deaths of inmates	20
Deaths of staff	3
Fires causing personal injury, or serious and/or extensive damage to property	11
Acts of concerted indiscipline	60
Barricade incidents	7
Rooftop demonstrations	26
Food refusals	39
Key/lock compromises	7
Hostage incidents	11
Bomb threats/explosions	24
Dirty protest	1
Other miscellaneous incidents	38

To be meaningful, a list would need to include some description of incidents. In view of the number of incidents, such information could be given only at disproportionate cost.

THE ARTS

Regional Film Theatres

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to meet the chairman of the British Film Institute to discuss increased investment in regional film theatres.

Mr. Luce: I regularly meet the chairman of the British Film Institute to discuss current issues.

Works of Art (Resale)

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Minister for the Arts what controls he intends to place on the resale of works of art by those who have purchased under the new regulations recently announced by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Luce: The Government have never had the power to control the sale of privately owned works of art. On 4 May, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced that, if an owner does not accept an offer from a private individual, the existence of that offer will be taken into account in deciding on the export licence application. If either the original owner, having rejected all offers to purchase, or a new owner, subsequently offer the item for resale, no conditions can be imposed on that sale. Should a resale result in an application for an export licence, the normal procedures for considering it would operate.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will publish the response he has made to the letter from Dr. Peter Jung and expert colleagues in foraminifera, ammonites and mammals of the naturhistorische museum in Basel about whether a major collection can be actively cared for under proposals such as those for the natural history museum in respect of expert staff; and what action he proposes to take to discharge obligations, in respect of scientists' work in building up collections to the benefit of smaller museums, throughout the world.

Mr. Luce: I have placed a copy of my correspondence with Dr. Peter Jung in the Library of the House. I have asked the Government's chief scientific adviser, who is in discussion with the natural history museum, to keep me informed of the museum's position in relation to the United Kingdom science base. I shall be meeting the chairman and director of the museum to discuss these and other issues.

British Library

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many reader seats were provided in the £2·3 million first phase conversion of the Corn Merchant's Store at the British Library, Boston Spa; and whether the second phase of this conversion has been approved.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* None. Approval has not been sought for a second phase.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make it his policy to move little used material to stores outside London so that readers may use most of the St. Pancras building.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* This is a matter for the British Library Board.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the cost of repairs at the India Office library and records; and whether the British Library is to use the section vacated some years ago by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The refurbishment at Orbit house by the British Library includes the area vacated by the Ministry of Defence and the costs are estimated to be £1·1 million excluding VAT.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on details of published surveys relating to readers' characteristics and needs in planning the new building at St. Pancras.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The "Report of the National Libraries Committee" Cm 4028 included several surveys. Further surveys have been undertaken by the British Library for use in planning the new building and have been reported to its advisory committees.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts when readers may inspect plans of the collection allocations and visit the site of the St. Pancras building.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The detailed collection allocations have not been finalised by the British Library although broad plans are being prepared. They will not be available for consideration before the end of this year. A user and staff communication programme has already commenced including a video and the production of leaflets. It is intended to institute site visits for readers towards the new year subject to safety considerations.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the percentage of shelving in phase I of the new St. Pancras building housing science and technology publications.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* Over 40,000 m of shelving, representing 13·8 per cent. of the shelving in the first stage of construction, are destined for science and technology publications. This compares with 27,000 m in the present Holborn and Aldwych buildings. A further 6,500 m are planned for the completion phase.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what are the total costs of the development of the radiation polymer preservation programme and the number of books which have been preserved by this process.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The development costs incurred by the British Library for the polymer preservation programme total £540,000. During the research period which has recently ended the process has been applied to sample volumes only.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the revenue from commercial sales of the British Library archivist book copier.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* Royalties from commercial sales so far total £15,000.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what area in phase I of the new St. Pancras building is to be allocated for book preservation.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* An area of over 1,500 sq m is assigned to book preservation functions in the first stage of construction, in addition to the environmentally controlled storage and consultation facilities and associated plant.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will itemise total investment by the British Library in compact disc with read-only memory.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* This information is not readily obtainable. Increasingly, the British Library's various operations employ equipment which makes some use of CD-ROM technology.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will take steps to ensure that stools, work surfaces and trolleys are part of the brief for the science and technology reading rooms at St. Pancras.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* Work surfaces, chairs and trolleys are included in the brief for the science and technology reading rooms at St. Pancras. Stools are not included.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts how it is proposed to manage phase I of the new St. Pancras building so it provides a national centre for reference, study and other information in relation to scientific and technological matters.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The whole of the British Library's London-based scientific, technological and business services currently spread over three buildings will be brought together at the same time at St. Pancras and will provide reference, study and information services in response to users' needs.

PRIME MINISTER

Criminal Proceedings (Children's Evidence)

Q104. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have any proposals to modify or change the legal procedures concerning the evidence of children on commission in criminal proceedings; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government are giving careful consideration to the recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission in its recent report on the evidence of children and other potentially vulnerable witnesses; and, for England and Wales, to the comments received on the report of Judge Pigot's advisory group on video evidence. We shall announce our proposals as soon as possible.

Westwood Hospital, Bradford

Q109. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Westwood hospital, Bradford.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

European Monetary Union

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she has received any views from member states since the Dublin meeting of the European Council on the United Kingdom proposals to be submitted to the intergovernmental conference on monetary union.

The Prime Minister: The Government's proposals have been welcomed as a constructive contribution to the debate on EMU and are being considered further in ECOFIN and other appropriate bodies.

Wandsworth Director of Education

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister when she last met in an official capacity the director of education of Wandsworth borough council.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Education and Science are in regular contact with representatives of all local authorities in England.

Council of Europe/WEU

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will place in the Library a copy of the correspondence received from the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate about the information bulletin on the activities of the United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Assembly of the Western European Union.

The Prime Minister: I have done so today.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will obtain for her office library a copy of the report on eastern European economics entitled "End of the Cycle" by Morgan Stanley.

The Prime Minister: The Government are obtaining a copy of that report.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister which east European countries have not taken up the credit which is available to them; how much is still available; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Export Credits Guarantee Department cover, subject to varying security requirements, is available for short-term credits for all markets of eastern Europe. Cover for medium-term export credits —that is, credits in excess of two years—is available to Czechoslovakia, GDR, Hungary and the USSR. The position on the availability of ECGD medium-term credit for other countries is under active review.

National Characteristics

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will hold meetings to discuss the national characteristics of peoples of countries other than Germany.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the replies given to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) on 17 July, *Official Report*, column 859.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will place in the Library a copy of the minutes of the meeting on 24 March which discussed what were considered to be the characteristics of Germans.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. French: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 July.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 July.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I also participated in the deputation from the House which attended on Her Majesty the Queen Mother.

In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Spending

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much his Department spent in 1989-90, expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product; and what comparable information he has on the Japanese Ministry of International Trade.

Mr. Lilley: Expenditure by the DTI last year was one quarter per cent. of GDP whereas general expenditure by Japan's Ministry of International Trade proportionate to GDP was one third lower, even though its responsibilities are wider.

Car Parks

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has plans to amend the Fair Trading Act 1974 to include car park operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: There are no plans to do so at present.

Dixon Takeover Report

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what compensation his Department has so far paid out to investors due to the early release of the price-sensitive Kingfisher-Dixon takeover report.

Mr. Redwood: All claims which are received before the end of the month will be considered for compensation. No payments have yet been made.

Chartered Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will hold a public hearing before granting supervisory status to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Mr. Redwood: No. But we intend, in considering applications for recognition as a supervisory body, to take account of any views or representations we receive from third parties.

Unlisted Securities

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has introduced since 1982 to protect investors in the unlisted securities market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1 July 1985, the issue of shares other than those to be included on the official list of the stock exchange has been regulated under part III of the Companies Act 1985. Prior to that Act, such issues were primarily regulated by provisions of the Companies Act 1948 of which the 1985 Act provisions are a consolidation. Shares may be offered to the public only by public limited companies, and there must be a prospectus which complies with the requirements set out in schedule 3 to the Act. My Department has recently issued a consultative document on part V of the Financial Services Act 1986 which will complete the replacement of the provisions of the Companies Act relating to the public offers of securities.

The stock exchange, of which the unlisted securities market is part, has been a recognised investment exchange —RIE—within the terms of the Financial Services Act 1986 since the main provisions of that Act came into force in April 1988. Prior to this, the stock exchange was a recognised stock exchange under the terms of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958. Responsibility for RIEs has been transferred to the Securities and Investments Board, including ensuring their compliance with schedule 4 to the 1986 Act, which sets out the safeguards for investors which RIEs must provide.

Since April 1988 those carrying on investment business in the United Kingdom, including advising investors and dealing or arranging deals in securities for them, have had to be authorised or exempt under the terms of the Financial Services Act.

Al Yamamah Agreement

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the dates and places of meetings about the Al Yamamah agreement with Saudi Arabia that involved officials or representatives of his Department or the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Redwood: Departmental and Export Credits Guarantee Department officials participate when necessary in interdepartmental meetings on the Al Yamamah project. Listing the dates and places of such meetings, which date back to 1985, would involve disproportionate cost.

Insurance Bundling

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will refer the practice of selling cars with free insurance, known as insurance bundling, to the Director General of Fair Trading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I understand that the Office of Fair Trading is already examining this practice, following a recent complaint.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to his reply of 18 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *23-24*, what conclusions have been reached on the future of the Export Credits Guarantee Department, after separation of the insurance services group.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has agreed that ECGD will continue as a separate Government Department, with the chief executive reporting directly to the Minister for Trade and me.

The immediate priority of ECGD's management is to prepare, subject to enabling legislation, for the separation and sale of the insurance services group.

The work of the remaining part of ECGD is essentially an executive function of the Government, and as such falls within the scope of the Prime Minister's statement of February 1988 launching the "next steps" project. The ECGD is engaged in redefining its financial objectives and developing a more consistent methodology for market assessment and underwriting decisions. This is compatible with the "next steps" approach, and agency status will be further considered when we have experience of how the new arrangements are working.

United Kingdom Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the import content, other than fuel, of United Kingdom manufactures other than food and fuel in 1973, 1979, 1985 and 1989.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 July 1990]:* Information on which to base a reliable estimate is not available.

Insurance Companies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the persons who have conducted investigations under the Insurance Companies Acts.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* Such investigations are usually conducted by those concerned with insurance company regulation. To publish the names of the civil servants concerned would be against usual Government practice, and could lead others to the wrong conclusions if a named official subsequently made a routine visit to a different company which was not being investigated.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the companies investigated since 1979 under the Insurance Companies Act.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The table lists the number of investigations under section 44(2)(b) of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 since 1979.

	Investigated
1979	1
1981	1
1983	2
1984	1
1987	3
1988	3
1989	1

These investigations are confidential. They may find that there is nothing of concern, or they may find problems that can be remedied fairly easily. To publish the name in such circumstances would do unjustified damage to the business.

Compliance Officers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about inadequacies in the performance of compliance officers; and from whom they came.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The Securities and Investments Board and the self-regulating organisations employ compliance officers to check that investment businesses comply with the regulatory requirements in the financial services sector. This includes assessing the adequacy of compliance procedures in licensed businesses under their regulatory control. These bodies themselves are responsible for the performance of their own officers. I receive complaints about inadequacies from time to time, which are pursued by the relevant bodies in the most appropriate way.

Property Development

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on shortfalls of liquidity in companies involved in property development; and from what source.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* I recently received a letter from an hon. Member enclosing representations about the entry into administrative receivership of a construction company. I am not aware of any other such representations.

FIMBRA

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the effectiveness of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 July 1990]:* My right hon. Friend and I regularly receive a variety of representations on the effectiveness of the Financial Services Act and the self-regulating organisations. Since 3 July we have received two representations about FIMBRA through hon. Members.

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the reply given to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 26 February, *Official Report*, column *16*, in how many of the unpublished companies inspectors' reports listed there, there were criticisms of the quality of company reports and accounts.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 July 1990]:* I cannot disclose details of unpublished reports. The inspector's report on Euroflame Holdings plc was referred to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. The decision whether to publish reports involving 13 of the companies listed in the *Official Report* on 26 February, at columns *16-17* remains under consideration. The report on House of Fraser Holdings plc was published on 7 March 1990.

Internal Market Council

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) which Minister from his Department is to attend the European Community Internal Market Council on 17 July;

(2) what matters are to be discussed in the European Community Internal Market Council of 17 July.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The Internal Market Council on 17 July was cancelled.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what matters are to be discussed at the European Community Internal Market Council on 17 September.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* I understand that at this stage the matters likely to be discussed at the Internal Market Council on 17 September are transEuropean infrastructure networks, the copyright protection of computer programmes, and spray suppression devices for vehicles and trailers. However, this agenda must be very uncertain. It is some time before the Council, and firm agendas are usually announced in the committee of permanent representatives about two weeks before the Council in question.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which Minister from his Department is to attend the European Community Internal Market Council on 17 September.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* Plans have not yet been finalised for ministerial attendance at the 17 September Internal Market Council. It is unlikely that I will be the United Kingdom representative.

Vietnam

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the level of United Kingdom exports to Vietnam has been in both volume and cash terms for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The only information available is for visible trade at current prices and is as follows:

United Kingdom visible exports to Vietnam

	£,000
1980	15,213
1981	1,180
1982	858
1983	950
1984	1,786
1985	2,076
1986	1,287
1987	2,597
1988	2,212
1989	4,108

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the level of United Kingdom imports from Vietnam has been in both volume and cash terms for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* The only information available is for visible trade at current prices and is as follows:

United Kingdom visible imports from Vietnam

	£,000
1980	69
1981	130
1982	132
1983	603
1984	1,154
1985	1,757
1986	1,200
1987	356
1988	491
1989	1,711

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Antarctica

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has received proposals from any Antarctic treaty nation regarding a moratorium on minerals mining in Antarctica.

Mr. Maude: No such proposals have been formally put to us. In respect of other proposals for conservation in Antarctica I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 3 May, at column *626*.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects that his Department will finalise proposals which the United Kingdom is to make to the meeting of Antarctic treaty parties in November.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 17 July to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), at column *494*.

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whom he will be consulting before the special meeting of the Antarctic treaty parties in November to discuss environmental protection for the Antarctic environment.

Mr. Maude: We shall be consulting various Antarctic treaty parties.

Israel

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the extent to which Her Majesty's Government's policies with regard to Israel are influenced by the holocaust.

Mr. Waldegrave: We can never forget the suffering of the Jewish people in the holocaust. We want friendly relations with Israel and a just and lasting settlement of the middle east conflict to enable Israel to live in peace and security with its neighbours, including the Palestinians.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds the Government have made available for the promotion of democratic trade unionism in eastern Europe; and how that money has been allocated.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made available money to assist eastern European countries in their transition to democracy and a market economy. This takes the form of a know-how fund for eastern Europe which is administered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Any requests from eastern European countries for assistance within the area of democratic trade unionism will be considered on their merit and funds allocated accordingly.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests have been received from trades unions and the Trades Union Congress for funds for the promotion of democratic trade unionism in eastern Europe; and what action has been taken.

Mr. Waldegrave: The joint assistance unit in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office which administers the know-how fund for eastern Europe has not received any proposals for assistance in this area from the United Kingdom trade union movement. In order to keep in touch with trade union views a senior union leader is a member of the know-how fund advisory board.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on the application made to the post in Jedda on 29 May by Mohd Nasir, who was born in 1961 and whose application reference is 7987, to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when entry clearance will be issued by the British High Commission Islamabad to Khalid Mahmood, husband of Mrs. Saeeda Begum of 48 Maple street, Blackburn, following the refusal of leave of appeal to the tribunal against the decision of the adjudicator to grant entry clearance; and why entry clearance has not yet been issued.

Mr. Maude: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the questions to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Members will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the promptness with which British posts overseas issue entry clearances after the completion of the appeal process.

Mr. Maude: Posts overseas contact successful appellants immediately on receipt of notification from the Home Office that an appeal has been allowed. How quickly entry clearance can be issued varies according to individual circumstances.

World Cup

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Italian authorities about the treatment of the English football supporters deported from Italy during the world cup.

Mr. Maude: Both Her Majesty's embassy at Rome and Her Majesty's consul at Florence are in touch with the Italian authorities to assist them in the location, identification and return to the United Kingdom of the personal property of those British nationals removed from Italy following the violence at Rimini on 26 June 1990.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 16 and 17 July.

Mr. Hurd: The Foreign Affairs Council met in Brussels on 16 and 17 July. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council considered the necessary follow-up to the European Council in Dublin, including on preparations for the two intergovernmental conferences, and on development policy and social policy. The Council also took note of the outcome of the Houston economic summit.

The Council further reviewed the Community's relations with central and eastern Europe, including the G24 programme of western assistance and the extension of the Community's PHARE programme to other eastern European countries in addition to Poland and Hungary. The Council endorsed the postponement of signature of the trade and economic and commercial co-operation agreement with Romania and the exclusion of Romania from the proposed extension of the PHARE programme.

The Council considered Commission proposals for additional assistance to Yugoslavia and remitted them for further study. The presidency also presented a proposal for a Mediterranean financial institution, which was similarly remitted for further study.

The Council agreed a negotiating mandate for a trade and economic co-operation agreement with Chile, and conclusions and guidelines for a common position of the Community and member states for the second United Nations conference on the least developed, to be held in Paris in September. The Commission presented proposals for the Community's response to Colombia's special plan to combat drugs, and referred them for further discussion.

On 17 July, the Council discussed the current state of play in the GATT Uruguay round in the light of the outcome of the Houston summit and in advance of the trade negotiations committee in Geneva from 23 July.

A meeting of the European Community/Malta Association Council took place in the margins of the Council on 16 July. Separately, Ministers agreed informally to defer decisions on the referral of the Malta and Cyprus European Community membership applications to the Commission until the September Foreign Affairs Council meeting.

There was also discussion on 16 July in European Political Co-operation of CSCE, eastern Europe—including Albania—South Africa, Vietnam, Kenya and the middle east. Ministers agreed that a Troika ministerial mission will meet separately the Israeli Foreign Ministers and the presidency of the Arab League on 23 and 24 July to follow up the Dublin declaration on the middle east.

Albania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to encourage the settlement of Albanian refugees in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

Any applications for asylum in this country from Albanian nationals would be considered in accordance with our obligations under the 1951 United Nations convention relating to the status of refugees.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the percentage change on the previous year in *(a)* current, *(b)* capital and *(c)* total local government expenditure in real terms for each year since 1980 and the total and average annual changes in the period 1980 to 1989.

Mr. Rifkind: The figures are shown in the table.

Expenditure by local authorities in Scotland
Change from previous year (per cent.)

£ million

	Current	*Capital (gross)*	*Total*
1981-82	3·0	−2·6	1·7
1982-83	1·5	−1·2	0·9
1983-84	5·0	16·2	7·4
1984-85	−1·7	−13·0	−4·3
1985-86	−2·6	−4·3	−2·9
1986-87	5·1	4·9	5·0
1987-88	2·8	13·8	5·0
1988-89	1·0	−4·8	−0·3
1989-90 Provisional	3·5	−3·2	2·1
Average annual change	1·9	0·3	1·6
Total change	18·6	2·4	15·0

Cancer

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the mortality one year after diagnosis for *(a)* colonic cancer and *(b)* breast cancer for each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Mortality figures one year after diagnosis for the period 1983-87 are as follows:

Colonic Cancer

Health Board	*Number of registrations 1983-87*	*Percentage of Patients who died within one year of diagnosis*
Argyll and Clyde	620	45
Ayrshire and Arran	596	44
Borders	203	34
Dumfries and Galloway	246	39
Fife	522	42
Forth Valley	405	42
Grampian	813	44
Greater Glasgow	1,650	45
Highland	403	35
Lanarkshire	590	43
Lothian	1,232	42
Orkney	30	43
Shetland	34	53
Tayside	812	45
Western Isles	55	36
Scotland Total	8,211	43

Breast Cancer

Health Board	*Number of registrations 1983-87*	*Percentage of patients who died within one year of diagnosis*
Argyll and Clyde	856	17
Ayrshire and Arran	763	15
Borders	265	16
Dumfries and Galloway	331	14
Fife	768	13
Forth Valley	597	14
Grampian	992	11
Greater Glasgow	2,246	13
Highland	519	14
Lanarkshire	1,017	14
Lothian	1,865	14
Orkney	40	5
Shetland	64	19
Tayside	1,013	14
Western Isles	89	12
Scotland Total	11,425	14

Family Planning

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the centres which offer the kind of comprehensive counselling outlined in Her Majesty's Government's guidelines for unplanned pregnancies in Scotland in the Edinburgh area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Current guidance from the Scottish Home and Health Department about the provision of family planning services draws health boards' attention to the need for counselling facilities, especially for young people. Such counselling is available within Lothian health board's area through general practitioners; obstetric and gynaecological in-patient and out-patient services; the board's community clinics; family planning clinics in central Edinburgh and peripheral locations; and at the Brook advisory centre.

More detailed information about individual centres is not held centrally.

Forestry Commission Land

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the Forestry Commission land announced for disposal on 16 June 1989 has so far been disposed of; on how much of this land has public access been protected; and if he will consider retrospective action to reinstate public access to land sold where access was not protected at the time of the sale.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Just over 7,000 hectares of forest land were sold by the Forestry Commission in the period between April 1989 and June 1990; in addition, some 2,900 hectares of other land were sold in that period. These sales were not subject to special conditions relating to public access and retrospective action to impose such conditions would not be practical or appropriate.

The Government are concerned, however, that the general public should continue to enjoy access to those

forests to be disposed of by the Forestry Commission in a way which is compatible with their management for forestry and other purposes. We are giving careful consideration to ways of achieving this objective. In the meantime, the commission is deferring the sale of woodlands that are particularly sensitive from the point of view of public access, except in those cases where the sale is to an environmental body under the sponsorship arrangements.

A68-A697 Junction

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking on proposals for the improvement of the junction between the A68 and the A697.

Mr. Rifkind: Borders regional council, as agent authority, has put forward two sets of proposals for improving the safety of the A68-A697 junction. The first, which involves changes to the side road traffic island and the laying of anti-skid surfacing material has been approved for implementation in this financial year. The second proposal, which was recently submitted, is to substantially alter the geometrical layout of the junction. This is a longer-term solution and will be the subject of further discussions between my Department and Borders regional council.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many deaths in Scotland were as a result of assault with *(a)* a household axe, *(b)* a kitchen knife, *(c)* a Stanley knife and *(d)* a coal hammer in each year since 1980;

(2) how many convictions for grievous bodily harm in Scotland were as a result of assault with *(a)* a household axe, *(b)* a kitchen knife, *(c)* a Stanley knife and *(d)* a coal hammer in each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Details of the exact type of weapon used in cases of homicide and serious assault are not collected centrally, with the exception of firearms.

Trunk Road Improvements

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the cost of the trunk road improvements, road by road, since 1979 in Dumfries and Galloway; and the projected expenditure for the next five years, including reconstructing the A74 into a motorway.

Mr. Rifkind: The total expenditure on new construction and improvements on trunk roads in Dumfries and Galloway region for each year from 1 April 1979 is listed in the table.

Year	*Expenditure (£ million)*
1979-80	1·2
1980-81	1·4
1981-82	4·0
1982-83	7·2
1983-84	5·6
1984-85	8·1
1985-86	11·1
1986-87	8·8
1987-88	17·9
1988-89	19·9
1989-90	24·2

Information from 1979 on individual schemes costing under £1 million is not available. However, the following table lists all major trunk road schemes costing over £1 million completed since May 1979.

Scheme	*Expenditure (£ million)*
A7 Canonbie Diversion	5·4
A7 Synton to Mossend	1·3
A74 Johnstone Bridge to Dinwoodie Lodge	1·8
A75 Carsluith Diversion	1·5
A75 Collin Diversion	3·8
A75 Gatehouse of Fleet Bypass	9·0
A75 Creetown Bypass	5·2
A75 Bridge of Dee Diversion	2·6
A75 Castle Douglas Bypass	6·2
A75 Ringlord Bypass	2·5
A75 Annan Bypass	17·0
A75 Glenluce Bypass	6·8

The following table gives the estimated expenditure on major schemes costing over £1 million which started prior to April 1990 but are not yet completed.

Scheme	*Cost (£ million)*
A701 Ae Bridge	1·4
A75 Dumfries Bypass	20·3

Start dates for future schemes currently in preparation are dependent on the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, the availability of finance and the relative priorities of the individual improvements. It is not therefore practical to determine individual starts and the associated expenditure in detail beyond the year ahead. Starts have been announced for 1990-91 to the £4 million A74 Carrutherstown-Hetland improvement, which is now under construction, and the £35 million upgrading of the A74 between Gretna and Kirkpatrick Fleming, which is due to commence in the near future. In addition schemes for major trunk road improvements in Dumfries and Galloway costing in excess of £250 million are the subject of studies or are being prepared.

NHS Drugs

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the value of national health service drugs administered in Scotland *(a)* in total and *(b)* in hospitals in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the year ending 31 March 1990, the cost of drugs in Scotland was:

	£ million
Hospitals	43·96
Community Pharmacists and dispensing doctors	215·42
Total	259·38

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *233*, if he will take steps to ensure that the Greater Glasgow health board writes immediately to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen about the weekly cost per bed it will pay to Takare plc under the contract for care of the elderly in Rutherglen.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to my previous answer of 11 July.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he is proposing to make to the community charge arrangements following the review of those arrangements.

Mr. Rifkind: I am proposing to make the following changes:

Community charge relief

(1) with effect from 1 April 1990 the threshold for relief will be reduced from £3 per week to £2 per week.

(2) the scheme will be extended by two years.

(3) relief paid under the scheme to an individual will not reduce until the fourth and fifth years.

Those proposals will take effect from the beginning of the second year of the scheme in Scotland. The lowering of the threshold for relief will give £52 more relief than would otherwise have been the case to each household that qualified for it, provided they have not moved. Pensioners and the disabled who were not former ratepayers and who qualified for extra relief will also receive an increase of £52 of relief. On top of this, postponing the withdrawal of relief will be worth up to £13 in 1990-91 to everybody already entitled to relief in respect of 1989-90. Many couples will be £78 a year better off than they would otherwise have been as a result of these changes. It is estimated also that the number of people benefiting may increase by more than 50 per cent. as a result. The amount of relief paid out is expected to increase by more than this proportion, reflecting the increase in relief that existing recipients of relief will receive as well as relief being paid for the first time to new recipients. The implementation of these changes will be subject to discussion with local authorities before regulations bringing them into effect are made.

My proposals to exempt small bed-and-breakfast establishments from non-domestic rating have been widely welcomed in Scotland: in consultations, there was general agreement that a limit of six bed spaces would be appropriate, and that it would not be desirable also to extend the exemption to establishments available for 100 days or less. Accordingly, I intend to lay regulations very shortly to exempt bed-and-breakfast establishments providing accommodation for no more than six people from non-domestic rates, by prescribing that they shall be treated as domestic property.

A number of specific classes with maximum multipliers have already been prescribed. These include empty manses, properties empty as a result of a person's death, property whose owner is being cared for elsewhere, empty homes belonging to students, and empty property belonging to prisoners. It is my intention now to prescribe additional classes of premises and the maximum multipliers which will apply to them. I will consult with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and with community charge registration officers with regard to the details before making the appropriate regulations. My intention is to make provisions relating to property owned by people who live in tied accommodation, property which has been repossessed by a mortgage lender and, subject to views which are expressed during consultation, property which forms a self-contained part of either the main residence of a charge payer or of a non-domestic property owned by him.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many compulsory purchase orders in each of the last four years were subject to public local inquiry from local authorities, broken down by local authority;

(2) how many compulsory purchase orders have been confirmed by his officials, broken down by local authority, in each of the last four financial years;

(3) how many applications for compulsory purchase orders he has received from local authorities broken down by local authority, in each of the last four financial years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

Local Authority and Financial Year	*Number of CPOs received*	*Number of CPOs confirmed*	*Number of CPOs subject to Public Local Inquiry*
1986-87			
Aberdeen	—	1	—
Angus	—	—	1
Annandale and Eskdale	—	1	—
Argyll and Bute	9	5	1
Banff and Buchan	3	3	—
Clackmannan	1	1	—
Cunninghame	2	1	—
Dundee	4	4	2
Dunfermline	1	1	—
East Kilbride	—	1	—
Edinburgh	6	5	—
Glasgow	34	20	3
Gordon	3	—	—
Hamilton	2	2	1
Kilmarnock	—	1	—
Kirkcaldy	1	1	—
Kyle and Carrick	1	1	—
Moray	—	1	—
Motherwell	3	3	—

Local Authority and Financial Year	Number of CPOs received	Number of CPOs confirmed	Number of CPOs subject to Public Local Inquiry
North East Fife	4	2	—
Perth and Kinross	1	1	—
Renfrew	—	1	—
Stewartry	1	1	—
Stirling	1	1	—
Strathkelvin	2	2	—
Tweeddale	—	—	1
West Lothian	7	4	2
Borders Regional Council	1	—	—
Lothian Regional Council	1	1	2
Totals	88	65	13
1987-88			
Aberdeen	1	1	—
Angus	1	1	—
Argyll	2	4	—
Banff and Buchan	—	—	1
Bearsden and Milngavie	1	1	—
Clydebank	1	1	—
Clydesdale	1	1	1
Cunninghame	1	1	—
Dumbarton	2	2	—
Dundee	6	6	—
Dunfermline	3	—	—
Edinburgh	3	3	—
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1	—	—
Glasgow	35	27	3
Hamilton	1	1	2
Inverclyde	1	1	—
Kirkcaldy	5	2	—
Monklands	2	—	—
Moray	2	1	—
Motherwell	4	3	1
North East Fife	1	1	—
Perth and Kinross	1	1	—
Renfrew	3	1	—
Stirling	1	—	—
Strathkelvin	2	2	—
Tweeddale	—	1	—
Borders Regional Council	1	1	—
Highland Regional Council	1	1	—
Lothian Regional Council	1	—	1
Strathclyde Regional Council	1	—	—
Totals	85	64	9
1988-89			
Aberdeen	4	4	—
Angus	1	1	—
Annandale and Eskdale	1	—	—
Argyll and Bute	3	1	—
Banff and Buchan	—	1	—
Bearsden and Milngavie	2	1	—
Clackmannan	1	—	—
Clydebank	1	1	—
Cumbernauld	1	1	—
Dumbarton	3	2	1
Dundee	4	1	—
Dunfermline	—	1	—
Edinburgh	—	1	—
Ettrick and Lauderdale	—	1	1
Glasgow	25	25	1
Hamilton	4	3	—
Inverclyde	1	1	—
Inverness	3	—	—
Kirkcaldy	3	3	—
Midlothian	1	1	—
Moray	1	2	—
North East Fife	—	1	—
Perth and Kinross	1	1	—
Renfrew	5	3	1
Stirling	1	1	1
Strathkelvin	13	10	—
West Lothian	1	1	—

Local Authority and Financial Year	Number of CPOs received	Number of CPOs confirmed	Number of CPOs subject to Public Local Inquiry
Lothian Regional Council	1	—	—
Strathclyde Regional Council	1	2	—
Totals	82	70	5
1989-90			
Angus	2	—	1
Argyll and Bute	1	2	1
Clackmannan	1	1	—
Clydebank	1	1	—
Clydesdale	2	1	—
Dundee	—	2	—
Falkirk	1	—	—
Glasgow	24	19	2
Hamilton	2	1	—
Inverclyde	—	1	—
Inverness	1	—	—
Kyle and Carrick	1	—	—
Midlothian	1	—	—
Moray	2	—	—
Nithsdale	1	1	—
North East Fife	4	1	—
Renfrew	5	4	—
Stewartry	1	1	—
Strathkelvin	3	1	1
West Lothian	2	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council	1	1	—
Lothian Regional Council	—	1	—
Strathclyde Regional Council	1	1	—
Totals	57	39	5

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the applications for compulsory purchase orders he received in each of the last four financial years were in respect of *(a)* unfit houses which were occupied, *(b)* empty private sector housing properties, *(c)* empty private sector industrial properties, *(d)* poor management of privately rented housing properties and *(e)* poor management of privately rented industrial properties; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Respite Care

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will release additional funds to enable greater respite care facilities to be offered within Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 July 1990]:* As regards resources for local authorities, I would refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to his question on 3 July 1990. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend makes financial assistance directly available to voluntary organisations in the social work field. Grants are currently made to Crossroads (Scotland) and a number of other bodies at national level which promote local respite care services. Support for voluntary organisations providing local caring services is seen as essentially the responsibility of local authorities and in some circumstances, health boards.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the number of accesses made to the police national computer by each constabulary over the last year; and what was the proportion of access requests made to the vehicle indexes of the police national computer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply. The information is as follows:

Force	Numbers of transactions for the year up to June 1990	Proportion of transactions made to vehicle indices
Avon and Somerset	928,045	60·5
Bedfordshire	376,446	66·9
British Transport Police	141,988	42·1
Cambridgeshire	375,627	60·7
Central	141,178	51·6
Cheshire	436,687	62·1
City of London	101,987	58·8
Cleveland	331,288	55·8
Cumbria	366,151	62·9
Derbyshire	448,074	61·1
Devon and Cornwall	730,000	55·6
Dorset	457,665	59·6
Dumfries and Galloway	106,837	59·0
Durham	350,553	53·1
Dyfed-Powys	241,976	48·3
Essex	892,740	60·1
Fife	137,425	56·4
Gloucestershire	359,446	68·0
Grampian	265,928	49·4
Greater Manchester	2,271,199	57·3
Guernsey	19,249	10·5
Gwent	187,118	46·3

Force	Numbers of transactions for the year up to June 1990	Proportion of transactions made to vehicle indices
Hampshire	877,175	59·4
Hertfordshire	463,569	46·5
Humberside	529,245	60·2
Isle of Man	20,547	52·9
Jersey	33,476	10·1
Kent	1,198,384	60·7
Lancashire	1,126,272	58·4
Leicestershire	397,810	55·4
Lincolnshire	267,208	61·3
Lothian and Borders	610,533	59·4
Merseyside	932,268	55·6
Metropolitan	7,597,182	48·4
Norfolk	392,549	63·5
North Wales	309,407	51·3
North Yorkshire	440,309	65·6
Northamptonshire	319,903	67·8
Northern	103,454	52·0
Northumberland	990,490	66·7
Nottinghamshire	650,988	71·8
South Wales	842,909	59·2
South Yorkshire	684,321	70·4
Staffordshire	398,871	58·4
Strathclyde	1,289,244	33·8
Suffolk	288,693	58·7
Surrey	370,132	61·8
Sussex	791,593	51·8
Tayside	318,767	50·7
Thames Valley	1,232,066	57·4
Warwickshire	312,924	68·7
West Mercia	498,609	57·5
West Midlands	2,240,914	62·8
West Yorkshire	1,407,148	54·6
Wiltshire	286,988	64·0

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many accesses were made to each index of the police national computer over the last year; and how many of the access requests could search more than one index.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The total number of accesses to each of the indices of the police national computer in the year to 30 June 1990 was as follows:

Index	Number of accesses
1. Stolen and Suspect Vehicles 2. Vehicle Owners	21,370,168
3. Chassis/Engine Numbers	508,710
4. Fingerprints	200,917
5. Fingerprints (Scene of Crime)	13,658
6. Criminal Names	1,094,072
7. Wanted/Missing Persons	2,134,554
8. Disqualified Drivers	765,081
9. Convictions	902,277
10. Major Investigations	5,921
11. Crime Pattern Analysis	279,711
There have also been the following joint accesses:	
To indices 6 and 9[1]	1,996,349
To indices 6, 7 and 9	1,687,245
To indices 6, 7, 8 and 9	8,265,989
To indices 4,6 and 9	652,426

[1] All accesses to the criminal names index will in addition automatically generate information from the convictions application.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the ministerial review of employment services for disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: The results of the review were published on 29 June in a consultative document, "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities". The document sets out our intentions for the development of services in the 1990s, taking forward the themes established in the 1980s of integration into the work force and the active commitment of employers to good practice in creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The document has been widely distributed and the period of consultation lasts until 31 December.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to outlaw discrimination against disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities" was published on 29 June. It invites comments on the merits and demerits of various legislative approaches to securing good practice in the employment of people with disabilities. Anti-discrimination legislation is one of the approaches discussed. Decisions on the best way forward will be taken when we have considered the comments that are received.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the consultation paper "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The consultative document was published on 29 June and only a few comments have so far been received. It is too soon to expect interested parties to make considered responses. The consultative period ends on 31 December 1990.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) on what basis he made his estimate of the savings in the cost of administration staff if the Neasden Health and Safety Executive office were to close;

(2) if he will give details of estimates of *(a)* the number and *(b)* the cost of extra inspector hours used in travelling if the Neasden Health and Safety Executive office were to close and of the number of inspections forgone.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available as the Health and Safety Executive has no current plans to close the Neasden office.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the number of inspections performed by Health and Safety Executive offices in *(a)* Neasden, *(b)* Barking and *(c)* Southwark.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available in the form requested. The total number of visits made by Health and Safety Executive inspectors operating from the three locations between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990 is as follows:

	Number
Neasden	5,235
Barking	3,085
Southwark	10,558

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the policy of the Health and Safety Executive with respect to advertising job vacancies internally in the London region.

Mr. Nicholls: Jobs are filled by seeking the most suitable people in the most economical way, taking account of the requirements of the post, the capacities and career aspirations of available people, and the possibilities of finding suitable candidates by normal postings action or by promotion. In general, posts are advertised where the HSE has difficulty—or expects to have difficulty—in securing sufficient suitable candidates: not as a matter of course.

Hazardous Substances Regulations

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the implementation of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: The responsibility for the implementation of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 rests with industry.

The Health and Safety Executive has committed substantial resources to promoting awareness and understanding of the regulations through the preparation of a wide range of guidance material, national and trade advertising and extensive use of local TV, radio and press. The HSE has worked closely with employers' organisations and others to encourage them to develop guidance for their members. The HSE and local authority inspectors have given advice and, where appropriate, initiated enforcement action during the course of their visits to employers' premises.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much it would cost to increase the maximum poll tax rebate from 80 to 100 per cent. for everyone in Scotland receiving the maximum 80 per cent. rebate in 1990-91, assuming that others in receipt of less than the maximum rebate were not affected by this change.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated cost of increasing the maximum community charge benefit from 80 to 100 per cent. of the community charge set by the local authority, only for those already in receipt of maximum benefit, would be about £35 million in Scotland in 1990-91. (*Source:* Modelled using data drawn from the 1985-86-87 Family Expenditure Survey).

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The total number of subject access requests from the Department's records from October 1987 to 13 July 1990 is 1,420. This includes those made of the then DHSS up to July 1988. The original estimate in 1987 of the number of such requests in DHSS was based on a 0·3 per cent. take-up of requests by data subjects, or 210,000 per annum. No subject access fee is charged by the Department.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the new criteria for eligibility for independent living fund grants were drawn up.

Mr. Scott: In order to make effective use of the fund's resources and to enable the fund to respond positively to the majority of new applications, as well as continuing to provide assistance to those already being helped, the fund's trustees have decided to give priority, for the time being, to those applicants between 16 and 74 years of age and who are also in receipt of the higher rate of attendance allowance.

Social Fund

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many, and what percentage, of income support claimants under 60 years of age are repaying social fund loans by deductions from their benefit payments.

Mr. Scott: At June 1990, the latest date for which data are available, 399,421 social fund loans were being recovered from income support recipients under the age of 60, representing 14·4 per cent. of all such recipients.

Single Parents

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase the earnings disregard and slacken the earnings taper for single parents in receipt of benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have already announced that the earnings disregard in housing benefit and community charge benefit for lone parents is to be increased in October of this year from £15 to £25 per week. We have no plans to alter the benefit tapers.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals have been lodged against local adjudication officers who have refused claims for attendance allowance in each of the last five years; and what proportion of those appeals have been successful during the same period.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

Attendance allowance appeals lodged with and percentage success rates at Social Security appeal tribunals 1985-89

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Appeals lodged	237	204	163	402	457
Percentage successful	11·8	13·7	19·6	14·4	14·7

Requests for reviews of the decisions on attendance needs are for the Attendance Allowance Board.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines have been issued in the last two years to local officers to determine eligibility for attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: The main adjudicating authority for attendance allowance is the attendance allowance board. The board published its handbook for delegated medical practitioners—the doctors who make decisions on its behalf—in 1988. Amendments to the guidance in the handbook are included in the board's published annual reports. A copy of the last report, which was issued in June 1990, has been put in the Library. I understand that a further three amendments to this guidance—dealing with children under two years of age, children with deafness and blindness, and relevant changes in circumstances—are to be issued shortly.

Staff Shortages, Bootle

Mr. Carr: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has for dealing with staff shortages at his Department's Bootle office.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The current staffing level at the Bootle office is 119·5 including nine fixed-term contract staff. This is above the level assessed as necessary to meet the operational needs of the office from 1 August 1990.

State Pension

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the Government's intentions on a common state pension age for men and women, in the light of the recent European Court of Justice ruling in the Barber *v.* Guardian Royal Exchange group case.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Barber judgment dealt with pensions paid under a contracted-out scheme. It distinguished these from benefits awarded under statutory social security schemes. The Government's position on a common state pension age was set out in our response in April to the report of the Select Committee in another place.

Residential Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has of payments of income support to claimants in residential care whose total additional weekly income from retirement pension, attendance allowance and housing or other benefits exceeds the care fees being charged when the weekly personal allowance is taken into account.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no evidence of such payments.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his estimate of the number of persons in residential care now eligible to claim housing benefit following the widening of the difference between the capital thresholds for eligibility for income support and housing benefit;

(2) what is his estimate of the annual cost to his Department of additional claims for housing benefit from persons in residential care arising from the widening of the difference between the capital thresholds for income support and housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This information is not available.

Community Care

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any information about the results of applications for community care grants for furniture and household goods by pregnant women or women with babies who have been homeless but have been allocated accommodation.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available.

Benefit Subsidy

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he intends to make any change to the benefit subsidy arrangements for housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Mr. Scott: We are today consulting the local authority associations on a proposal to change the basic rate of direct benefit subsidy from 97 to 95 per cent. from April 1991, as an improved incentive to economy. This change would affect all community charge benefit and housing benefit expenditure other than rent rebates in England and Wales covered by the housing revenue account arrangements, which are taken into account at 100 per cent. in calculating subsidy.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland are taking the proposed change into account in drawing up their proposed local authority expenditure settlements for the next financial year.

Income Support

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much he estimates it would cost his Department to extend the full rate of income support to cover all adults, including 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The estimated cost for income-related benefits would be around £400 million, based on existing benefit rates and youth training allowances. The actual cost would also depend on the number of people on youth training at the time.

Source: Modelled using data drawn from the 1985-86-87 family expenditure surveys.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer given on 21 June, *Official Report*, column *714*, how many people on income support receiving a transitional addition lost entitlement to maximum housing benefit in a similar way in April.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The estimated number of claimants so affected is 7,500. But an estimated 96 per cent. of all those floated off maximum housing benefit, some 187,500, gained or were no worse off.

Dependants

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for the numbers of children aged 16 to 18 years claimed for as dependants by parents *(a)* on income support and *(b)* on family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The latest available information is that, at May 1989, the number of dependants aged 16 to 18 years for whom income support was in payment was 109,000. In the families receiving family credit at the end of April 1990 there were 37,000 dependants who were aged 16, 17 and 18 at the time the awards were made.

ENERGY

United Kingdom Continental Shelf Gas

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the level of gas production this year on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Gas production in the first four months of 1990 was some 7,200 million therms. The level of production in the remainder of the year will depend on many factors, in particular the severity of the forthcoming winter.

Methane

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to decide whether to grant a consent under section 12 of the Energy Act 1976 for the discharge of methane into the atmosphere from the St. Fergus gas terminal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Both operators of the St. Fergus gas terminal currently hold valid venting consents for normal operations. No further venting consents are currently needed because gas which must be disposed of as a result of the fitting of emergency shut-down valves and the depressurisation of the main gas line will be flared.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his policy in respect of the granting of consents under section 12 of the Energy Act 1976 for discharges of methane into the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what environmental factors he takes into consideration before granting consents under section 12 of the Energy Act 1976 for discharge of methane into the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government are well aware of the adverse environmental impact of methane as a greenhouse gas. However, provision has to be made for venting for safety reasons. My Department scrutinises venting consent applications carefully and no consents are issued until I am satisfied that they are for the minimum amounts necessary for safe and economic operation.

Global Warming

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his policy in respect of global warming, in so far as this relates to emissions from energy sources.

Mr. Peter Morrison: It is essential that all nations play their part in reducing emissions of man-made greenhouse gases. As regards carbon dioxide, the Government have announced that the United Kingdom is prepared, provided that other nations do their share, to set itself the target of stabilising emissions at 1990 levels by 2005. The White Paper on the environment to be published in the autumn will spell out the full range of the Government's policies in relation to global warming, including those in the energy sector.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list his responsibilities *(a)* as Secretary of State and *(b)* as sole shareholder in British Nuclear Fuels plc in relation to the company's financial and accounting procedures; and if he will make a statement on the exercise of these responsibilities.

Mr. Baldry: British Nuclear Fuels plc and its directors must comply with the requirements of the Companies Acts on financial, accounting and audit procedures. Under the terms of section 14 of the Atomic Energy Act 1971 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for laying copies of BNFL's report and accounts before both Houses of Parliament.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: This information is not collected by my Department.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce the details of the proposed capital structure of National Power and PowerGen; what factors he will take into account; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I shall announce the proposed capital structures at flotation of National Power and PowerGen as soon as possible. All relevant factors will be taken into account.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will call for a report from the Director General of Electricity Supply on the operation of the upper limits on direct sales by National Power and PowerGen to electricity consumers above 1MW.

Mr. Baldry: My officials are in regular contact with the Director General of Electricity Supply's office on all aspects of the regulatory regime.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the answer of 2 July to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, *Official Report*, column *430*, (1) what types of competitive process were used to choose those companies chosen competitively; and what was the smallest number of competitors for any one appointment;

(2) how many valuers were chosen on the basis of an already established association with the company concerned.

Mr. Wakeham: Six of the firms of valuers were appointed on the basis of established relationships with the body concerned. The other nine were chosen following a competitive tender process with the number of competitors ranging from six to two depending on the availability of firms with sufficient resources and suitable local experience. The competitive process involved assessment on all the usual criteria, including price. My Department then carried out an exercise to cross-check prices across all the property advisers and negotiated discounts to fee rates where appropriate.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has received any representations from Kleinwort Benson regarding the selection procedure of items of correspondence between that company and his Department concerning the feasibility of privatising nuclear power to be sent to the Energy Select Committee for the purpose of its inquiry into that subject.

Mr. Baldry: Kleinwort Benson was consulted on the papers released to the Committee.

Electricity Distribution Companies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those electricity distribution companies which have lost more than *(a)* 15 per cent., *(b)* 20 per cent., *(c)* 25 per cent. and *(d)* 30 per cent. of their supply contract load since the first quarter of the current financial year.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from the chairmen of the 12 regional electricity distribution companies regarding their investment proposals in new electricity generating stations.

Mr. Baldry: Decisions to invest in independent generation projects are matters for the company concerned.

Natural Gas

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the use of natural gas in electricity generation over the next 10 years, and on the breakdown of its use between different sectors of the supply industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The future use of gas in electricity generation is a matter for the industry.

Fossil Fuel Levy

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate for the annual amount raised by the fossil fuel levy.

Mr. Wakeham: I announced on 12 February that I intended to set the levy rate for 1990-91 at 10·6 per cent. The detailed forecasts underlying this calculation are commercially confidential because they depend, inter alia, on forecasts of the electricity pool price. I shall publish the amount of levy collected in respect of 1990-91 after the end of the year.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has recived the 1989-90 report and accounts of the electricity industry successor companies.

Mr. Wakeham: I have today placed copies of the regional electricity companies' and National Grid Company's accounts in the Library. I will place copies of the accounts of National Power plc, PowerGen plc and Nuclear Electric plc when they are available.

British Coal

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has considered the British Coal Corporation's further response to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the corporation's capital investment programme.

Mr. Wakeham: In May 1989, at columns *455-47*, my predecessor informed the House that the British Coal Corporation had provided its initial response to the MMC report on the corporation's investment programme, and that a copy had been placed in the Library of the House. Under the normal arrangements for the follow-up to MMC recommendations arising from section 11 inquiries British Coal has now provided a second response, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. This second response is intended to give an account of the steps taken over the last 12 months to implement the commission's recommendations. It also ensures the continuing relevance of the report by providing a helpful description of the developments in the corporation's business environment since its initial response and setting out fully the organisational changes that British Coal has made in response to those developments.

The commission's report drew attention to the need for British Coal to commit itself to specific, quantified financial objectives—recommendations 1 and 2. In its initial response, the corporation said that it geared its investment programme to the need to fulfil the overall objectives set by the Government. It also pointed out that it would be able to consider what further objectives should be set only when the new coal supply contracts with the generators had been finalised. In informing the House of that initial statement, my predecessor supported the commission's recommendation, but accepted that new medium-term objectives could not sensibly be finalised before the completion of the new coal supply contracts with the electricity supply industry. I share this view, but I have made it clear that following the financial reconstruction provided for in the Coal Industry Act 1990 I expect the corporation at least to break even this financial year and to remain profitable thereafter. We also expect the corporation within the next two years to have made sufficient progress towards self-financing that it can start to reduce the oustanding borrowings remaining after the financial reconstruction. We have therefore told the European Commission that apart from restructuring and social costs it is not our intention to make any financial support available to the corporation in respect of 1990-91

and subsequent years under the terms of the current state aids decision. Once the full implications of the coal contracts have been digested I hope to announce firm and precise targets for the corporation.

The MMC report pointed to the major changes in its business environment facing British Coal, and expressed the view (recommendation 3) that the corporation's board will need to ensure

"that the systems and organisation are conducive to systematic and rigorous review of future prospects in British Coal's business environment."

In his statement last year my predecessor emphasised the importance of a fully articulated and co-ordinated business planning system, and indicated that he expected the corporation to set out in detail its response to this. British Coal has separately told me that in its view the business planning system continues to be

"well constructed to meet the requirements of the main planks of British Coal's strategy since the strike"

(MMC report, paragraph 4.75). It appreciates that business planning in the future, given the privatisation of the electricity supply industry, will need to allow for the prediction of and timely response to significant changes in the commercial environment. It considers that flexible response amid uncertainty will need to go together with setting a firm overall direction towards a state of sustained viability. In particular, greater emphasis will be placed on the cash-generating ability of individual collieries. In future, where a colliery has no hope of achieving a positive cash flow it cannot be regarded as having much chance of surviving. I welcome this general approach, and in particular I would expect the level of sales projected beyond the transitional period ahead to be based on those supply sources able to show a positive cash contribution, not on those units which represent a cash drain on the corporation's finances.

I have indicated that its future business strategy needs to be based on a thorough and co-ordinated examination of all aspects of the corporation's operations. It will be particularly important to ensure that specific loss-making sales of coal are identified and addressed, and that new commitments, particularly in the industrial and domestic sectors, are not taken on, unless realisations generate an adequate return. There also needs to be a firm co-ordination of the marketing and financial strategies.

I have asked British Coal to provide a further response to this MMC recommendation in 12 months' time setting out the detailed steps that have been taken to strengthen its business planning.

The MMC report highlighted the need for British Coal to adapt its organisation and systems in the light of developments and changes in its business environment (recommendation 5). British Coal's response reports the progress made in adapting its management organisation since the MMC report was first published. I therefore welcome the changes the corporation has made to the way its production management is organised. This is important not only in terms of cost savings, but in respect of matching British Coal's management structure to the market and business environment in which it has to operate. The corporation is right to draw attention to this in its response, and also to the changes it has made to its industrial relations and staff departments. This should help it to develop a more integrated approach in the key area of employee relations. The changes in the marketing department, too, are welcome evidence that British Coal is making real and significant efforts to adapt its organisational and management structure to meet the challenge of a new market place. In this context, I welcome the corporation's recent decision to end the arrangement whereby each colliery is attributed with a share of the average proceeds nationally. From the beginning of 1990-91 regional groupings of supplying units will be credited with the average proceeds available to that region for coal of the qualities produced, thereby aiding the identification of the profitability of coal flows on a local basis.

Apart from the specific response on business planning which I have asked for next year, British Coal will, under the normal arrangements for the follow-up to MMC recommendations arising from section 11 inquiries, be reporting to me in two years' time on its implementation of the MMC's recommendations. I shall inform the House when these further responses have been made.

Energy and Carbon Dioxide Modelling

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy during the period from December 1989 to May 1990, how many staff in his Department were employed on energy and carbon dioxide modelling; and what assessment he has made as to whether his Department has sufficient internal capability to review the energy and carbon dioxide projections as outlined in energy paper 58 and to carry out approximate additional modelling exercises.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Contributions to work on energy and carbon dioxide modelling are made by several staff involving different fields of expertise, as appropriate. The Department's model is kept under general review. I am confident that the Department has the necessary expertise to do this and carry out any review of energy paper No. 58, as required.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sitting Times

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what estimates he has made of the costs of keeping the House open for sittings which go beyond 10 pm.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The costs of keeping the House open for sittings which go beyond 10 pm are diverse and many are not at present separately identified. I shall be giving consideration to methods for improving this position.

Members' Remuneration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what changes are proposed to the way in which hon. Members are remunerated.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No changes are proposed to the way in which hon. Members are remunerated.

HEALTH

Maternity Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has funded to assess the safety or the comparative costs of delivery in *(a)* district

general hospitals, *(b)* general practitioner maternity units and *(c)* at home; and if he will give the conclusions of each project funded.

Mr. Dorrell: "Place of delivery: a review" by Rona Campbell and Alison Macfarlane; *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* (1986) volume 93 pages 675-83 a copy of which is available in the Library, is the most recent refereed publication arising from work funded by the Department. Alison Macfarlane is employed by the national perinatal epidemiology unit at Oxford which has conducted considerable work in this field with departmental funding since 1978.

Accident Prevention

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grants he intends to make available for the purpose of funding regional accident prevention groups and home and water safety councils, in the light of the report by the National Association of Health Authorities on "Action on Accidents: The Unique Role of the Health Service."

Mr. Dorrell: The Department does not make grants for this purpose. Regional and district health authorities may decide, in taking account of local priorities, whether to make funding available to such groups.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has given to regional health authorities and district health authorities on accident prevention in the areas of home and water safety.

Mr. Dorrell: No specific advice has been given to health authorities on these issues.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statistics he requires district and regional health authorities to collect on home and water safety accidents.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department of Health does not require health authorities to collect specific statistics in these areas.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to announce his proposals to clarify the new role of the community health councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State laid regulations on 6 July which amended the Community Health Councils Regulations 1985. The Department will be issuing revised guidance on these and related matters to the health service shortly.

Medway Health District

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the figures for the number of doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives in the South East Thames region, and separately, in the Medway health district, 1979-80, 1982-83 and 1988-89.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information is shown in the table. Our census data are collected every year at 30 September. Therefore, figures in the table relate to staff in post at 30 September for the years 1979, 1982 and 1988.

NHS staff at 30 September of each year

	Whole-time equivalent[1]			
	South East Thames Region		*Medway district health authority*	
Year	*Medical and dental*[2]	*Nursing and midwifery*[3]	*Medical and dental*[4]	*Nursing and midwifery*[3 5]
1979[6]	3,300	29,040	n/a	1,050
1982	3,360	31,570	120	1,510
1988	3,730	30,480	140	1,640

Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.

Notes:

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalent.

[2] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff.

[3] Includes agency staff.

[4] Excludes all Consultants and Senior Registrars whose contracts are held by the Regional Health Authority. There will therefore be more doctors and dentists actually working in Medway DHA than are accounted for.

[5] Due to reorganisation of District Health Authorities in 1982, district data for 1979 are not directly comparable to later years.

[6] Not adjusted for reduction in nurses' working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

Elderly People

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those health authorities which have partnership arrangements with the private sector for the care of the elderly and give in each case the company concerned.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally. However, we welcome cost-effective collaboration between the national health service and the independent sector to make services available to all patients including elderly people and expect health authorities to consider appropriate opportunities as part of their regular reviews of performance.

Health Care

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to achieve a reduction in inequalities in access to health care between regions and socio-economic groups.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 26 June at column *165*.

Family Planning

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to improve family planning services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 19 June at column *508* and on 27 June at columns *249-50*.

Census

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to the statement made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health in the debate on the draft census order on 19 December 1989 in the Fourth Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., whether a decision has been made on the request from the Economic and Social Research Council for output from the 1991 census in the form of samples of anonymous records for people and households.

Mr. Dorrell: Under the authority provided by section 4(2) of the Census Act 1920, the Registrars-General for England and Wales and for Scotland have agreed, in principle, to the Economic and Social Research Council's request to prepare two separate samples of anonymous records from the 1991 census at the cost of the Council. One sample, for people, would consist of extracts from census data about two individuals in every hundred; and the other, for households, would consist of extracts from census data about one household in every hundred. The Registrars-General are confident that these samples would not disclose any information about identifiable individuals.

The samples of anonymous records would complement the information available from the traditional type of tabulated census statistics. They would provide a flexible sample database for statistical research and would also help users assess which extra tables it would be cost effective to commission from the full census database. They would make a significant contribution towards ensuring that the country gains as much benefit as possible from the taxpayers' investment in the census.

Confidentiality would be safeguarded both by not identifying any geographic areas smaller than a large local authority district and by omitting data categories which apply to small groups in the population. Furthermore, there would be some blurring of data so that not all records would represent actual individuals exactly. In addition, the possibility is being investigated of setting up a body of independent experts to advise Ministers on the confidentiality arrangements for the samples of anonymised records.

The Registrars-General's decision follows consultation with the Office of the Data Protection Registrar, which has confirmed that it has no objection in principle to the issue of samples of anonymous records. The Registrars-General are continuing discussions with the Economic and Social Research Council on the detailed arrangements.

Novopen

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to add Novopen pens and needles used by diabetics to the drug tariff list of prescribable appliances.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no present plans to make this equipment available on general practitioner prescription although the matter will be kept under review. We believe that the existing range of disposable and reusable syringe equipment fully meets the needs of most insulin dependent diabetics.

Wakefield Health Authority

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total interest-bearing capital debt for Wakefield health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: Wakefield health authority does not have an interest-bearing debt. In common with all district health authorities, it is required to value its capital assets in order to introduce capital charging from April 1991-92. All directly managed units will include capital charges—equivalent to interest and depreciation—in their revenue costs, and consequently in the prices charged to purchasers of services.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued by his Department to local authorities with regard to the format, content and consistency of their community care plans.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Draft guidance on community care plans was issued by the Department on 15 June. The guidance will be finalised in the light of responses to formal consultation.

Care Villages

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's policy with regard to the establishment of large-scale care villages accommodating on a residential basis several hundred or more individuals who all require some form of social or nursing care.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no reason in principle why large-scale care villages should not meet the registration requirements of the Registered Homes Act 1984. The decision in individual cases, however, is a matter for the local registration authority.

Cornwall Air Ambulance

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his meeting with hon. Members representing constituencies in Cornwall, if he will now make a statement on the funding of the Cornwall air ambulance.

Mr. Dorrell: Discussions with Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority are continuing. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Youth Treatment Service

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has reached a decision on the future management of the youth treatment service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The findings of a social services inspectorate inspection of the two youth treatment centres managed by the Department of Health were published in May 1989. Copies of the report had been placed in the Library.

A key recommendation was that, while a national service of the kind provided by the YTCs was still needed, their management was not most appropriately placed within the Department, but should be brought more within the framework of mainstream child care. The findings were made available to providers and users of the service and other interests.

Having carefully considered the views expressed on the findings and visited both centres, we concluded that there remains a need for a nationally based YTC service to deal with a small but very difficult group of disturbed young people who cannot be catered for elsewhere in the child care system.

Direct management by the Department is not the most effective way to run the service.

We are assessing the benefits which might be obtained from establishing a "next steps" agency to run this service. A feasibility study on this will be completed by the end of this year.

The study will need to consider how best to involve those in the voluntary and local authority sectors with experience of developments in mainstream child care. The views of local authority, voluntary bodies, YTC staff and other interests will inform the study.

We want the resources deployed in the YTCs to be better used to provide a higher quality and more cost-effective service. This might be achieved by unifying the service at its current level of 70 available places on the Birmingham site. Conclusions will be made public by the end of the year.

Blood Supplies

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give for each region the units of blood supplied to private hospitals for each year since 1979;

(2) how many units were handled by the blood transfusion service in each year since 1979 by regional transfusion service.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The available information is given in the tables. Data giving units of blood supplied to private hospitals were not collected prior to 1982. Figures essentially for years before 1987, are likely to be incomplete because regional transfusion centres were not always informed of issues from hospital blood banks.

Number of units of blood issued to non-NHS hospitals and clinics by blood transfusion centres in England and Wales – 1982 to 1988

Blood transfusion centre	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Northern	0	2,236	1,739	1,722	1,678	1,360	879
Yorkshire	0	0	950	1,589	2,443	6,432	2,116
Trent	331	102	2	0	20	546	2,662
East Anglia	2,078	1,864	1,690	1,758	1,655	1,441	3,502
North West Thames	14,580	19,439	22,413	21,512	21,955	24,127	24,202
North East Thames	6	0	0	0	127	2,620	3,357
South East and South West Thames	9,141	10,174	10,433	13,885	17,857	16,350	19,134
Wessex	0	257	1,342	2,333	2,523	5,879	4,301
Oxford	0	0	0	0	0	4,359	0
South Western	1,259	1,241	4,338	4,032	2,315	3,658	3,008
West Midlands	2,628	3,512	3,601	4,431	10,154	9,086	5,095
Mersey[1]	0	0	0	0	0	1,362	1,438
North Western	1,414	1,961	2,724	3,065	3,313	5,302	6,058
Wales[2]	0	0	0	0	0	1,839	209
England and Wales	31,437	40,786	49,232	54,327	64,040	84,361	75,961

[1] Covers Mersey regional health authority and North Wales.
[2] Covers South and Mid Wales.
Figures may be unreliable as the data submitted by many of the transfusion centres are incomplete.

For the years 1979 to 1981 the following figures relate to the number of donors reporting at blood transfusion centres. From 1982 onwards the figures are those of actual donations received.

Transfusion centre	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Northern	139,797	145,938	144,880	134,392	133,039	131,947	133,544	128,321	120,878	122,267
Yorkshire	147,875	157,078	155,653	143,626	152,874	154,905	149,128	146,119	134,463	133,088
Trent	146,554	153,587	163,187	162,229	166,362	174,425	169,680	174,976	186,605	197,746
East Anglia	90,954	93,350	93,406	84,629	86,275	87,650	86,393	90,012	91,536	92,195
North West Thames	184,273	187,042	197,504	180,644	183,033	189,246	190,048	199,731	193,372	192,004
North East Thames	169,066	169,238	170,966	145,472	145,241	136,647	138,875	136,722	135,439	142,716
South East and South West Thames	268,240	277,720	285,737	256,589	301,029	302,097	282,738	277,696	268,585	282,188
Wessex	89,376	95,584	96,902	90,030	93,889	95,719	94,088	93,990	95,931	95,484
Oxford	123,565	125,859	128,299	115,997	118,822	119,689	111,129	104,609	104,537	107,805
South Western	182,513	186,274	186,808	172,462	171,678	170,859	168,169	175,570	180,057	182,008
West Midlands	194,823	199,051	201,019	195,332	193,048	200,128	199,389	199,290	199,320	216,485
Mersey	123,059	129,680	123,433	115,478	119,604	117,589	121,642	123,190	112,659	108,387
North Western	190,029	202,523	209,886	179,351	179,844	181,638	180,133	181,587	176,843	176,328
Wales	94,360	97,112	98,051	82,763	91,102	96,087	94,104	96,637	94,091	92,109
England and Wales	2,144,484	2,220,036	2,255,731	2,058,994	2,135,840	2,158,626	2,119,060	2,128,450	2,034,316	2,140,810

TRANSPORT

Railway Inspectorate

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has reached conclusions on the future location of the railway inspectorate.

Mr. Parkinson: I have now completed my consultations with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission. It has been agreed that an agency agreement should be made with the commission for the discharge of my railway safety functions and for the transfer of the railway inspectorate to the Health and Safety Executive, where its identity would be maintained. These arrangements will come into effect in the autumn.

Bicycles

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what practical steps he has introduced to encourage the use of bicycles as an alternative to cars in urban areas.

Mr. Atkins: Both car use and cycling are matters of personal choice. Cycling remains one of the least safe modes of transport, so our main role must be to help make it safer. People will then feel freer to cycle and will be more prepared to allow their children to do so.

My Department continues to promote safer cycling through the publication of technical advice and guidance based on our research and application studies. We have announced recently changes in the criteria for transport supplementary grant under which local highway authorities will be able to bid for grants for local safety schemes, which can include cycling provision. This is in addition to the cycle elements of major highway and traffic management schemes which will still be eligible for grant.

Car Journeys

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact on traffic speeds in London and other urban areas if the number of car journeys were to decrease by 10 per cent.

Mr. Atkins: Traffic speeds in urban areas are influenced by a number of factors such as road and junction capacity, parked vehicles, signal timings, roadworks, time of day and weather conditions. Other things being equal, a reduction of 10 per cent. in car traffic might lead to an increase in peak-hour speeds of between 5 and 20 per cent.

Northolt Airport

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if, pursuant to his answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *347*, he will estimate the implications of increased use of Northolt airport for aircraft noise in the area of the airport and increased road congestion to, from and around the airport; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will meet a deputation of local residents and the hon. Member for Ealing, North to discuss the future of Northolt airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have no proposals to increase the use of Northolt by civil aircraft, so estimates of possible effects would be speculative. A civil enclave is a separate issue. I am, of course, always willing to meet my hon. Friend.

Public Inquiries

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the annual expenditure of his Department on public local inquiries in each of the last 10 years, indicating the date, the cost and the duration of each inquiry.

Mr. Atkins: In 1989, the last full year for which information is available, 30 inquiries into trunk road schemes were held. Details available are as follows:

Scheme	*Date*	*Duration (days)*
A41 Chester improvement	17 January	2
A595 Egremont bypass	6 February	3
A12 Capel St. Mary	14 February	1
A47 Norwich southern bypass	21 February	4
A3 Milford bypass	21 March	9
A5 Telford — Shrewsbury bypass	4 April	5
A523 Macclesfield relief road	11 April	2
A259 Guestling Thorn diversion	18 April	4
A49 Weaverham diversion	26 April	5
A422 Alcester	2 May	1
A6 Burton Latimer bypass	6 June	1
A259 Dymchurch	13 June	2
A66 Bowes bypass — County boundary	20 June	2
A6 Improvement Derby	20 June	1
A65 Gargrave bypass	4 July	14
A339 Basinstoke northern bypass	4 July	1
A38 Alrewas — Barton	14 July	4
A40 Gipsey Corner	18 July	17
A590 Dalton-in-Furness bypass	9 September	5
A59 Mellor Brook bypass	26 September	4
A516 Etwall bypass	23 October	3
A47 East Dereham	31 October	2
A1 Gatenby Lane Leeming	7 November	10
A568 Widnes eastern bypass	8 November	4
M5 Warnden — Strensham	21 November	7
A12 Hackney Wick — M11	21 November	29
A31 Stoney Cross junction	21 November	10
A1 Tempsford	28 November	8
A41/A421 Bicester bypass	28 November	3
A27 Crossbush bypass	12 December	3

Accurate costs to the Department of these inquiries, including consultants' fees and costs, are not identified separately from total scheme preparation cost. Costs of the elements such as inspectors' costs, which can be identified, and details of previous years' inquiries could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

River Thames (Accident Procedure)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the emergency accident procedure known as POLACAP was immediately put into effect on the night of 20 August 1989 after the collision of the Bowbelle and the Marchioness on the River Thames.

Mr. McLoughlin: The conduct of emergency procedures following the accident was examined in the investigation carried out by the marine accident investigation branch, and will be covered in the chief inspector's report when it is published.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the emergency exercises carried out under the Port of London authority combined accident procedure in recent years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The emergency exercises carried out under the Port of London authority combined accident procedure in recent years were:

June 1986—PLAFIRE
October 1987—PLAFIRE
May 1988—NEPTUNE

Marine Craft

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many Government inspectors there have been, in each of the last 10 years, inspecting *(a)* pleasure craft and *(b)* non-pleasure craft for seaworthiness.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of Department of Transport surveyors in marine offices available to carry out such inspections in each of the last 10 years was as follows:

Date	*Number*
1 April 1981	168
1 April 1982	165
1 April 1983	171
1 April 1984	172
1 April 1985	157
1 April 1986	146
1 April 1987	138
1 April 1988	127
1 April 1989	122
1 April 1990	122

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* pleasure craft and *(b)* non-pleasure craft using the River Thames have had their seaworthy licences withdrawn in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Some 135 passenger vessels operating on the River Thames are required to be periodically surveyed and certificated by the Department of Transport to ensure compliance with relevant safety provisions. Any serious deficiencies detected during random inspections must be corrected before the vessel is allowed to operate. In the past 12 months four vessels have had their certificates temporarily invalidated.

Larger non-passenger vessels are also subject to periodic survey and certification as well as random inspections. It is normal practice to detain a vessel found to have serious deficiencies until they are corrected rather than withdraw certificates. In the past 12 months four vessels were detained.

Detailed information for earlier years is not readily available.

Airline Regulations

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the international regulations that govern the actions of police on a national airline or in national airspace.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Tokyo convention of 14 September 1963 sets out the powers of the commander of an aircraft to protect the safety of the aircraft and its passengers and to maintain order on board, whilst the aircraft is in flight. It is a matter for the commander, and the law of the aircraft's state of registry, to regulate the use of the police for this purpose.

Investment

Sir William Shelton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, year by year from 1974 to the present, with estimates for the next five years, the total investment by central Government in roads and London Underground in the Greater London area, and roads and British Rail countrywide.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to provide all the figures requested. No planning figures have been agreed for the period after 1992-93 and allocations for investment in roads in London are made only one year ahead. It would be possible to identify the total investment by central Government in roads in Greater London before 1982-83 only at disproportionate cost.

£ million

	Investment in			
	[1] *Roads in London*	[2] *London Underground*	[3] *National roads in England*	[4] *British Rail*
1974-75	n.a.	36	286	124
1975-76	n.a.	43	403	171
1976-77	n.a.	50	393	200
1977-78	n.a.	44	313	214
1978-79	n.a.	47	330	245
1979-80	n.a.	65	408	300
1980-81	n.a.	78	478	337
1981-82	n.a.	91	568	310
1982-83	30	82	684	269
1983-84	21	110	651	277
1984-85	20	143	726	404
1985-86	54	168	754	412
1986-87	85	187	794	411
1987-88	88	274	908	543
1988-89	62	264	935	590
1989-90	118	371	1,296	715
Plans				
1990-91	131	546	1,758	1,052
1991-92	n.a.	711	1,818	1,258
1992-93	n.a.	812	1,920	1,421

n.a. = not available.

[1] Central Government expenditure on new construction and the improvement of motorways and trunk roads in Greater London. Includes costs of works, land and design supervision but excludes maintenance expenditure.

[2] Funds for investment in London Underground Limited are allocated by London Transport (LT). Prior to 1984-85, the Greater London Council were responsible for funding LT. Figures up to and including 1983 are for calendar years. Expenditure on Jubilee Extension and Dockland Light Railway is included.

[3] Gross capital spend by central Government on national roads in England only.

[4] Covers Great Britain. Includes investment in BR Engineering Ltd., BR Maintenance Ltd., Freightliner, Road Transport Organisation and BR Property Board but excludes expenditure on continuously welded rail which is now classified as maintenance. Figures up to and including 1983 are for calendar years. The figure for 1984-85 covers a 15-month period; the 12-month equivalent was £323 million.

Merchant Ships

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the increase in United Kingdom merchant shipping tonnage for 1989.

Mr. McLoughlin: There was no increase.

Unroadworthy Vehicles

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many deaths and serious injuries each year can be attributed to the use of unroadworthy vehicles.

Mr. Atkins: The police complete a standard accident report form called STATS19 for each personal injury accident that occurs on public roads. The information requested is not recorded on the STATS19 accident report form and is therefore not available.

Road Safety

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number of (i) deaths, (ii) serious injuries and (iii) slight injuries relating to passengers on *(a)* stage carriage services and *(b)* other bus and coach services which occurred in the last three years for which figures are available, expressed in terms of number per million passenger miles.

Mr. Atkins: The police complete a standard accident report form called STATS19 for each personal injury accident that occurs on public roads. The information requested—subdividing buses and coaches into stage carriage services and others—is not recorded on the STATS19 accident report form and is, therefore, not available.

Casualty rates for all public service vehicles, whether or not in stage operation, are given in table 26 in "Road Accidents Great Britain", a copy of which is in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Colin Wallace

13. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has sent to the letters about Kincora which he has recently received from Colin Wallace.

Mr. Cope: The letters will be replied to shortly.

Investment

14. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on inward investment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Northern Ireland has achieved its best-ever year for inward investment since the Industrial Development Board was formed in 1982. A total of 14 projects were secured promoting almost 2,000 new jobs.

38. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of inward investment in the Londonderry area and the jobs created.

Mr. Needham: Of the 14 new inward investment projects secured by the Industrial Development Board in 1989-90, three have chosen to locate in Londonderry, promoting 620 new jobs.

43. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current levels of private sector investment in Belfast.

Mr. Needham: I am pleased to report that private investment in Belfast has increased dramatically in recent years. In the city centre alone, major projects completed in the past five years, under way or programmed total £573 million. In addition, during the past five years the Industrial Development Board has backed industrial projects with a total planned investment of £177 million.

Government

15. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for the better government of the Province.

Mr. Brooke: The Government would consider any proposals likely to prove stable and durable which would command widespread support and provide an appropriate role for both sides of the community.

Local Government

16. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to introduce local government structures and responsibilities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Local government structures and responsibilities already exist in Northern Ireland. The Government would give serious consideration to any workable proposals for more local involvement in the government of Northern Ireland, if they seemed likely to command widespread acceptance. However, in their talks with us, the Northern Ireland parties have indicated their support for the establishment of a form of locally accountable administration for Northern Ireland as a whole.

Legislation (Amendment)

17. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to extend to Northern Ireland legislation the same provisions in respect of amendment as exist for Great Britain and United Kingdom legislation.

Mr. Brooke: If the right hon. Gentleman has any proposals, he knows that I should be happy to discuss them with him.

UK-Irish Relations

18. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he expects to discuss United Kingdom-Irish relations at his next meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: At my next meeting under the Anglo-Irish Agreement with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland, I expect to discuss the range of issues which normally arises at such meetings, just as I did on 17 July.

Labour Statistics

19. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current levels of employment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At March 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, there were an estimated 524,840 employees in employment. This is the highest figure for March since 1980.

32. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At 14 June 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 95,055 unemployed claimants in the Province, representing 13·6 per cent. of the work force. Seasonally adjusted unemployment has fallen for 17 consecutive months and is at its lowest level for over eight years.

Blood Transfusion Service

20. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his plans for the development of the blood transfusion service.

Mr. Needham: Final approval has now been given to a new £7·7 million blood transfusion centre on the Belfast city hospital site. Construction of the new centre, which will be purpose built and will provide the most modern and up-to-date facilities, is expected to start early in 1992 and should be completed within two years.

Multiple-handicap Young People

21. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision is being made in Northern Ireland for the education of children and young people with visual and audio multiple handicap.

Dr. Mawhinney: At the pre-school stage, support from the education sector can take the form of assistance to parents at home by teachers from special schools or from the peripatetic teaching service, or by attendance of the child at a nursery school or unit. Toy and book libraries are also available.

Provision for children of compulsory school age is made at primary or secondary schools or in special units attached to such schools, or in special schools. In addition, a support service based in the Jordanstown school advises schools in the field of visual impairment and this is supplemented by the board's peripatetic service which provides a support and counselling service for children with hearing difficulties.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

22. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

34. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to amend the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

25. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement concerning the discussions to find an agreement for transcending the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the trilateral talks to find an agreement to transcend the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the talks he is holding with various political parties in Northern Ireland and the Eire Government.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Members and my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay).

40. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next hopes to meet the Foreign Secretary of Ireland to discuss the workings of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

45. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet the Foreign Secretary of the Republic of Ireland to discuss the workings of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: I expect to meet the Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs at the next meeting of the intergovernmental conference which is likely to take place within the next few weeks. We are likely to discuss the normal range of issues falling under the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Security

23. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

41. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member and the right hon. Member to the answer which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton).

General Practitioners' Lists

24. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals the Government are considering to give patients the right of appeal when removed from general practitioners' lists.

Mr. Needham: None.

Integrated Education

26. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the development of integrated education.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since the coming into effect last February of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, a number of schools have approached the Department of Education for advice about integrated status.

The Department of Education has received proposals for the establishment of two new grant-maintained integrated schools and three existing independent integrated schools are also seeking that status. In addition, seven existing grant-aided schools have begun the procedures to achieve either grant-maintained or controlled integrated status.

Devolution

27. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received regarding the devolution of powers to the Province from Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have been engaged in discussions since January with the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. These discussions have, in part, considered how progress might be made towards a transfer of powers from Westminster to locally elected representatives. I have also received, from time to time, representations from various organisations and individual members of the public.

"Making Belfast Work"

28. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress being made under his Department's "Making Belfast Work" initiative; and what resources have so far been committed to it.

Mr. Needham: The "Making Belfast Work" initiative was launched in July 1988 to reinforce, through specifically targeted programmes, the efforts being made to address the economic, educational, social and environmental problems in the most disadvantaged areas of Belfast. The initiative is delivered under a strategy published in January 1989, which is designed to address problems of unemployment, lack of skills, low educational achievement, poor health and a bad environment.

More than 100 separate projects—large and small—were operational during 1989-90; of these, more than 80 are being continued or expanded in the current financial year in addition to 40 new projects which have been introduced. There are encouraging signs of progress; for example in 1989-90 LEDU, the Local Enterprise Development Unit—Northern Ireland's small business development agency—promoted 1,100 jobs in the "Making Belfast Work" areas, a trebling of its performance prior to the initiative; almost 3,000 people were placed in jobs or training by eight local job clubs and new job markets in the Falls and Shankill areas; the Whiterock further education centre had around 2,000 people enrolled on 80 different courses; almost 1,000 people undertook open learning training; and there were significant improvements in immunisation uptake rates, particularly in north and west Belfast. Particularly encouraging is the fact that during 1989-90 unemployment fell in virtually every ward in the initiative area, and the recently announced Springvale project is an exciting opportunity for a major economic regeneration initiative in the heart of north and west Belfast.

A total of £92·5 million has been provided for the initiative for the period 1988-89 to 1992-93, of which £10 million was spent in 1988-89, £15 million in 1989-90 and for which £22·5 million is available in each of the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93. This is in addition to the extensive resources already allocated to Departments' mainstream programmes in the "Making Belfast Work" areas.

Maintaining and accelerating the progress achieved to date requires a comprehensive and sustained effort involving the Government, the private sector and the local community.

Kilroot Phase II

29. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further progress has been made towards a final decision on the future of Kilroot phase II.

Mr. Needham: Work is continuing on the comparison between Kilroot phase II and interconnection with Scotland. I hope to be able to announce my conclusions within the next few months.

Conservation

30. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on conservation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since replying to the hon. Gentleman on 1 March 1990, at columns *307-8* with a detailed statement on conservation of the environment in Northern Ireland, there have been some further developments.

Two new areas of special scientific interest, Moninea bog and Fairy Water bogs, have been declared bringing the number of ASSIs to 26. A further 73 historic buildings have been listed bringing the total to 7,685.

The Department of the Environment's planning service has been considering a report by Professor John Hendry of Queen's university who has proposed that the Department should consider designating a further 28 conservation areas in addition to the 26 already designated and the eight proposed in the Belfast urban plan. Two of the 36 proposed conservation areas—Ballycastle and the cathedral area in Belfast—were designated in June.

On 9 July 1990 the Department of Agriculture issued its document "Countryside Management" which outlines its strategy on conservation. I shall arrange for a copy to be sent to the hon. Gentleman. We look forward to receiving the report from the Select Committee on the Environment and to the first report for the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside.

The size of the directorate in the Department of the Environment is to be doubled.

Human Rights

31. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will publish his considered reply to the second report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 26 June at columns *154-55*. We intend awaiting comments on the report (Cm. 1107) from any interested persons or organisations prior to coming to any conclusions.

Cross-border Security

33. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic.

Mr. Cope: Measures to improve security co-operation are regularly discussed at Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference meetings, most recently on 17 July. In

addition, regular meetings take place at all levels between members of the RUC and the Garda Siochana. Progress has been made, but further improvement is possible and the Government are committed to securing it.

County Towns

35. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's plans for the regeneration of the county towns of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) on 1 February 1990 at column *337*. Since then the International Fund for Ireland—IFI—has made available up to £3 million this year for a third urban development programme and has announced a new programe focused on smaller towns—those with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants. Both these programmes are administered by the Department of the Environment's planning service on behalf of the IFI.

The Department of the Environment has consultants working on regeneration strategies in Downpatrick and the Craigavon area and regeneration partnership arrangements with district councils in Armagh and Carrickfergus.

Anglo-Irish Conference

36. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference will be held.

Mr. Brooke: The next meeting is likely to be held within the next few weeks.

Community Relations

37. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to meet representatives of the Community Relations Council to discuss improved links between Catholic and Protestant communities.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council was established in January 1990. The council has already established a wide range of contacts with groups working to promote reconciliation, greater cross-community contact and awareness and understanding of cultural diversity in Northern Ireland. The council has also launched a number of funding programmes designed to support the work of these groups. I have not yet had the opportunity to meet the council, but I hope to do so later in the year.

39. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many schools are taking part in the cross-community contact scheme.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since the introduction of the cross-community contact scheme in October 1987, more than 400 schools—about one third of all schools in Northern Ireland—have become involved.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

42. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last discussed the case of those found guilty of the Birmingham pub bombings with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Cope: This is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and is not within the ambit of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but the matter was referred to during a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 30 November 1989.

Youth Training

44. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what level the youth training programme allowance would need to be increased to bring it to the same value as on its introduction, measured by *(a)* the rise in prices, and *(b)* the rise in average earnings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The weekly training allowance was first paid to young people in the youth opportunities programme (YOP) in April 1978 and was £19·50. The equivalent value of the youth training programme allowance if adjusted for changes in the retail prices index would be £49·50 and if adjusted for changes in the index of average earnings it would be £63·48.

The youth training programme (YTP) especially since the introduction from 1 April 1990 of the new arrangements for delivery and funding, incorporates substantially higher quality training than YOP. It is, therefore, misleading to compare the values of the YOP and YTP training allowances, which reflect the fact that trainees are still learning.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what value-for-money and cost-effectiveness evaluations the Royal Ulster Constabulary performs on its own services.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Chief Constable's strategy statement 1990 in which he sets out the RUC's principal objectives for the current year. The RUC has developed and continues to develop a range of methods of judging the extent to which those objectives are being achieved.

Heart Disease

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the incidence of heart disease in Northern Ireland in 1990, 1989, 1988 and 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Mortality rates for the four most recent years for which figures are available are given in the following table. Morbidity incidence figures are not available.

Age standardised death rates from ischaemic heart disease per 100,000 population aged 40–69 years

Year	*Male*	*Female*
1986	557	169
1987	497	155
1988	512	175
1989	461	155

It is encouraging to note that deaths from heart disease are on a definite downward trend having fallen by around 25 per cent. over the last 10 years. The Government's "Change of Heart" coronary prevention programme, launched in October 1986, aims to ensure that the reduction in mortality continues over the next decade.

Road Deaths

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were accidentally killed on the roads in Northern Ireland last year; and what was the average number for the previous five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One hundred and eighty-one people were killed on the roads in Northern Ireland in 1989. The average during the previous five years was 199. In 1986, 236 died.

A programme was launched on 31 October to achieve the following targets:

to reduce by one third within 12 months commencing 1 November the average annual fatality rate of 210 over the last three years; and

to reduce by one third serious road casualties—killed and seriously injured—by the end of the century.

The preliminary total of deaths from 1 November 1989 to 30 June 1990 shows a 13 per cent. decrease over the same period last year. This statistic may change.

Reduced levels of drink driving are likely to be contributing to reduced levels of death.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by how much the number of road deaths has fallen since the launch of the road casualty reduction campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The fall has been 18 per cent. Since the campaign was launched on 1 November 1989, road deaths have fallen to 114 compared with 139 for the same period last year. The number is provisional.

I am grateful that the media in Northern Ireland have been treating road deaths as events that generally have avoidable causes. It is particularly noticeable that the main categories—adults as passengers, pedestrians and drivers —have fallen from 117 to 84, a drop of 28 per cent.

School Governors

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration is being given to offering recompense to members of new boards of governors in the form of attendance allowance in respect of their increase of responsibility and work load under local management of schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no plans to change present arrangements.

Education Achievement

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will initiate an inquiry into the levels of achievement for Northern Ireland schoolchildren in A-level and general certificate of secondary education results relative to comparable children in England, Scotland and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The qualifications of Northern Ireland school leavers compare favourably with those in England and Wales; comparison with Scotland is not appropriate because of different examination arrangements. The most recent comparable statistics show 26 per cent. of Northern Ireland leavers with one or more A-levels compared to 18·7 per cent. in England and 17·9 per cent. in Wales. The figures also show that some 16·4 per cent. of Northern Ireland school leavers obtained no recognised qualifications compared to 9·6 per cent. in England and 17·5 per cent. in Wales. However, there has been an encouraging reduction in the number of unqualified leavers in Northern Ireland in recent years and the Government believe that the education reforms will accelerate this trend.

NHS Drugs

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the value of national health service drugs administered in Northern Ireland *(a)* in total and *(b)* in hospitals in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The total expenditure on drugs in Northern Ireland for the latest financial year available, 1988-89, was £78·21 million, of which £9·96 million was hospital expenditure.

Dog Fighting

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the incidence of organised dog fighting in Northern Ireland; and whether any prosecutions have been brought for this activity in the last four years.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* I am advised by the Chief Constable that information held centrally does not distinguish dog fighting from other offences of cruelty to animals.

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show for each of the present council areas in Northern Ireland the number of deaths from terrorist action since these council areas came into existence until the latest available date, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Courts and Legal Services

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will outline his proposed course of action following the publication of the Green Paper on the courts and legal services in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The future framework for legal services in Northern Ireland is presently being considered in consultation with my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. I expect that a policy paper for Northern Ireland will be published in the autumn.

ENVIRONMENT

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the responsibilities of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in respect of discharge of radioactive waste to the public sewers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution regulates the disposal of all radioactive waste, including discharges to the public sewerage system, by means of authorisations issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 (RSA 60). These authorisations impose strict conditions and activity limits, set at levels which ensure proper protection from such disposals for members of the public, sewerage workers and the environment. In all cases, proper and detailed records must be maintained by disposers. These records and the premises concerned are subject to scrutiny by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution inspectors under powers contained in section 12 of RSA 60, to ensure compliance with the terms of certificates of authorisation issued.

Landfill

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what extra resources he will make available to ensure full monitoring and necessary remedial work to all landfill sites where there is a risk of leachate and ground water pollution.

Mr. Trippier: Under the licensing provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 waste disposal authorities already have responsibilities, in consultation with water authorities, now the National Rivers Authority, to ensure that no water pollution is likely to arise from the disposal of waste to land. The costs of meeting any monitoring and remedial works have to be borne within the budgets for operating licensed sites and for the enforcement of statutory responsibilities. No extra resources would appear to be necessary.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation in line with the proposals of the European Community draft directive on landfill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: A draft directive is still in preparation by the Commission, with the aid of expert working groups on which the United Kingdom is represented, but is unlikely to be available until the end of the year for further consideration and negotiation. It is, therefore, too early to say what legislative implications it might have. However, the Commission appears to be basing its proposals upon systems of site licensing to high operational standards, therefore meeting the objectives of the Environmental Protection Bill.

Nature Conservancy Council

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those statutory functions currently carried out by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Trippier: The statutory functions of the Nature Conservancy Council were set out in section 1, together with schedule 1, of the Nature Conservancy Council Act 1973.

Since 1973, the following Acts have conferred additional functions on the council: Import of Live Fish (Scotland) Act 1978, Highways Act 1980, Animal Health Act 1981, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Inheritance Tax Act 1984, Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, Agriculture Act 1986, Channel Tunnel Act 1987, Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988, Electricity Act 1989, and the Water Act 1989.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff are currently employed by the Nature Conservancy Council on *(a)* permanent contracts and *(b)* temporary contracts.

Mr. Trippier: On 1 July this year, the Nature Conservancy Council employed 766 full-time staff and 87 part-time staff on permanent contracts, and 449 full-time and 42 part-time staff on temporary contracts.

Methane

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that all waste tips are monitored to identify those which are at risk from methane release; what resources he will make available for this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: In 1988-89 Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, together with waste disposal authorities, undertook surveys of landfill sites to determine those with the potential to generate landfill gas. It is intended that the results of these surveys will be published in due course.

A capital allocation of £33 million has been earmarked during 1990-91 for local authorities undertaking landfill gas remedial work on closed sites. Similar resources will be made available in future years.

Gas controls should be installed in current landfill sites within normal operational budgets in line with the recommendations of waste management paper 27 and no additional resources need to be made available.

Crassula

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action he has taken concerning the sale of crassula from aquarium shops;

(2) what advice he has received from the Nature Conservancy Council concerning the sale of crassula as a pond and aquarium oxygenator.

Mr. Trippier: I have received no information or advice from the Nature Conservancy Council on the use of crassula in aquaria and I have taken no action regarding its sale in aquarium shops.

Antarctica

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), *Official Report*, 23 May, columns *187-88*, what steps he takes to ensure environmental factors are given full weight in respect of the Antarctic environment.

Mr. Trippier: The Department's officials have regular discussions on the protection of the Antarctic environment with officials at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office which has overall responsibility for the Government's policy on the Antarctic.

Drinking Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those public supplies identified by the drinking water inspectorate where levels of tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene exceed the World Health Organisation standards for these substances; and where undertakings under section 20 of the Water Act 1989 have been given.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to his earlier question, *Official Report*, 5 July 1990, Vol. 175, column *646*.

Undertakings have been given by water companies as follows under section 20 of the Water Act 1989 to take steps to secure or facilitate compliance with the standards for tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene:

Water supply zones	*Date by which steps to be completed*
Lee Valley Water Company	
Luton Park Town	31 March 1990
Luton Stopsley	
Luton Chaul End	
Mid Southern Water Company	
Maidenhead No. 1	31 December 1990
Maidenhead No. 2	
South Staffordshire Water Company	
Sutton Boreholes: City	
Brownhills	
Central	Three phases: December 1990 December 1992 Deember 1994
Barr Beacon: Aldridge	
Pheasey	

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish his Department's report into radioactive contamination of London drinking water.

Mr. Trippier: The research work commissioned by my Department on iodine 125 and being carried out by St. Bartholomew's hospital medical college will not be completed until March 1991. A first draft report was received this month and is currently being reviewed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The report will be published in due course and copies will be placed in the Library.

Inspectorate of Pollution

Mr. Carr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the director of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to discuss staff recruitment.

Mr. Trippier: I meet the director of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution regularly and discuss all aspects of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's business including staffing and recruitment. There are currently 215 staff in post in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution compared with 148 when Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution was established in April 1987 and 193 a year ago. The staff complement has recently been increased further to 250. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has 35 vacancies in the increased complement, of which 26 are for professional staff. Eight of the professional vacancies are reserved for successful candidates from the current recruitment competition. We are continuing to recruit actively to fill the remaining posts.

Dogs

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to introduce new controls on dogs.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Our consultation paper "Action on Dogs", issued in August 1989, put forward two main proposals: transferring the duty for dealing with strays from the police to local authorities and clarifying enforcement of the existing collar and identification tag requirement. We recently issued, together with the Home Office and the Welsh and Scottish Offices, a consultation paper entitled "The Control of Dogs". Following discussions with the joint advisory committee on pets in society about how the package of measures outlined in "Action on Dogs" could be strengthened, the new paper considers two ideas in particular: first, that there should be a specific offence of allowing a dog persistently to stray, and secondly, that there should be a fixed penalty scheme for the enforcement of the collar and tag provisions. We intend to legislate at a convenient opportunity.

Empty Properties

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has developed any new proposals for the utilisation of suitable Government-owned empty properties for homeless families.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government's policy is to sell surplus properties wherever possible. Where disposal is not practicable, Government Departments are encouraged to let their empty properties to local authorities and housing associations to assist them in relieving local housing pressures. The Department of Transport has recently contracted out the management of the majority of its domestic dwellings to housing associations, and the Ministry of Defence has so far leased 650 homes to local authorities.

Leisure Centres

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications he has received from boroughs with loss-making leisure centres, built with European Community grants, to be released from restrictive conditions so they may be privatised.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not aware of any formal applications from local authorities to be released from the conditions placed on European regional development fund grants by the European Commission which relate to the disposal of publicly owned leisure centres to the private sector.

Nitrates

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the practicality of reducing nitrate content in water through the creation of new wetlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am aware that studies carried out in other countries have shown encouraging results. This is an interesting proposal and I will keep developments under review.

Groundwater Contamination

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake a full national survey to identify aquifers most at risk from groundwater contamination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As part of its statutory duties to protect water resources and control pollution the National Rivers Authority is already undertaking national surveys of groundwater contamination and establishing a uniform national network of monitoring sites. It is also developing a national groundwater protection policy which will include a classification of aquifers according to *vulnerability from* pollution.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the financial benefits of compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have no comprehensive information about the financial results of compulsory competitive tendering for local authority services. However, findings published by the Audit Commission and other bodies point clearly to the possibility of achieving substantial savings in the cost of providing services, which may be as high as 20 per cent.

Housebuilding Costs

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the average price, excluding the value of land, of building *(a)* a two-storey house with three bedrooms, reception room, bathroom, toilet, kitchen, with external dimensions 21 ft by 22 ft, or the nearest equivalent for which he has information and *(b)* a terraced house block comprising five such houses.

Mr. Chope: Estimates, based on tenders accepted by local authorities, indicate that in England the current average cost of building a two-storey three-bedroomed house with external dimensions of 21 ft by 22 ft, excluding the value of land but including external works and professional fees, is approximately £43,000. The cost of a terrace of five such houses is approximately £215,000.

National Rivers Authority

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the recreation duties of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Section 8 of the Water Act 1989 imposes upon the National Rivers Authority a duty to make available for recreation the waters and associated lands to which it has rights. This section also places upon the National Rivers Authority a duty to promote the use of other inland and coastal waters and land associated with such waters for recreational purposes.

In carrying out these duties I understand that the National Rivers Authority seeks advice from the statutory regional rivers advisory committee.

Footpaths and Bridleways

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that authorities adequately carry out their duties with regard to signposting footpaths and bridleways.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department recently carried out a survey among authorities to establish the extent of signposting of footpaths and bridleways; the results have been made available to highway authorities through the County Surveyors Society and the rights of way review committee. It is for the authorities to take action as appropriate in the light of these findings, within the context of the formulation of their rights of way strategies.

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what lengths of footpaths and bridleways now exist in England and Wales.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Precise figures are not available: however, a recent sample survey by the Countryside Commission suggests the total length of rights of way in England and Wales to be about 140,000 miles. Of this, footpaths make up 106,000 miles and bridleways 28,000 miles.

Forestry Commission Land

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the introduction of a mechanism to protect access to Forestry Commission land which is to be disposed of.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 18 June, *Official Report*, column *450*, by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland.

Water Gathering Grounds (Public Access)

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the National Rivers Authority has any duty to protect public access to water gathering grounds owned by water undertakers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Water Act 1989 imposes on the water undertakers a duty to have regard to the desirability of preserving public freedom of access to areas of natural beauty and to sites of architectural or historic interest on their lands. This duty also applies to the National Rivers Authority in respect of its own lands. The NRA is also under a duty generally to promote recreational use of inland and coastal waters and associated land.

The code of practice issued by the Government under section 10 of the Water Act gives practical guidance to the National Rivers Authority and the water undertakers on the performance of their environmental and recreational duties.

Rights of Way

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is a requirement of the countryside premium scheme that rights of way must be kept clear and in good order; and if he will include in the

countryside premium scheme a management guidelines requirement that rights of way must be kept clear at all times.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Landowners and the local highway authorities are statutorily required to keep all rights of way clear and in good order. The countryside premium scheme, operating in seven eastern counties of England, enhances public access to the countryside and does not override any statutory provisions. It is implict in the general rules and conditions of the scheme that farmers should fulfil their statutory obligations in respect of existing rights of way and, under the guidelines for the meadowland option, there is a specific requirement for landowners to keep open and available for use at all times any footpaths, bridleways or byways on land entered into the scheme. The Countryside Commission keeps the guidelines for the scheme under review.

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that rights of way across countryside premium scheme land are in good order; and what steps have been taken where rights of way are found not to be in good order.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The duty to protect and assert the public's right of passage and to prevent the stopping up or obstruction of highways is placed with the highway authority under the Highways Act 1980. I am not aware of any problems with rights of way on countryside premium land. However, if such problems came to the attention of the Countryside Commission project officers who are responsible for administering the scheme, they would ask the landowner to take remedial action. Landowners failing to meet their obligations may prejudice payments under the scheme. They may also be prosecuted in certain circumstances by the highway authority or any other person.

Leaseholds

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many leaseholders have enfranchised their lease under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

Mr. Chope: This information is not held centrally.

Car Pollution

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of car-induced air pollution in urban areas and the estimated impact if the number of car journeys were *(a)* reduced and *(b)* increased by 10 per cent.

Mr. Trippier: Cars are responsible for about 81 per cent. of national emissions of carbon monoxide, 23 per cent. of national emissions of oxides of nitrogen and 28 per cent. of national emissions of volatile organic hydrocarbons. Estimates for central London suggest that petrol-driven vehicles contributed 46 per cent. to annual mean concentrations of oxides of nitrogen. However, emissions depend not only on the number of car journeys, but on road speed and traffic congestion. It is not presently possible to make precise estimates of the impact of a change in driving habits on urban air quality.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to introduce legislation to prevent the dumping of sewage sludge at sea which is contaminated by toxic pollutants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. Control of dumping of waste at sea is already exercised by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in accordance with powers available in the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Local Government Finance

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling of 28 June, *Official Report*, columns *312-13*, if he will state the relevant sections of the primary or secondary legislation under which exemption from the community charge is given to those aged 18 years who have left secondary education and in respect of whom child benefit is continuing to be paid.

Mr. Portillo: Paragraph 5 of schedule 1 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended by paragraph 10 of schedule 5 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Sewage Discharges

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to introduce legislation to require nutrient removal pollution controls at sewage works discharging to the sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Sufficient powers to require nutrient removal at sewage treatment works where necessary are already available under the Water Act 1989. It is for the National Rivers Authority to decide when to impose such conditions.

Atmospheric Conditions (Monitoring)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, columns *502-3*, if he will give the county or region in Scotland of each monitoring site; and if he will give grid references for those rain acidity monitoring sites whose grid references are not contained in the second report of the United Kingdom review group on acid rain 1987.

Mr. Trippier: The information for the current acid rain monitoring network is as follows:

Site Name	*Map Reference*	*Region*
Eskdalemuir		Dumfries and Galloway
Strathvaich Dam	NH 347 750	Highland
Glen Dye	NO 642 864	Grampian
Allt a'Mharcaidh	NH 876 052	Highland
Whiteadder		Lothian
Loch Dee		Dumfries and Galloway
Achanarras	ND 151 550	Highland
Balquhidder	NN 521 206	Central
Yarner Wood	SX 786 789	
High Muffles	SE 776 939	
Preston Montford	SJ 423 143	

Site Name	Map Reference	Region
Flatford Mill	TM 077 333	
Bannisdale	NY 515 043	
Cow Green	NY 817 298	
Thorganby	SE 676 428	
Beddgelert	SH 556 518	
Wardlow Hay Cop	SK 177 739	
Tycanol Wood	SN 093 364	
Llyn Brianne	SN 822 507	
Woburn	SP 964 361	
Compton	SU 512 804	
Driby	TF 386 744	
Hillsborough Forest	J 243 577	
Pumlumon	SN 823 854	

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Carr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will bring forward funds already committed in order to develop sheltered housing schemes.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Small Shops

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the average change and *(b)* the aggregate change in rate bills for small shops in 1990-91 as against 1989-90.

Mr. Chris Patten: While there is considerable variation in the charges for individual shops, the average rate bill for small shops in England has fallen as a result of the introduction of the uniform business rate and of the non-domestic revaluation: including the effect of the transitional arrangements, there has been a 2 per cent. reduction in real terms compared with 1989-90. The aggregate rate bill of such shops has fallen by £10 million in real terms. This is partly because the uniform business rate has kept the total increase in business rates well below the increase in local authority spending this year. For this purpose small shops are those with rateable values of £500 or more and less than £15,000 in London and £10,000 elsewhere—the definition used in the business rate transitional arrangements.

Empty Council Properties

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to enable local councils to bring the council properties now lying empty to habitable standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 18 July 1990]:* The Government have made clear to local authorities the need to make efficient use of their housing stock, including giving a high priority to using their capital resources to bring empty properties back into use. The new housing revenue account subsidy encourages authorities to reduce the number of their empty properties. Inefficient authorities reduce their entitlement to HRA subsidy.

In addition to their normal housing investment programme allocations local authorities in London and the south-east will this year have an additional £42 million to repair and rehabilitate their empty housing as part of our initiative to help tackle homelessness. This should create up to 2,500 new lettings.

Industrial Pollution Inspectorate (Report)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date the industrial pollution inspectorate will produce its annual report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

A report covering the work of Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate for Scotland for the period January 1987 to March 1988 is presently being printed and will be published within the next few weeks. Copies of the report will be placed in the Library.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what tonnage of polychlorinated biphenyls was imported into Newport by sea in the past three years.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 6 July 1990]:* I have been asked to reply.

The information sought is available only since the introduction of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988.

Records of shipments under the regulations show that 479 tonnes of PCB contaminated materials were imported via Newport for disposal in the year 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 20 July 1990

NORTHERN IRELAND

Road Accidents

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many deaths and injuries due to road accidents there have been in Northern Ireland since 1969.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures are 5,421 and 171,998 respectively to the end of 1989. The detail was as follows:

Year	*Killed*	*Injured*
1969	257	7,124
1970	272	7,902
1971	304	7,658
1972	372	8,025
1973	335	7,662
1974	316	7,188
1975	313	7,340
1976	300	7,319
1977	355	7,849
1978	288	8,080
1979	293	7,628
1980	229	7,035
1981	223	7,557
1982	216	7,923
1983	173	7,540
1984	189	8,561
1985	177	8,460
1986	236	9,206
1987	214	9,722
1988	178	10,789
1989	181	11,430
Total	5,421	171,998

Security Forces

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the RUC and RUC reserve are currently estimated to be Catholics; how many people were recruited to the RUC and RUCR in 1989; and what proportion of those recruits were Catholics.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* I am advised by the Chief Constable that at 1 January 1990, 855 members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its reserves were perceived to be Roman Catholic. The religion of a further 388 officers could not be determined.

In 1989, 556 officers were recruited to the RUC and its reserves. Seven per cent. of these were perceived to be Roman Catholic and a further 5·4 per cent. could not be determined.

Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civil servants in his Department of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge; and how many are graduates of other universities.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* Within the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments 991 civil servants of the rank of principal or equivalent and above are graduates.

Information as to which university each individual attended is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of *(a)* the future work programme of the equal opportunities unit of the Northern Ireland civil service, in relation to the representation of (i) females and (ii) Catholics in the higher grades of the Northern Ireland civil service and *(b)* the timetable for the introduction and implementation of this programme of action.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The future work programme of the equal opportunities unit of the Northern Ireland civil service is multi-faceted. It ranges from the essential maintenance and development of its computer monitoring system, through analysis of recruitment and promotion competitions to researching ways and means of dealing with specific issues such as the adverse impact of recruitment selection procedures and the low level of representation of females and of Roman Catholics in the higher grades of the service.

As I indicated in my reply to a previous question on 18 April, Vol. 170, col. *879*, the level of representation of females and Roman Catholics in the higher grades is being treated as a priority issue at senior level within the service. Consideration of this matter, assisted by discussions with the Fair Employment Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission, has produced a number of ideas which require further work to assess whether they should be included in the equal opportunities work programme. I am thus unable now to give details either in terms of content or time scale. An account of this work, as it develops, will continue to be given in the regular reports of the equal opportunities unit.

In the meantime, the encouraging trend of increased Roman Catholic representation in the higher grades, to which I referred in my earlier response, continues. The proportion of Roman Catholics at assistant secretary level and above in the general service is now 15·1 per cent. (21 out of 139) compared with 12·3 per cent. in January 1989 and 5·9 per cent. in January 1985.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

UN Conservation Convention

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom is expected to ratify the United Nations convention on conservation.

Mr. Sainsbury: I shall write to the honourable Member.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount of income tax the Exchequer would forgo in 1990-91 if the threshold

for the starting point for the higher rate of income tax were raised to *(a)* £30,000, *(b)* £40,000, *(c)* £50,000, *(d)* £60,000, *(e)* £70,000, *(f)* £80,000, *(g)* £90,000 and *(h)* £100,000.

Mr. Ryder: Estimates are as follows:

Increases to the basic rate limit from £20,700

New basic rate limit £	*Direct revenue cost*[1] *£ billion*
30,000	1·6
40,000	2·5
50,000	3·0
60,000	3·3
70,000	3·5
80,000	3·7
90,000	3·8
100,000	3·9

[1] for a full year at 1990-91 projected levels of income

The estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional, the estimates for basic rate limits above £70,000 being particularly tentative.

VAT

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Gloucester on 13 July, *Official Report*, column *353*, what is the administrative cost of implementing the change whereby value added tax is applied to *(a)* gas and *(b)* electricity bills for supplies made to domestic premises for business purposes.

Mr. Ryder: I regret that no estimate is available. However, the arrangements to ease the administrative burden of taxing some supplies of fuel and power, which was required following the judgment of the European Court of Justice in June 1988, were formulated after extensive consultation with representatives of fuel and power suppliers.

Manufacturing

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what fiscal measures the Government intend to introduce to encourage an increase in the United Kingdom's manufacturing base.

Mr. Ryder: The Finance Bill contains proposals to increase the small profits limit for the small companies' corporation tax rate and to introduce a comprehensive system of VAT relief on bad debts.

Government Data Network

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his answer of 4 April, *Official Report*, column 608, he will make a statement on the outcome of the price variation negotiations with Racal Data Networks Ltd. for the Government data network.

Mr. Ryder: I confirm that these negotiations between the Treasury and Racal Data Networks Ltd. (RDNL) have now been completed.

RDNL has the right under the Government data network contract to increase the tariff by 6·75 per cent. for the year beginning 1 April 1990. The company has agreed, however, to limit the effective rate of increase over this period to 5·06 per cent. by applying this price adjustment from 1 July 1990 instead of 1 April 1990.

As foreshadowed in my answer on 4 April 1990, column *608*, the Treasury and RDNL have discussed possible revisions to the Government data network contract. It has not, however, been possible to identify revisions which would be acceptable to both parties. The existing contract provisions will therefore remain in force.

As stated by my right hon. Friend the then Paymaster General on 22 June 1988, columns *599-600*, Departments will continue to be free to compare alternatives to the Government data network to ensure best value for money. Hence RDNL will retain a strong interest in maintaining the Government data network tariff at a competitive level.

ENVIRONMENT

Landfill

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those landfill sites surveyed earlier in the current year by Government—sponsored research which were found to be *(a)* poorly managed and *(b)* contributory to water pollution problems.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Member may be referring to the UKAEA Harwell paper published earlier this year and based on a survey two years ago on behalf of my Department. The co-operation of the site owners was given on the understanding that statistical information only would be published and no sites identified.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: By 16 July 1990 my Department—including PSA—had received 491 subject access requests. No prior estimate of this number had been made and I have no plans to reconsider the level of the fee charged.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to meet local authority leaders to discuss his proposals for amending the community charge.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend will be meeting the leaders of the local authority associations at the consultative council on local government finance in September. They may wish to raise the matters dealt with in his statement of 19 July, *Official Report*, columns 1185-89, and discussed in the consultation document issued that day.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the risk of explosion in respect of the presence of acetone or alcohol solvents in radioactive waste subject to storage and disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Conditions imposed in certificates of authorisation issued by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 for the short-term accumulation and disposal of radioactive waste take full account of the assessment made in each case concerning the nature and activity of the waste in question.

For example, in the case of flammable liquids contaminated with radioactivity, conditions imposed require the waste to be kept in closed containers in a locked store which is designed and constructed so that the waste is reasonably protected from fire and that the store contains nothing else which is explosive or flammable. All authorised premises are subject to inspection by HMIP to ensure that these conditions are being met.

Cryptosporidium

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the report of the group of experts on cryptosporidium in water supplies is to be published.

Mr. Trippier: The report of the expert group chaired by Sir John Badenoch is being published today by HMSO. I have placed copies in the Library.

Following an outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in Swindon and that part of Oxfordshire supplied by water from Farmoor reservoir, the group was appointed in March 1989 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and asked to examine the implications for water supplies generally. It produced an interim report in July 1989 which formed the basis of guidance issued by Government Departments to the water industry.

Cryptosporidium has long been recognised as a parasite of animals and birds, but it was not until 1976 that it was shown to be capable of producing illness in man. Infection with cryptosporidium may cause acute diarrhoea. In 1989 there were about 9,000 reported cases of cryptosporidiosis in Britain; an increase over previous years which can be attributed in part to recent changes in laboratory sampling policies. The report concluded that water supplies can act as a source of human infection although the illness also spreads in other ways. Nationally, waterborne cases of cryptosporidiosis represent only a very small fraction of all cases of diarrhoea.

When operated optimally, the background levels of cryptosporidium oocysts in raw water sources, current water treatment processes appear able to prevent contamination of drinking water. However, they cannot be relied upon to remove all oocysts from heavily contaminated raw water.

The group highlights the importance of trying to prevent heavy contamination of raw water and of developing alternative disinfection processes to kill oocysts. It does not advocate routine monitoring of treated water for the parasite until more is known about the occurrence of cryptosporidium in the water environment and techniques for its isolation and identification are improved. The group recommends that each water undertaker should develop a strategy for monitoring in certain specific situations; and that water undertakers, health authorities and local authorities should collaborate to produce detailed contingency plans for identifying, and dealing with, any outbreak of cryptosporidiosis. The report identifies a number of subjects on which further research is required.

My right hon. and right hon. and learned Friends are most grateful to Sir John Badenoch and the other members of the expert group for producing such a comprehensive and authoritative account of the present state of knowledge. The Government had accepted and endorsed their recommendations, and I have put in the Library a copy of our detailed response. Many of the recommendations involve action by other bodies, and copies of the report and the response are being sent to all water undertakers, health authorities and local authorities.

The Government already have wide-ranging polices to reduce pollution of source waters from farming activities. These include advice to farmers, generous grant aid, and regulations currently being finalised. In addition, we intend to increase the maximum fine in magistrates and sheriff courts for polluting controlled waters from the present £2,000 to £20,000 at the next legislative opportunity.

Some of the specific topics which the report identifies as needing further research have already been incorporated into a national research programme funded by this Department, the National Rivers Authority, the Foundation for Water Research and water undertakers, and supported by the Public Health Laboratory Service. This will now be extended to cover the remaining subjects.

The Government will keep the position under review, and will consider the need for further action when the findings from the research programme become available.

Sports Clubs (Rating)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply he gave on 19 March to the hon. Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy), *Official Report*, column *483-84*, if he has made a further assessment of the effect of the new business rate upon sports facilities now that the rating lists have come into force.

Mr. Chope: The 25,591 sports grounds, sports stadia, playing fields and clubhouses in the rating lists for England which came into force on 1 April have average rate bills under the new system, excluding the effect of the transitional arrangements, 3·05 per cent. higher than in 1989-90. This represents a fall of about 4·5 per cent. in real terms. Average rate bills for the 3,300 golf courses, swimming pools and tennis courts in the new lists have risen by 20·6 per cent. and those for leisure and sports centres, of which there are 2,105 in the lists, by 30·3 per cent, again without transition.

These figures take no account of rate relief: local authorities have discretion to grant up to 100 per cent. rate relief on property occupied by non-profit making bodies.

Litter

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the current timetable for competitive tendering for street cleaning services in the light of the proposed code of practice on litter under the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Portillo: A number of authorities are now making preparations to let contracts for street cleaning from 1 January 1991. We have proposed, in the Environmental Protection Bill, that there should be a new litter duty on local authorities from 1 April 1991 and that, in fulfilling that duty, authorities should have regard to standards contained in a code of practice. While consultation on that code is well advanced, it is not yet in its definitive form, and I recognise that authorities cannot easily settle the basis for new street cleaning contracts until the standards are finalised. In the case of those authorities to which the deadline of 1 January 1991 currently applies, I intend, therefore, to substitute a later deadline of 1 August 1991. In the case of those authorities to which the deadline of 1 August 1991 currently applies, I intend to substitute a later deadline of 1 January 1992. In the case of those authorities to which the deadline of 1 January 1992 applies, I intend to make no change to the deadline. I shall bring forward regulations to give effect to these changes.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be making similar arrangements in respect of the competitive tendering deadlines applicable to Scottish and Welsh authorities.

Non-hazardous Waste

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his best estimate of the current average cost of landfilling non-hazardous municipal and industrial waste per tonne; and what is the estimated cost per tonne resulting from the implementation of the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 19 July 1990]:* The Department is currently reviewing the availability of waste disposal statistics, but there are no firm figures on costs currently available. We estimate that the current average cost of landfilling non-hazardous waste is about £7 per tonne and that disposal to the highest possible standards reflected in the terms of the Environmental Protection Bill is likely to be in the region of £10 to £13 per tonne or more.

Environment Exhibition, Czechoslovakia

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will send an official to the Brno environmental exhibition in Czechoslovakia; and if he will make a statement on British participation.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 19 July 1990]:* This Department has not received an invitation to the environmental exhibition "ENVIBRNO" in Brno, Czechoslovakia, on 23 to 25 October. On the information available to me, however, I think it unlikely that an official from this Department will attend. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Trade and Industry has today answered an associated question on the involvement of his Department and British industry in the exhibition.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which boroughs in London have made claims to his Department for the refund of community charge benefit; and in respect of how many people in each borough such a claim has been made.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: All local authorities are currently receiving monthly payments of subsidy from the Department based on their estimated 1990-91 expenditure on community charge benefit. It is largely a matter for local authorities to determine the basis for such estimates. At the end of the financial year each authority is required to make a final claim for subsidy based on the actual outturn expenditure on community charge benefit. Any difference in subsidy between the estimated claim and the final claim is adjusted accordingly.

Information about numbers receiving benefit is collected independently from the subsidy information. Returns of the numbers receiving community charge benefit on 31 May have not yet been received from all London boroughs.

Household Incomes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will now publish the 1987 data on households below average income.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We expect to publish the 1987 data on households below average income shortly.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Incomes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer of 13 July to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), *Official Report*, column *349*, if he will give the money figures for per capita income in £ sterling and include the United Kingdom in the table.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Average GNP per capita in low income countries (excluding India and China) and average GNP per capita for DAC member countries and United Kingdom 1979-1988

Year	*Low income countries GNP per capita £ sterling*	*DAC member countries GNP per capita £ sterling*	*United Kingdom GNP per capita £ sterling*
1979	125	4,559	3,455
1980	168	4,597	4,046
1981	183	5,296	4,462
1982	199	6,080	4,901
1983	208	7,250	5,345
1984	178	8,644	5,671
1985	242	9,373	6,186
1986	221	10,074	6,673
1987	161	10,394	7,282
1988	194	10,617	8,051

Sources:
OECD—DAC chairman's report, 1981-1989.
World bank atlas 1989.

Note 1: Low income countries as classified by OECD are those

countries which have GNP per capita of
1979 —less than $500 in 1979
1980-82—less than $600 in 1980
1983-86—less than $700 in 1983
1987-88—less than $700 in 1987
Note 2: Sterling-US dollar exchange rates used
1979 0·4713
1980 0·4299
1981 0·4931
1982 0·5713
1983 0·6592
1984 0·7483
1985 0·7714
1986 0·6820
1987 0·6102
1988 0·5614

Eastern Europe (Information Technology)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to the reply of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *368*, what progress has been made on establishing a computing/information technology mission *(a)* in Czechoslovakia and *(b)* in Hungary.

Mrs. Chalker: We hope that information technology missions will visit Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the autumn.

European Development Fund

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of goods and services procured by the European development fund from United Kingdom companies for each £1 contributed by the United Kingdom Government.

Mrs. Chalker: As at 31 March 1990, United Kingdom companies had won contracts to the value of 133·15 million ecu under the current (sixth) European development fund. This represents 13·7 per cent. of total procurement—some 27 per cent. of which is won by recipient countries. The United Kingdom contributes 16·58 per cent. of EDF VI.

Know-how Fund

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries of eastern Europe and the amount that each is due to receive in each of the next five years from the know-how fund.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 19 July 1990]*: It is not possible to list the amounts that each eastern European country will receive over the next five years. These will depend on the total resources available for eastern Europe which have to be agreed in the context of the public expenditure survey, plans for spending those resources, which will depend on developments in the countries concerned, and the pattern of actual disbursements. Support under the know-how fund is at present available to Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

TRANSPORT

Leicester-Burton Rail Link

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any proposals for re-opening of the Leicester to Burton railway link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Leicestershire county council has made an application for grant aid and credit approval in respect of the proposed reopening to passengers of this railway line. We are considering this application, but no decisions on resources for the project can be taken until the autumn.

Railway Tankers

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss alternative sites for the parking of railway oil tankers at Port Talbot.

Mr. Freeman: Safety issues are discussed, if appropriate, at our regular meetings. I understand that loaded fuel trains are stopped briefly at Port Talbot while a new crew takes over and the train is checked. Certain empty trains returning to the refinery wait during the night at Port Talbot for periods up to four hours.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ask the railways inspectorate to examine British Rail's compliance with its statutory duties so far as safety is concerned in respect of the parking of rail-borne tankers at stations.

Mr. Freeman: The railway inspectorate is examining the practice of holding fuel tanker trains at stations to ensure that all reasonably practical safety measures are being taken. I am writing to the right hon. and learned Member with further details.

Public Transport, London

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many passenger journeys were travelled by underground within London in 1989; what was the figure in the previous three years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many passenger journeys were travelled by bus within London in 1989; what were the figures for the previous three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the table:

Passenger journeys on London Regional Transport services

	Underground millions	*Bus millions*
1986-87	769	1,158
1987-88	798	1,249
1988-89	815	1,244
1989-90	765	1,221

The number of passenger journeys during 1989-90 was, of course, affected by industrial action during the summer of last year.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to attract commuters to the London underground and London bus systems.

Mr. Freeman: A total of 83 per cent. of commuters into central London already use public transport. I trust that the major investment programme being undertaken by London Transport, coupled with the quality of service objectives which the Government have set it will encourage more commuters to use its services.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department at what age a boy or girl may be committed to prison in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: Although a sentence of imprisonment cannot be passed on anyone under the age of 21, other custodial sentences are available. The minimum ages for custodial sentences for boys and girls are as follows. The sentence of detention in a young offender institution is available for boys from the age of 14 and girls from the age of 15 convicted of imprisonable offences. Detention under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 is available from the age of 10 for young people of either sex convicted of murder or manslaughter; and from the age of 14 for those convicted of other offences for which an adult may be imprisoned for 14 years or more.

Boys aged 15 or 16 charged with criminal offences and refused bail may be remanded in prison department custody if a court certifies them as being too unruly to be safely committed to local authority care. The adult remand arrangements apply to young people of either sex from the age of 17.

World Cup (Deportations)

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what authority the 247 British citizens deported from Italy during the World Cup tournament were photographed upon arrival at Gatwick airport; what was the purpose of this photographing; what use is to be made of these photographs; and what action is open to these people to ensure that such photographs are destroyed and no records retained.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: People who were returned from Italy on 26 June following incidents of violence in Rimini were photographed on their arrival at Gatwick airport by the national football intelligence unit (NFIU), which is responsible for obtaining, collating and analysing information about individuals who are suspected of being involved in acts of football hooliganism.

Personal information held by NFIU on computer is subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Immigration Officers

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if the pay scales of immigration officers are designed to reward proficiency in more than one language;

(2) if immigration officers at ports of entry to the United Kingdom are required to speak foreign languages.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The possession of foreign language skills is not a pre-requisite of employment as an immigration officer, but it is the policy of the Department to attract new recruits who have language skills and to encourage the use of those skills in existing staff. Immigration officers who are successful in departmental language examinations are paid an allowance for each language in which they reach the required standard up to a financial limit which is reviewed regularly. Individual language allowances are higher for the more difficult languages.

Public Order Act 1986

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the results of his evaluation of the operation of section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 with particular reference to the interpretation of police forces of the circumstances under which the relevant powers should be exercised.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are considering the representations which we received in response to the announcement of the evaluation of section 39 and hope to reach conclusions by the end of the year.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the numbers of subject access requests made to police forces; whether he will introduce regulations to make it an offence for any person to require a data subject to seek subject access to personal data held by the police; whether he will introduce legislation to determine when police records may be used for vetting purposes; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that from July 1989 to June 1990 the subject access office of the national identification bureau received 10,818 requests for subject access under the Data Protection Act 1984. Of these 1,371 requests were made initially to the Metropolitan police and 9,447 to other forces. We are currently discussing with representatives of the police service and the Data Protection Registrar how to deal with enforced subject access. The Home Department is planning to mount a scrutiny in the autumn to examine the most appropriate arrangements for the maintenance of, and disclosure from, the national collection of criminal records.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a decision is to be taken on the application to the post in Islamabad by Shamim Ayaz, born on 31 July 1965, Home Office reference: H.162359, to join his family in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I shall write to the hon. Member about this case shortly.

Juvenile Detainees

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the regulations concerning the imprisonment on remand in adult prisons of juvenile detainees.

Mr. Mellor: The provisions which govern the detention in prison custody of unconvicted and convicted unsentenced juveniles are sections 23 and 34 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, section 69 of the Children Act 1975, section 37 of the Magistrates Courts Act 1980, the Certificates of Unruly Character (Conditions) Order 1977 (Statutory Instrument 1977/1037) and the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 (Transitional Modifications of Part I) Orders 1979 and

1981 (Statutory Instruments 1979/125 and 1981/81). By virtue of section 37 of the 1980 Act, when a magistrates court commits in custody to the Crown court for sentence a young offender aged 15 or 16, the committal may be only to a remand centre or prison. By virtue of the other provisions quoted, the only other unsentenced young persons who may be committed in custody to a remand centre or prison are boys aged 15 or 16 whom a criminal court has certified to be of so unruly a character that they cannot safely be committed to the care of a local authority.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles are held on remand at each adult prison in the United Kingdom at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is given in the table:

Untried and convicted unsentenced males[1] aged under 17 held in adult prisons[2] in England and Wales on 30 April 1990: by establishment

Establishment	*Number*
Bristol	3
Hull	12
Leeds	1
Manchester	2
Pentonville	2
Shrewsbury	1
Winchester	1
All adult prisons	22

[1] No unsentenced juvenile girls were held on 30 April 1990.
[2] A further 62 were held in remand centres taking only prisoners aged under 21.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many youngsters aged 16 years or under have committed suicide while in custody in each of the last 20 years; at which institutions; and what was the age of each.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 July 1990]:* In the last 20 years six inmates aged 16 or under have died at their own hand while in prison custody. The details are as follows:

Year	*Establishment*	*Age*	*Verdict recorded at Coroner's inquest*
1971	Cardiff	15	Suicide
1976	Pucklechurch	15	Suicide
1978	Hindley	16	Suicide
1981	Rochester	16	Suicide
1983	Manchester	16	Suicide
1990	Swansea	15	Not yet held

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offenders aged under 17 years are in Her Majesty's prisons at present.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 19 July 1990]:* According to the records held centrally, on 30 April 1990, the latest date for which information is readily available, 65 untried, 19 convicted unsentenced and 21 sentenced juveniles were held in prisons and remand centres in England and Wales. Of these 44 untried and 18 convicted unsentenced juveniles were held in remand centres for young offenders.

Football League Grounds (Policing)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library the correspondence between the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde and his Department's Under-Secretary for State on the subject of increases in charges made for policing at Football League grounds in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A reply to the hon. Member's letter to me of 12 July about this matter will be sent to him as soon as possible. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines he is issuing to police authorities on the assessment of charges for the policing of football matches following recent increases in the levels of such charges.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: These charges are a matter for police authorities. Lord Justice Taylor's report recommended that their charges should be more realistic. We are therefore consulting the football authorities, the local authority associations and police representative bodies on the terms of the Home Office circular advising police authorities to recover as far as practicable the full cost of providing police officers inside football grounds.

Philip Andrew Knight

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the death of Philip Andrew Knight in Swansea prison.

Mr. Mellor: The circumstances surrounding the death of Philip Knight will, as in all cases of death in prison custody, be thoroughly investigated at a coroner's inquest. It would not be right for me to comment on the details of the case until the inquest has taken place.

Prisoners (Observation)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the regulations pertaining in *(a)* adult prisons and *(b)* juvenile penal establishments concerning the observation of prisoners considered to be at risk of committing suicide.

Mr. Mellor: Once an inmate has been identified as potentially suicidal it is for the prison medical officer to decide what form of special supervision is needed, depending on the seriousness of the risk. Broadly speaking, continuous supervision is considered appropriate where the medical officer believes there is an immediate risk of the inmate harming him or herself. Where continuous supervision is impracticable, or where the medical officer considers the inmate to present some suicide risk but not so immediately as to require continuous supervision, the inmate should normally be placed under intermittent supervision. Where this is ordered, the inmate will normally be observed by a member of staff at approximately 15-minute intervals. Where, exceptionally, this is not possible, the governor or medical officer may order the frequency of observation to be reduced, but not below once every 30 minutes.

Detailed guidance on special supervision procedures, and on all other aspects of suicide prevention (for example, the location of suicidal inmates and sources of help and support), is set out in circular instruction 20/1989, a copy of which is in the Library. The guidance applies to all prison service establishments.

Autopsies

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many autopsies were carried out in England and Wales for the latest year for which information is available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of post mortems ordered by coroners is published in table 1 of the Home Office statistical bulletin issue 14/90 "Statistics of Deaths reported to Coroners: England and Wales 1989", a copy of which is in the Library.

Pollution Prosecutions

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions for pollution have been undertaken against the owners of *(a)* lorries, *(b)* buses, *(c)* motor cycles and *(d)* other motor vehicles in respect of air pollution and noise, respectively, in the past 12 month for which figures are available; and what are the comparable figures for the previous 12-month period.

Mr. John Patten: The available information about offences relating to motor vehicles is published annually in Home Office statistical publications. These statistics do not identify the type of vehicle involved. Summary information is set out in the bulletin entitled "Offences relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales"; the most recent number 34/89, included data for 1988. Detailed information is given in the publication "Offences relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Details of noise offences, offence group 22, are included in the supplementary tables publications. Emission of smoke offences are not separately identified.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technology Colleges, Wandsworth

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he or his colleagues last met the chairman of ADT Ltd. regarding the opening of city technology colleges in Wandsworth.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend last met Mr. Michael Ashcroft, the chairman of ADT plc, on 9 January 1990 to discuss the proposal to establish a city technology college at Wandsworth. They also met informally at a dinner given by the CTC Trust on 31 January.

Baccalaureate

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the introduction of a baccalaureate; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 8 May 1990, *Official Report*, col. *10*.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his talks about proposed negotiating machinery for teachers' pay and conditions.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is now considering the responses of the teacher unions and employers to his proposals for new permanent pay negotiation machinery. He will announce his conclusions in due course.

Child Abuse

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has completed his review of the arrangements made by local education authorities to give effect to the recommendations in his Department's circular No. 4/88 for the protection of children from abuse.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This review has recently been completed, and the Department is writing today to local education authorities to convey my right hon. Friend's thanks for their co-operation with it and to give them some feedback. We are encouraged both by the positive manner in which authorities have responded to our advice and by the confirmation that the measures we recommended are proving generally helpful and workable.

School Closures

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools in England of fewer than 50 pupils closed in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding answer 16 July 1990]:* The information for the years, 1985, 1980 and 1975 is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

In England, 36 maintained schools with fewer than 50 pupils were closed in 1989.

The criteria against which my right hon. Friend considers proposals to reorganise schools are set out in the Department's circular 3/87, which makes it clear that assessing the viability of an individual school is not solely a matter of the number of pupils on roll. A copy of the circular is available in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Bank Accounts

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 13 June to the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), *Official Report*, column *212*, what further progress is being made on the implementation of the European Commission bank accounts directive.

Mr. Redwood: My Department has today issued a consultative document inviting comments on draft regulations to implement the EC bank accounts directive. Copies will be placed in the Library. Views are invited on the draft regulations attached to the consultative document by 19 October.

Rover Group

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has yet received the formal Community decision on the Rover Group.

Mr. Lilley: I received the formal Community decision on 19 July, and have placed copies in the Library.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the reasons there was an exceptional tax allowance pool prior to the sale of Rover in August 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* I presume the hon. Member has in mind the reference in the National Audit Office report (appendix 2, paragraph 2.1.2) to

"the exceptional size of the capital allowance pools"

As that paragraph went on to explain, this was

"resulting from previous disclaimers of allowances".

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the latest information available to the Government about the current value to British Aerospace of the lifting of the ring fences on Rover's capital losses and allowances in July 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 17 July 1990]:* This must be a matter for British Aerospace, but the report by Touche Ross for the National Audit Office in September 1989 put the commercial net present value of the trading losses and capital allowance pools at £33 million to £40 million and assigned a "negligible or nil value" to the capital losses.

Auditing Practices Committee

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 3 April, *Official Report*, column *507*, he can now indicate the Auditing Practices Committee's policy on release of information.

Mr. Redwood: I understand that the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies is now undertaking a comprehensive review of the methods of operation of its Auditing Practices Committee.

Companies Act

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to amend the Companies Act to provide a statutory definition of *(a)* revenue, *(b)* an expense and *(c)* liability.

Mr. Redwood: No. These terms are in general use and well understood. If definitions are required in particular contexts, that is best dealt with in accounting standards or other professional guidance.

Tear Gas

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many licences have been granted in the last 10 years for the export of tear gas to *(a)* Yugoslavia and *(b)* Tunisia.

Mr. Redwood: Such information is not readily available, and could be produced only at extremely disproportionate cost, as export licensing does not maintain records of export licence applications by specific products.

Germany

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what new initiatives he has taken to improve trade relations with Germany.

Mr. Lilley: I intend to maintain close contacts with my German counterparts on all aspects of bilateral and EC business involving my Department.

Dunsdale Securities

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department is intending to pay compensation to those investors who dealt with Dunsdale Securities when it was under Department of Trade and Industry licence.

Mr. Redwood: I see no grounds for considering compensation payments to investors who placed money with Dunsdale Securities Ltd.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) of 26 June, *Official Report*, column *129*, (1) whether the auditors' certificates issued by his Department to Dunsdale Securities were qualified in any way;

(2) whether the auditors of Dunsdale Securities appointed by his Department were fully recognised by an appropriate accountancy body.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* The Department does not issue audit certificates to companies or appoint their auditors, nor did it do so under the regulatory system put in place by the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 which was repealed in April 1988 upon entry into force of the Financial Services Act 1986. The auditors' reports and verifications provided to the Department in relation to applications and annual monitoring returns for Dunsdale Securities were in accordance with the requirements of the Dealers in Securities (Licensing) Regulations 1983 made under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958: they were not subject to any qualifications. Dunsdale Securities Ltd. employed auditors who, when they signed the reports and verifications, were members of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, were qualified in accordance with the law and held a practising certificate issued by the institute. One of the auditors was subsequently excluded from membership of the institute.

Textiles and Clothing

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the latest index of output figures for the textile and clothing industries; and what the figures were one year ago.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

Index of Production (1985 = 100)

	Textiles (SIC 43)	*Clothing (SIC 453)*
May 1989	98	97
May 1990	92	98
Percentage change	−5·8	+0·2
March-May 1989	99·8	97·1
March-May 1990	92·7	100·6
Percentage change	−7·1	+3·6

Source: Central Statistical Office (CSO).

Notes:

1. Textiles and clothing have been classified according to the UK Standard Industrial Classification (SIC).

2. The Index of Production (IOP) figures are seasonally adjusted, and represent movements in output in constant price terms. The series for textiles has also been adjusted to account for stock movements.
3. Although the latest IOP figures are those for May 1990, comparisons have also been made for the latest three month period. The extra data are included, on the advice of the CSO, as a more reliable guide to underlying performance than comparisons between single months. Monthly data tend to be volatile.
4. Percentage changes have been calculated on unrounded data.

Raw Materials Imports

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide the latest available statistics for the import content of raw materials consumption.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Based on information published in the latest available input-output tables for 1984, the proportion of all purchases by the energy and manufacturing industries accounted for by imports was approximately 26 per cent. Purchases include both raw materials and semi-manufactures, which cannot be separately distinguished. I will write to my hon. Friend in more detail.

Environmental Control Equipment

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what involvement his Department has had in encouraging British firms to sell environmental control equipment to the countries of eastern Europe at the forthcoming Brno exhibition in Czechoslovakia; with what results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 19 July 1990]:* When my Department's programme of assistance of overseas trade for 1990-91 was drawn up last year, consideration was given to the inclusion of a British group at the exhibition to which the hon. Member refers (ENVIBRNO). However, demand for support at other trade fairs worldwide was so great that it was not possible to include ENVIBRNO in the programme. There was, of course, nothing to prevent United Kingdom firms from attending ENVIBRNO if they wished to do so.

The Department is providing support for some 60 British companies at the annual Brno general engineering fair in September, where it is expected that some will be exhibiting environmental control equipment.

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is his estimate of the United Kingdom content of television sets produced in the United Kingdom in 1973, 1975, 1985 and the latest year for which an estimate is feasible;

(2) what is his estimate of the United Kingdom content of cars and commercial vehicles produced in the United Kingdom in 1973, 1979, 1985 and the latest year for which an estimate is feasible.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 18 July 1990]:* Information on which to base a reliable estimate is not available.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the annual exports from the United Kingdom of chlorofluorocarbons for each year from 1979 to 1989; what is the figure for 1990 to the most recent practicable date; and what estimate he has made of the quantities which will be exported in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 19 July 1990]:* This information is not available.

British Airways

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *384*, under what legal provision EEC inspectors entered the office of Lord King, chairman of British Airways, and inspected the chairman's personal banking papers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 19 July 1990]:* Commission officials visited British Airways on 23-24 February, by prior arrangement with the company. The Commission was investigating an agreement between BA, KLM and Sabena which had been notified by the airlines under the Community's competition rules. The relevant powers are set out in article 11 of Council regulation (EEC) 3975/87, which lays down competition procedures for air transport.

Machine Tool Industry

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the most recently available output figures for the United Kingdom machine tool industry in money and real physical output terms, and the equivalent figures in Germany, France and Italy, for the latest available statistical periods.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 18 July 1990]:* Information on numbers or weight of machine tools produced is not readily available. The most recent data on output of machine tools in money terms may be found in the latest issue of "Engineering Sales and Orders", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. The table shows the most recent international comparisons from industry sources:

	Machine tool production in 1989 (£ million)
United Kingdom	969
France	590
West Germany	4,840
Italy	1,835

Source: Machine Tool Technologies Association.
Note: These figures are industry estimates excluding parts and accessories.

PRIME MINISTER

European Policy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to convene meetings to assess the characteristics of any or each of the European Community countries for the development of European policy.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the replies given to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) on 17 July 1990, at column 859.

EMPLOYMENT

Child Care

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions have been issued to the Training Agency with regard to the treatment of child care costs for single parent employment training trainees.

Mr. Nicholls: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) and Training Agency area offices must ensure that provision is made for the costs of caring for children of lone parents who have one or more children under the age of 16 and who are participants in assessment or training on ET. TECs may also make provision for child care out of their local initiative funds. Funding arrangements for child care are for negotiation between individual training agents, training managers and the TEC or area office concerned.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the cost of child care for single parent employment training trainees is to be covered under the new contract; and whether the Training Agency is including child care costs as part of the single unit per training place.

Mr. Nicholls: Contracts with training agents and training managers require them to ensure that child care provision is made for lone parents who have one or more children under the age of 16 and who are participating in assessment or are trainees on ET. Arrangements for funding child care are for negotiation between individual training agents and training managers and the training and enterprise council or Training Agency area office concerned. Provision for child care may be included within composite unit costs or funded separately.

Illiteracy and Innumeracy

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effects of illiteracy and innumeracy upon future prospects for British employers.

Mr. Eggar: Available evidence indicates that as many as 6 million people in the adult population may have experienced some difficulty with literacy or numeracy either in the workplace or outside. Lack of basic word and number skills is clearly a barrier to effective performance at work and, in turn, profitability. The problem is as much the concern of employers as of individuals.

Tourism

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the Government's measures to encourage the tourism industry since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The then Secretary of State announced the conclusions of the Government's major review of their support to the tourism industry on 6 July and 28 November 1989. With the sharper focus of Government support, my right hon. and learned Friend is confident that the industry will continue to prosper.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the statements of the Minister of State of 29 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *761*, concerning the Government's estimates of the cost of establishing a minimum wage, if he will state when the research referred to was conducted and completed.

Mr. Eggar: Work estimating the effect of a national minimum wage in the context of the social charter started in early October 1989. The estimate of the costs of imposing the national minimum wage, referred to on 29 November, became available in mid-November. Subsequently, a note on method was written, and the work continued to be under review until the end of January.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 9 July, *Official Report*, column *98*, to the hon. Member for Stretford, on the effects on pay differentials from the introduction of a minimum wage, what would be the total effects if it is assumed that differentials are restored by one half only *(a)* where, according to the new earnings survey and other departmental sources, more than 50 per cent. of workers in a particular industry earn between half and two thirds of national average earnings, *(b)* where more than half the workers in an industry are paid below the minimum wage, *(c)* for those earning up to two thirds average earnings and *(d)* in the (i) retailing, (ii) distributive trades, (iii) miscellaneous services and (iv) national and local government industries.

Mr. Nicholls: Such estimates could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stretford, 2 February, *Official Report*, column *375*, on minimum wage effects, what is the estimated direct cost of raising all those to the minimum wage assumed in the note, broken down as follows: *(a)* industrial category, *(b)* region, *(c)* public sector and *(d)* private sector and the costs in each case.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 9 July, *Official Report*, column *98*, to the hon. Member for Stretford, regarding the assumptions contained in the Treasury model on the demand effects of the introduction of a minimum wage *(a)* how many jobs will be gained as a direct result of the higher wages paid according to the simulations done for the Treasury paper, "The Relationship Between Employment and Wages" and *(b)* what are the estimated demand effects according to the latest version of the Treasury model.

Mr. Nicholls: The simulations reviewed in the Treasury paper, "The Relationship Between Employment and Wages" produced an estimate of the impact of changes in real wages on employment. This is an estimate of the net change taking into account both the effects on consumer demand of changes in real wages, as well as the offsetting effects on company sector demand which arise from corresponding changes in their costs. It is, therefore, not possible to make a separate estimate of how many jobs will be gained as a direct result of the higher wages paid.

It has not, since 1978, been the practice to run particular simulations on the Treasury model to meet specific outside requests, but the hon. Member will be aware that the current version of the model is available in the Library for Members' use.

Health and Safety

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria are used in deciding whether accident prevention advisory unit reports are made public by *(a)* the Health and Safety Executive or *(b)* the employer involved.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not the Health and Safety Executive's policy to publish the reports of its accident prevention advisory unit which rely on information provided in confidence by employers. Publication by employers is a matter for them.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Health and Safety Executive intends to make public the full findings of the accident prevention advisory unit report into health and safety issues arising from construction of the channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive does not intend to publish the report but has sent a copy to the Select Committee on Employment, at its request. Chapter 16, which contains the report's conclusions, has already been published by the contractors, who, with assistance from HSE, are bringing the report to the attention of their work force.

Training

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the arrangements for approving training providers under new youth training and employment training.

Mr. Howard: In April 1986, three years after its introduction, the youth training scheme was extended into a two-year programme. At the same time all YTS training providers were required to achieve approved training organisation status. The purpose of the approval process was to ensure that all providers developed and maintained training of the highest possible quality. By October 1988 all providers delivering YTS met the required standards. These arrangements have been carried forward into new youth training which I launched on 28 June.

Drawing on the YTS experience a similar stringent approval process was introduced into employment training from its outset in September 1988. In April 1990 the approvals process was streamlined so that seven common criteria now apply to both employment training and new youth training. These are:

Stage 1:
1. Recruitment, selection and competence of staff;
2. Equal opportunities;
3. Health, safety and suitability of premises and equipment;
4. Financial viability.

Stage 2:
5. Identification of training needs;
6. Training designed and delivered to national standards;
7. Effective quality management.

Good progress has been made in extending approval to employment training providers. At 13 June 90 per cent. had achieved stage 1 approval. The stage 2 approval process is still under way and I expect it to be completed not later than April 1991.

During this period, training and enterprise councils will progressively take over the responsibility for contracting with training providers and for completing the approval process. They will be required to ensure that providers achieve and maintain the standards necessary for approval under each of the seven criteria or to set and enforce equally or more exacting quality standards to be agreed with my Department.

WALES

Young Offenders

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what secure units, and how many places, are available for young offenders in *(a)* the Swansea area, *(b)* south Wales and *(c)* Wales as a whole.

Mr. Grist: The following secure units, and places, are available in Wales:

(a) the Swansea area:
Llwyncelyn in West Glamorgan has two secure places.

(b) South Wales and *(c)* Wales as a whole:
Ty Mawr in Gwent has two secure places and Silverbrook in Mid Glamorgan has three secure places.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what responsibility he has for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's operations and activities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has joint responsibility with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for the operations and activities of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in Wales.

Pollution, Port Talbot

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will consult Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution as regards pollution created by BP Chemicals at Baglen bay, Port Talbot;

(2) if he will take appropriate action to deal with pollution created by BP Chemicals at Baglen bay, Port Talbot.

Mr. Grist: I am advised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) that the pollution referred to in these questions is primarily that associated with the flaring of light hydrocarbon material during periods of major plant commissioning or plant upset. The impact of such flaring is a high luminosity flame, and noise associated with the use of steam injection to ensure complete combustion of flared material. HMIP received complaints during the commissioning period of the BP petrochemical complex from 27 May to 10 June. It had 95 representations via BP Chemicals' complaint procedure system, and a similar number via Port Talbot borough council environmental health department. Six complaints were received directly by HMIP. We understand that most complaints were received by BP and the local authority over the critical period from 1 June to 5 June when instability in the refrigeration system resulted in flaring.

HMIP tells me that the commissioning of any major petrochemical works will inevitably result in some degree of flaring as the flare system is vital for major equipment protection and safety of personnel. HMIP assures me, however, that it is being kept fully informed of the

situation at BP Chemicals by communications with the company and is currently assessing the results of internal investigations into the flaring incidents and will be taking any action deemed necessary.

Corlan Housing Association

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements have been made to continue the outstanding commitments on Corlan housing association's grant-aided development programme.

Mr. David Hunt: Under the terms of the rescue package for Corlan housing association drawn up by Housing for Wales, the outstanding commitments on Corlan's grant-aided development programme will be taken over by Housing for Wales and then placed with other housing associations.

As an interim arrangement instead of paying housing association grant, Housing for Wales will need to make payments direct to contractors. Parliamentary approval of this expenditure will be sought in a winter supplementary estimate for class XVI, vote 6. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at a total cost of £6·4 million is being met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

ENERGY

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library copies of all notifications provided by his Department to the European Commission relating to the level and extent of the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on Monday 26 March at column *5*.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, *Official Report*, 10 July, column *155*, on the fossil fuel levy, if he will give details of the projected scope for efficiency savings within Nuclear Electric until 1998 as identified by his Department.

Mr. Baldry: No. This is a commercial matter for Nuclear Electric plc.

Energy Paper Projections

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to update the projections in energy paper 55; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I expect to review energy paper 55 in 1991. This will include both the projections and Government programmes.

Wind Power

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most recent estimate of the maximum potential for wind power generation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Government views on the potential for renewable energy sources were laid out in energy paper 55. A contribution of up to 30 TWh from land-based turbines was estimated by the year 2025 if R and D programmes were successful and the technology could be deployed commercially.

PowerGen

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) with whom discussions have taken place about the sale by private treaty of PowerGen;

(2) which companies are advising him on the possible sale of PowerGen by private treaty;

(3) what steps are being taken to protect public financial interests under the private treaty method of sale for PowerGen.

Mr. Wakeham: In preparing the electricity industry for privatisation, I am bound to consider with my financial advisers all options for maximising proceeds consistent with the Government's objectives for the industry. All such discussions are confidential. It would not be right to rule out the possibility of a trade sale if a suitable purchaser emerged.

Nuclear Fuel (Reprocessing)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is *(a)* the total quantity and *(b)* the total percentage of plutonium arising from the reprocessing of foreign spent fuel that has been returned to its country of origin, for each foreign country whose fuel has been accepted, for each year from 1965 to 1989, inclusive.

Mr. Baldry: I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that, between 1965 and 1989, some 3·5 tonnes of plutonium from the reprocessing of overseas spent fuel were returned to the country of origin or sent to a country specified by the owner of the plutonium. The bulk of this plutonium has been of Japanese or Italian origin with smaller amounts originating in Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, Spain or Switzerland. At the end of 1989, some 0·5 tonnes of extracted plutonium were held in stock at Sellafield awaiting return to overseas owners.

National Grid Company

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the proposed capital reduction for the National Grid Company.

Mr. Wakeham: A court hearing is scheduled for Monday 30 July. This is an important part of the process for establishing the capital structure of the company in preparation for the move to the private sector as part of the sale of the 12 regional electricity companies later this year.

Hinkley Point C

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the report of the Hinkley Point C inquiry before he announces his decision and before the House rises for the summer Adjournment.

Mr. Wakeham *[pursuant to his reply 2 July 1990, c. 431]:* I am now in a position to inform the House that I shall not be able to announce my decision regarding Nuclear Electric's application before the House rises for the summer Adjournment. As I have previously indicated it is my intention to publish my decision and the inspector's report simultaneously in the late summer.

I shall be arranging for copies of both my decision letter and of the report to be placed in the Libraries of the House. Copies of my decision letter and the inspector's conclusions and recommendations will be available in the Vote Office.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Offals

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now ban the use of those offals specified in the bovine offals order in *(a)* pet food and *(b)* feed for pigs and poultry.

Mr. Maclean: I am considering the recommendation by the Select Committee on Agriculture of a statutory ban on the use of these materials in pet food. In doing so I will need to bear in mind whether there is any scientific evidence for such action.

There is no evidence to support banning the use of these materials in pig and poultry feed.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy in respect of disposal of those cattle offals banned for use for human consumption which are not held in storage by the rendering industry.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 7 December 1989, (*Official Report*, column *374*).

Animal Feed

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now instigate an inquiry into the production of animal feed.

Mr. Maclean: I am considering the recommendation of the Select Committee on Agriculture that such an inquiry should be undertaken.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the prevalence of the practice of feeding chicken manure to *(a)* cattle, *(b)* pigs and *(c)* poultry; what is his policy in respect of this practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: As far as I am aware, chicken manure is not fed direct to animals and ensiled poultry litter is fed only to cattle. Free-range chickens may of course naturally eat their own and other chicken's droppings.

Anyone ensiling such material is subject to the provisions of the Processed Animal Protein Order 1989 which requires registration with the Department and microbiological testing of the end product. Regular checks on the ensiling process are carried out by the state veterinary service.

Cattle Offspring

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now introduce a comprehensive system for identifying and tracking the offspring of cattle.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 4 July, *Official Report*, column *590*.

Cattle Heads

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now ban the splitting of cattle heads in abattoirs.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 10 July 1990, *Official Report*, column *270*.

Fish Landings

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details for June 1989 and June 1990 of all *(a)* non-cod and *(b)* cod landings from sea area VIIA broken down by vessel length band for (i) east coast Scottish, (ii) west coast Scottish, (iii) English, (iv) Welsh and (v) Northern Irish, indicating within each category the number of vessels and tonnages landed.

Mr. Gummer: I regret that it would be too expensive to give a detailed response to the questions posed by my hon. Friend. I will, however, make a general statement about the alleged misreporting of cod in the Irish sea and off the west coast of Ireland.

The non-sector's quota of cod in the Irish sea for 1990 is 1,858 tonnes. Approximately half this quota was apparently taken by Scottish vessels and landed into Scotland during June and early July. In addition, landings into Scotland of cod reported as taken from the west of Ireland (areas VIIb and VIIc) have shown a marked increase in the second half of June. The Irish sea cod fishery has had to be closed to the non-sector as its quota for the year has already been exhausted.

The industry has stated its view that some Scottish vessels have been misreporting fish caught in the North sea or off the west coast of Scotland as coming from the Irish sea or off the west coast of Ireland, and has asked that catches should be reallocated from the latter to the former areas.

Fisheries Departments accept that the circumstantial evidence points to misreporting having taken place. The Irish sea cod fishery is traditionally a spring and winter fishery and high catches in summer are unusual. The pattern of landings this year is very different from experience. Moreover, the rate of uptake by the non-sector has not been paralleled by the sector. However, departments cannot act to penalise a particular group of vessels or to compensate Irish sea fishermen affected on the basis of rumour or circumstantial evidence; they can act only following successful prosecution of offenders. Departments are examining all fishing documents and, if they can secure hard evidence of misreporting, they will prosecute.

In the meantime, Departments are looking urgently at ways of limiting misreporting in future, and hope to be able to set up a system later this year. I know that the industry has in the past rejected tougher enforcement measures in view of their cost and inconvenience, but if it is serious about limiting misreporting, I hope that it will now accept the need for firm action.

If a system to limit misreporting can be established quickly, Departments will try to obtain more quota from another member state with the aim of reopening the Irish sea cod fishery to the non-sector later this year. However, such a swap would depend on the successful identification of another United Kingdom stock to offer in exchange.

HEALTH

Waiting Lists

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of persons on hospital waiting lists per 1,000 persons within *(a)* Norwich district health authority, *(b)* East Anglian regional health authority and *(c)* all district health authorities in England.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested has been placed in the Library. The waiting list per thousand resident population may be misleading because a significant, though varying, proportion of patients on the waiting list are referred by general practitioners in other districts. The relevant population for comparison is therefore the "catchment" population which in many cases varies substantially from the resident population.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of people who have been treated for psychiatric or physical injuries following harassment for being HIV-positive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all projects in the United Kingdom of which he is aware involved in researching the AIDS virus, together with their expenditure, noting specifically where the Government have financed or partly financed them.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The chief scientist of the Department of Health chairs interdepartmental meetings to discuss Government-funded AIDS/HIV research. Under the auspices of this committee, "HIV Infection and AIDS in the UK: Overview of Government Funded AIDS Research" has been compiled. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to contain the HIV-2 virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are firmly committed to taking effective action to minimise the spread of HIV. All the possible health measures in place, including health education, are as relevant to HIV 2 as they are to HIV 1.

All blood donations have been screened for HIV 1 and 2 as a combined test since 1 June 1990. However, HIV 2 is not considered to be a significant problem in the United Kingdom, nor for the rest of Europe, except Portugal where there appear to be roughly equal numbers of HIV 1 and HIV 2 positive donors. Many countries do not screen for HIV 2, including the United States of America.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria are being used to evaluate the effectiveness of advertising the dangers of AIDS in the media.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: AIDS mass media public education campaigns are evaluated by continuing independent market research consisting of interviews with a sample of the population. This measures public awareness, comprehension and acceptability of campaign advertising. This research, which began in 1986, also includes surveys of respondents' claimed heterosexual behaviour, including condom use, and a survey undertaken in venues attended by homosexual men to gauge their response to advertising specifically directed towards them.

Other indicators include:

the number and nature of calls to the national AIDS helpline; and

new attendances at genito-urinary medicine clinics.

National Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much per capita spending on the national health service is for the current financial year; and how much it was in 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: We currently spend more than £500 per head on the National Health Service each year, compared with £360 at today's prices in 1978-79.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the spending per resident by Dewsbury health authority was for each of the years 1979 to 1989, inclusive; and what was the comparable national average spending over the same period.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 13 June 1990]:* Information for Dewsbury health authority and for all district health authorities in England for the years since 1 April 1982 are shown in the table.

The figures relate expenditure on services within Dewsbury health authority boundaries to numbers of residents. They do not show expenditure on services for Dewsbury residents, since they do not take account of services provided by other districts for Dewsbury residents, or services provided by Dewsbury health authority for residents of other districts.

Total revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services (HCHS) per resident

	Dewsbury health authority £ (cash)	*England average £ (cash)*
1982-83	118	166
1983-84	123	175
1984-85	130	185
1985-86	139	194
1986-87	149	208
1987-88	162	227
[1]1988-89	181	252

[1] Latest available.

Sources:

(a) Annual accounts of the Dewsbury health authority and all other district health authorities in England for the financial years 1982-83 to 1988-89.

(b) Mid year estimates of resident population—1982 to 1988 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Notes to the table:

1. Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) covers the total expenditure by district health authorities including that on hospital community health and where relevant patient transport (i.e. ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.
2. District capital expenditure, all expenditure incurred by Regional health authorities on behalf of their regions as a whole and by special health authorities, etc. is excluded. Expenditure on family practitioner services, which is accounted for by family practitioner committees and cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts, is also excluded.
3. Prior to 1 April 1982 to Dewsbury health authority's predecessor health district formed part of a larger area health authority and in those cases district based figures were not collected centrally.

National Health Service (Contracts)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the effect of separating purchasers and providers within the national health service in the new contracts system.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We expect the separation of purchasers and providers and the introduction of contracts to bring a new clarity to the management of the National Health Service. As purchasers, district health authorities will be able to concentrate on securing effective and efficient health care for their residents. Our initial concern for 1991-92 is to ensure that the new mechanisms are in place. As the new system develops, we expect contracts to be the means by which purchasing authorities and provider units together will be able to agree improvements in the quality and appropriateness of services offered.

National Health Service (Surplus Land)

Sir Norman Fowler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the amount which has now been raised within the national health service, for the sale of surplus land since 1979; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Sales of surplus National Health Service property from 1979-80 to 1989-90 inclusive have realised a total of approximately £1·1 billion. This money has been retained by health authorities for reinvestment in the service.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the new membership of the district health authorities will be announced.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Statutory responsibility for the appointment of non-executive members of district health authorities rests with the relevant regional health authority. We expect them to make announcements in due course.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what restrictions apply on the eligibility for reappointment of CHC members of eight years' standing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The restrictions on the eligibility for reappointment of CHC members of eight years' standing are set out in the Community Health Councils Regulations 1985, regulation 7(2).

Health Authorities

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who was consulted over the new membership for each of the positions of (1) chairperson of regions, (2) membership of regions, (3) chairperson of district health authority, (4) membership of district health authority and (5) membership of family health service authority in the new health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no statutory requirement to consult on these appointments. However, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State appoints the chairmen of regional and district health authorities and the non-executive members of regional health authorities he welcomes recommendations and comments from all quarters, as do regional health authorities when making the appointments to district health authorities and family health services authorities.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the new *(a)* membership and *(b)* chairpersons of the regional health authorities will be announced.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today placed in the Library a list of the non-executive members of regional health authorities appointed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. The general manager and the director of finance will be ex-officio executive members of the regional health authority. Other executives are appointed by the chairman, the non-executives and the general manager.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made an announcement on regional chairmen's appointments in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) on 24 May at column *337*.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the new membership of the family health service authorities will be announced.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Appointments of members of family health services authorities is a matter for the appropriate regional health authority.

Remand Homes

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of spaces available in each juvenile remand home and other secure accommodation together with the number of vacancies currently available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authority social services departments provide a range of facilities and services, both residential and non-residential, which may be used by juveniles remanded to their care. This includes a national network of approved secure accommodation to which all local authorities have access.

The number of places available in approved local authority secure units in England on 30 June 1990 was 294. Such accommodation is, however, available for children in care generally, some of whom will be alleged juvenile offenders. Details of the number of places provided in each secure unit are in the following table.

Occupancy figures are collected annually. Provisional figures for the year ending 31 March 1989 indicate that there were 282 approved secure places on that date, of which 224 were occupied (an occupancy rate of 79·4 per cent.). This figure is similar to the year-end occupancy rates of previous years.

Information relating to the provision of secure accommodation in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Table: Places provided in local authority secure accommodation on 30 June 1990

Region	*Name of Unit*	*Local Authority*	*Number of places*
Northern	Aycliffe (Royston House)	Durham	*14M
	Aycliffe Special Unit	Durham	36M
	Netherton Park	Northumberland	5M
Yorkshire and Humberside	Kepples View	Rotherham	4M
	East Moor	Leeds	27B
North Western	Red Sands	Cheshire	6M
	Derwent House	Liverpool	4G
	Red Bank (Vardy House)	Lancashire	4B
	Red Bank Special Unit	Lancashire	26B
	Blackbrook House (Labore House)	Liverpool SSVA	5G
	Briars Hey (Orchard House)	Lancashire	8G
	Dyson Hall	Liverpool	8B
	Barton Moss (Park House)	Salford	7B
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M = Mixed B = Boy G = Girl

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

High Court Judges

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what is the number and percentage of High Court judges, by rank, who are *(a)* ex-solicitors and *(b)* ex-barristers.

The Attorney-General: It is at present a statutory requirement that anyone appointed to the High Court bench must be a barrister of at least 10 years' standing (Supreme Court Act 1981, section 10(3)(c)). The Courts and Legal Services Bill, currently before Parliament, provides for a change in this requirement.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what information he has on the number and percentage of High Court judges, by rank, who are *(a)* public school educated, *(b)* university educated and *(c)* Oxbridge educated.

The Attorney-General: There are 83 High Court judges, of whom 64 (77·1 per cent.) went to schools which are today listed in the "Independent Schools Yearbook," 80 (96·4 per cent.) went to university, and 70 (84·3 per cent.) went to either Oxford or Cambridge.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what is the number and percentage of High Court judges, by rank, who are *(a)* 70 years old and over and *(b)* 60 years old and over.

The Attorney-General: There are 83 High Court judges, of whom 23 (27·7 per cent.) are aged between 60 and 69, and 10 (12 per cent.) are aged between 70 and 75, giving a total of 33 (39·8 per cent.) who are aged 60 and over.

SCOTLAND

Maternity Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department has funded to assess the safety or the comparative costs of delivery in *(a)* district general hospitals, *(b)* general practitioner maternity units and *(c)* at home; and if he will give the conclusions of each project funded.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 July 1990]:* The Scottish Home and Health Department provides core funding for the health economics research unit and the social paediatric and obstetric research unit, which are based in Aberdeen university and Glasgow university respectively.

In the late 1970s the health economics research unit published "An Analysis of the Costs and Functions of General Practitioner and Specialist Maternity Hospital Units" which showed that the cost per delivery and per occupied bed-day in general practitioner and consultant units was not dissimilar.

Over the past 20 years the social paediatric and obstetric research unit's research programme has covered epidemiological studies of maternal and child care and the evaluation of the performance of aspects, including safety, of the Scottish maternity services. This recognises that in practice straightforward confinements can be handled at home but potentially more complex ones should be directed to specialist services at an early stage. The results of the studies have been widely publicised.

The Department is funding separately a study based at Dundee university of antenatal care in a random sample of Scottish hospitals.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the average number of days at sea per trip recorded in June by Scottish vessels landing into Peterhead and having declared fishing in area VII;

(2) of the Scottish vessels landing into Peterhead in June having declared area VII catches, how many had radioed in; and what percentages were physically summoned for inspection;

(3) how many of the Scottish vessels landing in Peterhead in June having declared area VII catches failed to radio in;

(4) whether vessels crossing the 4 deg. line have to declare in which International Council for the Exploration of the Seas area their catch was caught.

Mr. Lang: I have been asked to reply.

During June, 29 Scottish vessels landed fish into Peterhead which they recorded as having been caught in International Council for the Exploration of the Seas area VII. This involved 34 fishing trips, averaging eight days. None of the vessels radioed in on crossing the 4 deg. line and consequently none was summoned for inspection. There is no requirement for vessels which do radio in to report details of where catches were taken. This information is obtained from the log book.

These cases are being fully investigated and any evidence of misreporting will be submitted to the procurator fiscal. Urgent consideration is also being given as to how to limit future misreporting.

Local Authority Allowances

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to lay the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 before Parliament.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to all those who submitted comments on the draft regulations circulated by my Department on 15 June 1990. Points have since arisen which will result in a number of changes to the regulations. These changes will not affect the main essentials of the Government's proposals, including the banding proposals which I announced in my letter of 15 May 1990 to the president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. I have nevertheless decided to defer implementation of the new scheme of councillors' allowances in Scotland until 1 November 1990. This will provide local authorities with time to decide whether they wish to make any detailed amendments to their schemes in the light of the revised regulations which will be issued as soon as possible.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to introduce regulations to remove the need for charge payers to inform community charge registration officers of their new home address or a forwarding address whenever they move to a new charging authority area; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the terms of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 there is no general duty placed upon community charge payers to inform the community charges registration officer for the area in which they are registered for any of the community charges of their intended address, if they are proposing to move outwith that registration officer's area. There is, of course, a requirement for a charge payer to register at his new address. Under section 18A of the 1987 Act a registration officer may require information of a person whom he reasonably believes is, has been, or is about to be resident in the residential area but only if that information is such as the registration officer may reasonably require for the purposes of the exercise of his functions under the Act and is in the possession or control of the person. Charge payers can, of course, provide forwarding addresses to registration officers if they wish to have the notification that their register entry has been deleted sent to their new address.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce regulations to prevent the disclosure of information by charging authorities, whenever the information disclosed relates to community charge debts and the recipients of information are not acting as agents of the authority with respect to debt recovery; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to introduce such regulations which he considers to be unnecessary.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of domestic rates payable for 1988-89 was collected by local authorities; and what percentage of personal poll tax payable for 1989-90 was collected by local authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 July 1990]:* The information requested relating to the collection of domestic rates is not held centrally. On the general level of collection of community charges I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 4 July. Final collection figures will not be known until local authorities have completed their recovery procedures, which may not be for some time.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many subject access requests under the terms of the Data Protection Act his Department has received; what was his estimate of the number of requests that would be

received; what consideration he is giving to the subject access fee charged by his Department as a result; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Forty-six valid applications have been received under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984; 45 were received from Scottish Office staff and one was from a member of the general public. For forward planning there was a working assumption of 500 requests per annum. I do not propose to review the access fee. There have been no complaints or other evidence that the access fee accounts for the low level of public interest.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has for regulations concerning the disclosure of anonymous poll tax data; what advice he intends to give to community charges registration officers on how to ensure that the identity of individuals is guaranteed; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will introduce legislation to prevent charging authorities from using community charge information for purposes that are not directly relevant to the management or collection of the community charge; and whether he will make a statement;

(3) whether he will introduce legislation to prevent a community charge registration officer or charging authority from disclosing community charge information for purposes that are not directly relevant to the management or collection of the community charge; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him of 26 February 1990, *Official Report*, 26 February 1990, Vol. 168, column 76].

Rural Libraries

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce a rural library incentive scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: In line with the undertaking already given to the hon. Member and others, I am considering whether a rural public library incentive scheme should be introduced in Scotland. The report, which called for a rural public library incentive scheme, also urged rural library authorities to take action to improve services within their communities and I hope that rural authorities will consider this carefully.

A1

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland at which points the A1 in Scotland is expected to be reduced to one-way operation during the next six weeks; and whether these restrictions will apply during the Scottish and English bank holiday weekends.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One-way operations on the A1 in Scotland in the next six weeks will take place at the following locations:

Haddington Bypass—construction of a roundabout at the Aberlady (A6132) junction.
Haddington eastwards to Beanston—two separate moving single lane.
Beanston eastwards to East Linton—restrictions for laying a gas main.
Musselburgh Bypass—short contraflow or lane closures for bridge works.

Of these, the Haddington bypass restriction will be in force over the Scottish bank holiday weekend but will be lifted for the English holiday. British Gas will still be working on both holidays but will remove one-way working over the Scottish holiday weekend and it is hoped that it will manage to do likewise for the English weekend.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what were the projected traffic flow figures for vehicles, by category, travelling on the A1 between Edinburgh and the border before the announcement of the upgrading programme south of Newcastle;

(2) what are the projected traffic flow figures for vehicles, by category, travelling on the A1 between Edinburgh and the border following completion of the upgrading programme south of Newcastle.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* Traffic levels vary significantly on the A1 between Edinburgh and the border. At 1989 traffic levels, the average annual flow west of Haddington was 13,000 vehicles per day, reducing to approximately 5,000 vehicles per day in Borders region. Heavy goods vehicles account for approximately 12 to 13 per cent. and 20 to 30 per cent. of the flows respectively. National forecasts predict an overall increase in road traffic of between 23 per cent. and 39 per cent. by the year 2000. However, the routes south of Edinburgh study concluded that improvements planned on other competing routes will affect the distribution of traffic and that traffic growth on the A1 through the Borders in Scotland will be less than might otherwise be expected.

The study also considered the potential for a transfer of traffic to the route resulting from east coast road improvements. It is likely that the completion of a motorway link to Newcastle will result in an increase of fewer than 1,000 trips per day on the A1 in Scotland by the turn of the century.

These assessments will be monitored by the A1 steering group whose formation I announced recently.

Hazardous Waste Inspectorate

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the hazardous waste inspectorate will publish its fourth annual report for 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hazardous waste inspectorate's (HWI) terms of reference required it to publish reports periodically rather than annually. The last report, published in June 1988, covered the whole of the United Kingdom.

In April 1987 the HWI in England and Wales became part of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) whose report does not cover Scotland. The Scottish Development Department is preparing a separate Scottish HWI report which it intends to publish before the end of 1990.

Nitrogen Dioxide

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what powers he intends to use to protect the health of people in Scottish cities from the effects of nitrogen dioxide.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is no evidence that the present levels of nitrogen dioxide pose a health hazard to people in Scottish cities.

Measurements of nitrogen dioxide made at some 50 different locations in Scotland gave no cause for concern. The relevant EC directive on air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide specifies the limits and the results from the directive monitoring site in Glasgow have been below these limits.

Powers to reduce emissions of nitrogen dioxide from motor vehicles rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. His plans for the reduction of emissions are contained in the written answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport on 8 June, *Official Report*, Vol. 173, column *722*.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible for emissions from prescribed industrial plant and for implementing the EC large combustion plants directive which requires, inter alia, that emissions of nitrogen dioxide be reduced overall by 15 per cent. and 30 per cent. by 1993 and 1988 respectively, taking 1980 as the base year.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what powers he has to reduce the volume of urban traffic in Scottish cities; and whether he intends to take steps to reduce the concentrations of nitrogen dioxide in city centres.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has no such powers. Responsibility for traffic management matters for local roads in Scotland rests with regional and islands councils as local roads authorities.

Plans for the reduction of nitrogen dioxide emissions from motor vehicles are contained in the written answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport on 8 June 1990, *Official Report*, Volume 173, column *722*.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what powers he has to reduce emissions of nitrogen dioxide from industry where these contribute to a level in air which exceeds the limit laid down by the EC directive on nitrogen dioxide.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate is responsible for ensuring that the best practicable means are taken by operators of prescribed classes of industrial premises to prevent the emission of substances such as nitrogen dioxide and to render such emissions as may occur harmless and inoffensive.

Autopsies

56. **Mr. Michael Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many autopsies were carried out in Scotland for the latest year for which information is available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of autopsies performed in Scotland in the year ended 31 March 1989 was 9,721.

Nurses (Grading Appeals)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what deadline he has set for all clinical grading appeals by nurses which are currently outstanding.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 July 1990]:* A majority of health boards have already completed their regrading appeal hearings. Initial reluctance on the part of the staff side to co-operate in arranging hearings led to considerable delays in the commencement of the appeal hearings programme. These difficulties have now been overcome and health boards have been asked to ensure that the backlog of hearings is cleared as quickly as practicable.

Bypass Operations

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of patients in each health board area currently awaiting coronary artery bypass operations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 15 July 1990]:* At March 1990 the numbers were:

Health board of residence	*Number of patients*
Argyll and Clyde	50
Ayrshire and Arran	56
Borders	23
Dumfries and Galloway	23
Fife	45
Forth Valley	31
Grampian	114
Greater Glasgow	223
Highland	33
Lanarkshire	89
Lothian	105
Orkney	2
Shetland	2
Tayside	91
Western Isles	3
TOTAL	890

Youth Training

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *607*, if he will give the equivalent figures for the reduction in funding under youth training for those with special training needs.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 July 1990]:* In 1989-90, 26·5 per cent. of youth training expenditure in Orkney and 14·4 per cent. in Shetland related to special needs trainees. Information as regards the overall percentage of youth training expenditure in 1990-91 which relates to special needs trainees will not be available until total data for that financial year have been analysed.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 176**

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes, and cannot, therefore, be used in conjunction with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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